

Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for

Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States



Volume 5, Part 1

Chapter 11: Nevada Proposed Solar Energy Zones

On the cover:

Typical Solar Fields for Various Technology Types (clockwise from upper left):
Solar Parabolic Trough (Source: Hosoya et al. 2008),
Solar Power Tower (Credit: Sandia National Laboratories. Source: NREL 2010a),
Photovoltaic (Credit: Arizona Public Service. Source: NREL 2010b), and
Dish Engine (Credit: R. Montoya. Source: Sandia National Laboratories 2008).
Reference citations are available in Chapter 1.

Background photo: Parabolic trough facility from an elevated viewpoint
(Credit: Argonne National Laboratory)

Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States (DES 10-59; DOE/EIS-0403)

Responsible Agencies: The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) are co-lead agencies. Nineteen cooperating agencies participated in the preparation of this PEIS: U.S. Department of Defense; U.S. Bureau of Reclamation; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. National Park Service; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, South Pacific Division; Arizona Game and Fish Department; California Energy Commission; California Public Utilities Commission; Nevada Department of Wildlife; N-4 Grazing Board, Nevada; Utah Public Lands Policy Coordination Office; Clark County, Nevada, including Clark County Department of Aviation; Dona Ana County, New Mexico; Esmeralda County, Nevada; Eureka County, Nevada; Lincoln County, Nevada; Nye County, Nevada; and Saguache County, Colorado.

Locations: Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

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Abstract: The BLM and DOE are considering taking actions to facilitate solar energy development in compliance with various orders, mandates, and agency policies. For the BLM, these actions include the evaluation of a new BLM Solar Energy Program applicable to all utility-scale solar energy development on BLM-administered lands in six southwestern states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah). For DOE, they include the evaluation of developing new program guidance relevant to DOE-supported solar projects. The Draft PEIS assesses the environmental, social, and economic effects of the agencies' proposed actions and alternatives.

For the BLM, the Draft PEIS analyzes a no action alternative, under which solar energy development would continue on BLM-administered lands in accordance with the terms and conditions of the BLM's existing solar energy policies, and two action alternatives for implementing a new BLM Solar Energy Program. Under the solar energy development program alternative (BLM's preferred alternative), the BLM would establish a new Solar Energy Program of administration and authorization policies and required design features and would exclude solar energy development from certain BLM-administered lands. Under this alternative, approximately 22 million acres of BLM-administered lands would be available for right-of-way (ROW) application. A subset of these lands, about 677,400 acres, would be identified as solar energy zones (SEZs), or areas where the BLM would prioritize solar energy and associated transmission infrastructure development. Under the SEZ program alternative, the same policies and design features would be adopted, but development would be excluded from all BLM-administered lands except those located within the SEZs.

For DOE, the Draft PEIS analyzes a no action alternative, under which DOE would continue to conduct environmental reviews of DOE-funded solar projects on a case-by-case basis, and one action alternative, under which DOE would develop programmatic guidance to further integrate environmental considerations into its analysis and selection of solar projects that it will support.

The EPA Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft PEIS was published in the *Federal Register* on December 17, 2010. Comments on the Draft PEIS are due by March 17, 2011.

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Reader's Guide

The detailed analysis of the proposed solar energy zones (SEZs) in Nevada, provided in Sections 11.1 through 11.7, will be used to inform BLM decisions regarding the size, configuration, and/or management of these SEZs. These sections also include proposed mitigation requirements (termed "SEZ-specific design features"). Please note that the SEZ-specific summaries of Affected Environment use the descriptions of Affected Environment for the six-state study area presented in Chapter 4 of the PEIS as a basis. Also note that the SEZ-specific design features have been proposed with consideration of the general impact analyses for solar energy facilities presented in Chapter 5, and on the assumption that all programmatic design features presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, will be required for projects that will be located within the SEZs.

BLM will implement its SEZ-specific decisions through the BLM Record of Decision for the Final PEIS. Comments received during the review period for the Draft PEIS will inform BLM decisions.

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NOTATION

The following is a list of acronyms and abbreviations, chemical names, and units of measure used in this document. Some acronyms used only in tables may be defined only in those tables.

GENERAL ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AADT	annual average daily traffic
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
AC	alternating current
ACC	air-cooled condenser
ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
ADEQ	Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
ADOT	Arizona Department of Transportation
ADWR	Arizona Department of Water Resources
AERMOD	AMS/EPA Regulatory Model
AFC	Application for Certification
AGL	above ground level
AIRFA	American Indian Religious Freedom Act
AMA	active management area
AML	animal management level
ANHP	Arizona National Heritage Program
APE	area of potential effect
APLIC	Avian Power Line Interaction Committee
APP	Avian Protection Plan
AQCR	Air Quality Control Region
AQRV	air quality-related value
ARB	Air Resources Board
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
ARRTIS	Arizona Renewable Resource and Transmission Identification Subcommittee
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
ARZC	Arizona and California
ATSDR	Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
AUM	animal unit month
AVWS	Audio Visual Warning System
AWBA	Arizona Water Banking Authority
AWEA	American Wind Energy Association
AWRM	Active Water Resource Management
AZ DOT	Arizona Department of Transportation
AZDA	Arizona Department of Agriculture
AZGFD	Arizona Game and Fish Department
AZGS	Arizona Geological Survey

1	BA	biological assessment
2	BAP	base annual production
3	BEA	Bureau of Economic Analysis
4	BISON-M	Biota Information System of New Mexico
5	BLM	Bureau of Land Management
6	BMP	best management practice
7	BNSF	Burlington Northern Santa Fe
8	BO	biological opinion
9	BOR	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
10	BPA	Bonneville Power Administration
11	BRAC	Blue Ribbon Advisory Council on Climate Change
12	BSE	Beacon Solar Energy
13	BSEP	Beacon Solar Energy Project
14	BTS	Bureau of Transportation Statistics
15		
16	CAA	Clean Air Act
17	CAAQS	California Air Quality Standards
18	Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
19	C-AMA	California-Arizona Maneuver Area
20	CAP	Central Arizona Project
21	CARB	California Air Resources Board
22	CAReGAP	California Regional Gap Analysis Project
23	CASQA	California Stormwater Quality Association
24	CASTNET	Clean Air Status and Trends NETwork
25	CAWA	Colorado Agricultural Water Alliance
26	CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
27	CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
28	CDCA	California Desert Conservation Area
29	CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
30	CDOT	Colorado Department of Transportation
31	CDOW	Colorado Division of Wildlife
32	CDPHE	Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
33	CDWR	California Department of Water Resources
34	CEC	California Energy Commission
35	CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
36	CES	constant elasticity of substitution
37	CESA	California Endangered Species Act
38	CESF	Carrizo Energy Solar Farm
39	CFR	<i>Code of Federal Regulations</i>
40	CGE	computable general equilibrium
41	CIRA	Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere
42	CLFR	compact linear Fresnel collector
43	CPC	Center for Plant Conservation
44	CNDDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
45	CNEL	community noise equivalent level
46	CNHP	Colorado National Heritage Program

1	Colorado DWR	Colorado Department of Water Resources
2	CPUC	California Public Utilities Commission
3	CPV	concentrating photovoltaic
4	CRBSCF	Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum
5	CREZ	competitive renewable energy zone
6	CRSCP	Colorado River Salinity Control Program
7	CSA	Candidate Study Area
8	CSC	Coastal Services Center
9	CSFG	carbon-sequestration fossil generation
10	CSP	concentrating solar power
11	CSQA	California Stormwater Quality Association
12	CSRI	Cultural Systems Research, Incorporated
13	CTG	combustion turbine generator
14	CTPG	California Transmission Planning Group
15	CTSR	Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad
16	CUP	Conditional Use Permit
17	CVP	Central Valley Project
18	CWA	Clean Water Act
19	CWCB	Colorado Water Conservation Board
20	CWHR	California Wildlife Habitat Relationship System
21		
22	DC	direct current
23	DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
24	DNA	Determination of NEPA Adequacy
25	DNI	direct normal insulation
26	DNL	day-night average sound level
27	DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
28	DOE	U.S. Department of Energy
29	DOI	U.S. Department of the Interior
30	DOL	U.S. Department of Labor
31	DOT	U.S. Department of Transportation
32	DRECP	California Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan
33	DSM	demand side management
34	DTC/C-AMA	Desert Training Center/California–Arizona Maneuver Area
35	DWMA	Desert Wildlife Management Area
36		
37	EA	environmental assessment
38	ECAR	East Central Area Reliability Coordination Agreement
39	ECOS	Environmental Conservation Online System (USFWS)
40	EERE	Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (DOE)
41	Eg	band gap energy
42	EIA	Energy Information Administration
43	EIS	environmental impact statement
44	EISA	Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007
45	EMF	electromagnetic field
46	E.O.	Executive Order

1	EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
2	EPRI	Electric Power Research Institute
3	EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
4	ERCOT	Electric Reliability Council of Texas
5	ERO	Electric Reliability Organization
6	ERS	Economic Research Service
7	ESA	Endangered Species Act of 1973
8	ESRI	Environmental Systems Research Institute
9		
10	FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
11	FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
12	FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
13	FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
14	FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
15	FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
16	FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
17	FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
18	FR	<i>Federal Register</i>
19	FRCC	Florida Reliability Coordinating Council
20	FSA	Final Staff Assessment
21	FTE	full-time equivalent
22	FY	fiscal year
23		
24	G&TM	Generation and Transmission Modeling
25	GCRP	U.S. Global Climate Research Program
26	GDA	generation development area
27	GHG	greenhouse gas
28	GIS	geographic information system
29	GPS	global positioning system
30	GTM	Generation and Transmission Model
31	GUAC	Groundwater Users Advisory Council
32	GWP	global warming potential
33		
34	HA	herd area
35	HAP	hazardous air pollutant
36	HAZCOM	hazard communication
37	HCE	heat collection element
38	HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan
39	HMA	Herd Management Area
40	HMMH	Harris Miller Miller & Hanson, Inc.
41	HRSG	heat recovery steam generator
42	HSPD	Homeland Security Presidential Directive
43	HTF	heat transfer fluid
44	HVAC	heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning
45		
46		

1	I	Interstate
2	IARC	International Agency for Research on Cancer
3	IBA	important bird area
4	ICE	internal combustion engine
5	ICWMA	Imperial County Weed Management Area
6	IEC	International Electrochemical Commission
7	IFR	instrument flight rule
8	IID	Imperial Irrigation District
9	IM	Instruction Memorandum
10	IMPS	Iron Mountain Pumping Station
11	IMS	interim mitigation strategy
12	INA	Irrigation Non-Expansion Area
13	IOP	Interagency Operating Procedure
14	IOU	investor-owned utility
15	IPPC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
16	ISA	Independent Science Advisor; Instant Study Area
17	ISB	Intermontane Seismic Belt
18	ISCC	integrated solar combined cycle
19	ISDRA	Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area
20	ISEGS	Ivanpah Solar Energy Generating System
21	ITP	incidental take permit
22	IUCNNR	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
23	IUCNP	International Union for Conservation of Nature Pakistan
24		
25	KGA	known geothermal resources area
26	KML	keyhole markup language
27	KOP	key observation point
28	KSLA	known sodium leasing area
29		
30	LCC	Landscape Conservation Cooperative
31	LCOE	levelized cost of energy
32	L _{dn}	day-night average sound level
33	LDWMA	Low Desert Weed Management Area
34	L _{eq}	equivalent sound pressure level
35	LLA	limited land available
36	LLRW	low-level radioactive waste (waste classification)
37	LRG	Lower Rio Grande
38	LSA	lake and streambed alteration
39	LSE	load-serving entity
40	LTVA	long-term visitor area
41		
42	MAAC	Mid-Atlantic Area Council
43	MAIN	Mid-Atlantic Interconnected Network
44	MAPP	methyl acetylene propadiene stabilizer; Mid-Continent Area Power Pool
45	MCAS	Marine Corps Air Station
46	MCL	maximum contaminant level

1	MFP	Management Framework Plan
2	MIG	Minnesota IMPLAN Group
3	MLA	maximum land available
4	MOA	military operating area
5	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
6	MPDS	maximum potential development scenario
7	MRA	Multiple Resource Area
8	MRI	Midwest Research Institute
9	MRO	Midwest Reliability Organization
10	MSDS	Material Safety Data Sheet
11	MSL	mean sea level
12	MTR	military training route
13	MWA	Mojave Water Agency
14	MWD	Metropolitan Water District
15	MWMA	Mojave Weed Management Area
16		
17	NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
18	NADP	National Atmospheric Deposition Program
19	NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
20	NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission (California)
21	NAIC	North American Industrial Classification System
22	NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
23	NCA	National Conservation Area
24	NCCAC	Nevada Climate Change Advisory Committee
25	NCDC	National Climatic Data Center
26	NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
27	NDCNR	Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
28	NDEP	Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
29	NDOT	Nevada Department of Transportation
30	NDOW	Nevada Department of Wildlife
31	NDWP	Nevada Division of Water Planning
32	NDWR	Nevada Division of Water Resources
33	NEAP	Natural Events Action Plan
34	NEC	National Electric Code
35	NED	National Elevation Database
36	NEP	Natural Events Policy
37	NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
38	NERC	North American Electricity Reliability Corporation
39	NHA	National Heritage Area
40	NHNM	National Heritage New Mexico
41	NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
42	NID	National Inventory of Dams
43	NM DOT	New Mexico Department of Transportation
44	NLCS	National Landscape Conservation System
45	NMAC	<i>New Mexico Administrative Code</i>
46	NMBGMR	New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources

1	NMDGF	New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
2	NMED	New Mexico Environment Department
3	NMED-AQB	New Mexico Environment Department-Air Quality Board
4	NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
5	NMOSE	New Mexico Office of the State Engineer
6	NMSU	New Mexico State University
7	NNHP	Nevada Natural Heritage Program
8	NNL	National Natural Landmark
9	NNSA	National Nuclear Security Administration
10	NOA	Notice of Availability
11	NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
12	NOI	Notice of Intent
13	NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
14	NP	National Park
15	NPL	National Priorities List
16	NPS	National Park Service
17	NRA	National Recreation Area
18	NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
19	NREL	National Renewable Energy Laboratory
20	NRHP	<i>National Register of Historic Places</i>
21	NRS	<i>Nevada Revised Statutes</i>
22	NSC	National Safety Council
23	NSO	no surface occupancy
24	NSTC	National Science and Technology Council
25	NTS	Nevada Test Site
26	NTTR	Nevada Test and Training Range
27	NVCRS	Nevada Cultural Resources Inventory System
28	NV DOT	Nevada Department of Transportation
29	NWCC	National Wind Coordinating Committee
30	NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
31	NWPP	Northwest Power Pool
32	NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
33	NWSRS	National Scenic River System
34		
35	O&M	operation and maintenance
36	ODFW	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
37	OHV	off-highway vehicle
38	ONA	Outstanding Natural Area
39	ORC	organic Rankine cycle
40	OSE/ISC	Office of the State Engineer/Interstate Stream Commission
41	OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
42	OTA	Office of Technology Assessment
43		
44	PA	Programmatic Agreement
45	PAD	Preliminary Application Document
46	PAH	polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon

1	PAT	peer analysis tool
2	PCB	polychlorinated biphenyl
3	PCM	purchase change material
4	PCS	power conditioning system
5	PCU	power converting unit
6	PEIS	programmatic environmental impact statement
7	PFYC	potential fossil yield classification
8	PIER	Public Interest Energy Research
9	P.L.	Public Law
10	PLSS	Public Land Survey System
11	PM	particulate matter
12	PM _{2.5}	particulate matter with a mean aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 µm or less
13	PM ₁₀	particulate matter with a mean aerodynamic diameter of 10 µm or less
14	POD	plan of development
15	POU	publicly owned utility
16	PPA	Power Purchase Agreement
17	PPE	personal protective equipment
18	PSD	Prevention of Significant Deterioration
19	PURPA	Public Utility Regulatory Policy Act
20	PV	photovoltaic
21	PVID	Palo Verde Irrigation District
22	PWR	public water reserve
23		
24	QRA	qualified resource area
25		
26	R&I	relevance and importance
27	RCI	residential, commercial, and industrial (sector)
28	RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976
29	RD&D	research, development, and demonstration; research, development, and
30		deployment
31	RDBMS	Relational Database Management System
32	RDEP	Restoration Design Energy Project
33	REA	Rapid Ecoregional Assessment
34	REAT	Renewable Energy Action Team
35	REDI	Renewable Energy Development Infrastructure
36	ReEDS	Regional Energy Deployment System
37	REPG	Renewable Energy Policy Group
38	RETA	Renewable Energy Transmission Authority
39	RETAAC	Renewable Energy Transmission Access Advisory Committee
40	RETI	Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative
41	REZ	renewable energy zone
42	RF	radio frequency
43	RFC	Reliability First Corporation
44	RFDS	reasonably foreseeable development scenario
45	RGP	Rio Grande Project
46	RGWCD	Rio Grande Water Conservation District

1	RMP	Resource Management Plan
2	RMPA	Rocky Mountain Power Area
3	RMZ	Resource Management Zone
4	ROD	Record of Decision
5	ROI	region of influence
6	ROS	recreation opportunity spectrum
7	ROW	right-of-way
8	RPG	renewable portfolio goal
9	RPS	Renewable Portfolio Standard
10	RRC	Regional Reliability Council
11	RSEP	Rice Solar Energy Project
12	RSI	Renewable Systems Interconnection
13	RTTF	Renewable Transmission Task Force
14	RV	recreational vehicle
15		
16	SAAQS	State Ambient Air Quality Standards
17	SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
18	SCADA	supervisory control and data acquisition
19	SCE	Southern California Edison
20	SCRMA	Special Cultural Resource Management Area
21	SDRREG	San Diego Regional Renewable Energy Group
22	SDWA	Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974
23	SEGIS	Solar Energy Grid Integration System
24	SEGS	Solar Energy Generating System
25	SEI	Sustainable Energy Ireland
26	SEIA	Solar Energy Industrial Association
27	SES	Stirling Energy Systems
28	SETP	Solar Energy Technologies Program (DOE)
29	SEZ	solar energy zone
30	SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office(r)
31	SIP	State Implementation Plan
32	SLRG	San Luis & Rio Grande
33	SMA	Special Management Area
34	SMP	suggested management practice
35	SNWA	Southern Nevada Water Authority
36	SPP	Southwest Power Pool
37	SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
38	SSA	Socorro Seismic Anomaly
39	SSI	self-supplied industry
40	ST	solar thermal
41	STG	steam turbine generator
42	SUA	special use airspace
43	SWAT	Southwest Area Transmission
44	SWIP	Southwest Intertie Project
45	SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
46	SWReGAP	Southwest Regional Gap Analysis Project
47		

1	TAP	toxic air pollutant
2	TCC	Transmission Corridor Committee
3	TDS	total dissolved solids
4	TEPPC	Transmission Expansion Planning Policy Committee
5	TES	thermal energy storage
6	TSA	Transportation Security Administration
7	TSCA	Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976
8	TSDF	treatment, storage, and disposal facility
9	TSP	total suspended particulates
10		
11	UACD	Utah Association of Conservation Districts
12	UBWR	Utah Board of Water Resources
13	UDA	Utah Department of Agriculture
14	UDEQ	Utah Department of Environmental Quality
15	UDNR	Utah Department of Natural Resources
16	UDOT	Utah Department of Transportation
17	UDWQ	Utah Division of Water Quality
18	UDWR	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
19	UGS	Utah Geological Survey
20	UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
21	UNPS	Utah Native Plant Society
22	UP	Union Pacific
23	UREZ	Utah Renewable Energy Zone
24	USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
25	USC	<i>United States Code</i>
26	USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
27	USFS	U.S. Forest Service
28	USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
29	USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
30	Utah DWR	Utah Division of Water Rights
31	UTTR	Utah Test and Training Range
32	UWS	Underground Water Storage, Savings and Replenishment Act
33		
34	VACAR	Virginia-Carolinas Subregion
35	VCRS	Visual Contrast Rating System
36	VFR	visual flight rule
37	VOC	volatile organic compound
38	VRI	Visual Resource Inventory
39	VRM	Visual Resource Management
40		
41	WA	Wilderness Area
42	WAPA	Western Area Power Administration
43	WECC	Western Electricity Coordinating Council
44	WECC CAN	Western Electricity Coordinating Council – Canada
45	WEG	wind erodibility group
46	WGA	Western Governors’ Association

1	WGFD	Wyoming Game and Fish Department
2	WHA	wildlife habitat area
3	WHO	World Health Organization
4	WRAP	Water Resources Allocation Program; Western Regional Air Partnership
5	WRCC	Western Regional Climate Center
6	WREZ	Western Renewable Energy Zones
7	WRRRI	Water Resources Research Institute
8	WSA	Wilderness Study Area
9	WSC	wildlife species of special concern
10	WSMR	White Sands Missile Range
11	WSR	Wild and Scenic River
12	WSRA	Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968
13	WWII	World War II
14		
15	YPG	Yuma Proving Ground
16		
17	ZITA	zone identification and technical analysis
18	ZLD	zero liquid discharge
19		
20		

21 **CHEMICALS**

23	CH ₄	methane	NO ₂	nitrogen dioxide
24	CO	carbon monoxide	NO _x	nitrogen oxides
25	CO ₂	carbon dioxide		
26	CO _{2e}	carbon dioxide equivalent	O ₃	ozone
27				
28	H ₂ S	hydrogen sulfide	Pb	lead
29	Hg	mercury		
30			SF ₆	sulfur hexafluoride
31	N ₂ O	nitrous oxide	SO ₂	sulfur dioxide
32	NH ₃	ammonia	SO _x	sulfur oxides
33				

35 **UNITS OF MEASURE**

37	ac-ft	acre-foot (feet)	°F	degree(s) Fahrenheit
38	bhp	brake horsepower	ft	foot (feet)
39			ft ²	square foot (feet)
40	°C	degree(s) Celsius	ft ³	cubic foot (feet)
41	cf	cubic foot (feet)		
42	cfs	cubic foot (feet) per second	g	gram(s)
43	cm	centimeter(s)	gal	gallon(s)
44			GJ	gigajoule(s)
45	dB	decibel(s)	gpcd	gallon per capita per day
46	dBA	A-weighted decibel(s)	gpd	gallon(s) per day

1	gpm	gallon(s) per minute	Mgal	million gallons
2	GW	gigawatt(s)	mi	mile(s)
3	GWh	gigawatt hour(s)	mi ²	square mile(s)
4	GWh/yr	gigawatt hour(s) per year	min	minute(s)
5			mm	millimeter(s)
6	h	hour(s)	MMt	million metric ton(s)
7	ha	hectare(s)	MPa	megapascal(s)
8	Hz	hertz	mph	mile(s) per hour
9			MW	megawatt(s)
10	in.	inch(es)	MWe	megawatt(s) electric
11			MWh	megawatt-hour(s)
12	J	joule(s)		
13			ppm	part(s) per million
14	K	degree(s) Kelvin	psi	pound(s) per square inch
15	kcal	kilocalorie(s)	psia	pound(s) per square inch absolute
16	kg	kilogram(s)		
17	kHz	kilohertz	rpm	rotation(s) per minute
18	km	kilometer(s)		
19	km ²	square kilometer(s)	s	second(s)
20	kPa	kilopascal(s)	scf	standard cubic foot (feet)
21	kV	kilovolt(s)		
22	kVA	kilovolt-ampere(s)	TWh	terawatt hours
23	kW	kilowatt(s)		
24	kWh	kilowatt-hour(s)	VdB	vibration velocity decibel(s)
25	kWp	kilowatt peak		
26			W	watt(s)
27	L	liter(s)		
28	lb	pound(s)	yd ²	square yard(s)
29			yd ³	cubic yard(s)
30	m	meter(s)	yr	year(s)
31	m ²	square meter(s)		
32	m ³	cubic meter(s)	µg	microgram(s)
33	mg	milligram(s)	µm	micrometer(s)

ENGLISH/METRIC AND METRIC/ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS

The following table lists the appropriate equivalents for English and metric units.

Multiply	By	To Obtain
<i>English/Metric Equivalents</i>		
acres	0.004047	square kilometers (km ²)
acre-feet (ac-ft)	1.234	cubic meters (m ³)
cubic feet (ft ³)	0.02832	cubic meters (m ³)
cubic yards (yd ³)	0.7646	cubic meters (m ³)
degrees Fahrenheit (°F) -32	0.5555	degrees Celsius (°C)
feet (ft)	0.3048	meters (m)
gallons (gal)	3.785	liters (L)
gallons (gal)	0.003785	cubic meters (m ³)
inches (in.)	2.540	centimeters (cm)
miles (mi)	1.609	kilometers (km)
miles per hour (mph)	1.609	kilometers per hour (kph)
pounds (lb)	0.4536	kilograms (kg)
short tons (tons)	907.2	kilograms (kg)
short tons (tons)	0.9072	metric tons (t)
square feet (ft ²)	0.09290	square meters (m ²)
square yards (yd ²)	0.8361	square meters (m ²)
square miles (mi ²)	2.590	square kilometers (km ²)
yards (yd)	0.9144	meters (m)
<i>Metric/English Equivalents</i>		
centimeters (cm)	0.3937	inches (in.)
cubic meters (m ³)	0.00081	acre-feet (ac-ft)
cubic meters (m ³)	35.31	cubic feet (ft ³)
cubic meters (m ³)	1.308	cubic yards (yd ³)
cubic meters (m ³)	264.2	gallons (gal)
degrees Celsius (°C) +17.78	1.8	degrees Fahrenheit (°F)
hectares (ha)	2.471	acres
kilograms (kg)	2.205	pounds (lb)
kilograms (kg)	0.001102	short tons (tons)
kilometers (km)	0.6214	miles (mi)
kilometers per hour (kph)	0.6214	miles per hour (mph)
liters (L)	0.2642	gallons (gal)
meters (m)	3.281	feet (ft)
meters (m)	1.094	yards (yd)
metric tons (t)	1.102	short tons (tons)
square kilometers (km ²)	247.1	acres
square kilometers (km ²)	0.3861	square miles (mi ²)
square meters (m ²)	10.76	square feet (ft ²)
square meters (m ²)	1.196	square yards (yd ²)

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1 **11 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR**
2 **PROPOSED SOLAR ENERGY ZONES IN NEVADA**

3
4
5 **11.1 AMARGOSA VALLEY**

6
7
8 **11.1.1 Background and Summary of Impacts**

9
10
11 **11.1.1.1 General Information**

12
13 The proposed Amargosa Valley solar energy zone (SEZ) is located in Nye County in
14 southern Nevada near the California border (Figure 11.1.1.1-1). The SEZ has a total area of
15 31,625 acres (128 km²). In 2008, the county population was 44,175, while adjacent Clark County
16 to the southeast had a population of 1,879,093. The closest towns to the SEZ are Beatty, about
17 11 mi (18 km) north on U.S. 95, and Amargosa Valley, about 12 mi (20 km) southeast on
18 U.S. 95. Las Vegas is about 84 mi (135 km) southeast.

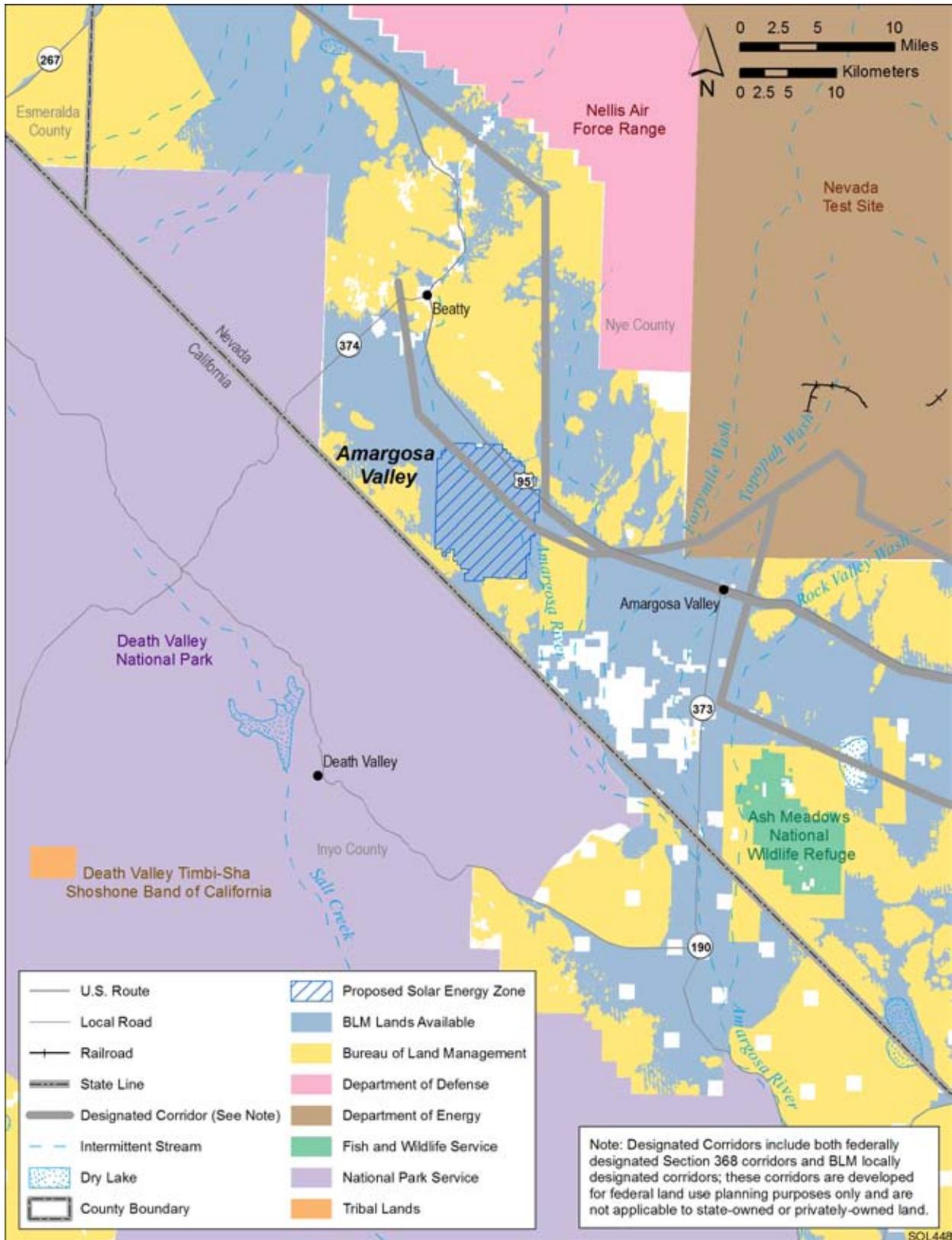
19
20 Access to the Amargosa Valley SEZ is via U.S. 95, which passes through the northeast
21 edge of the SEZ. Access to the interior of the SEZ is by dirt roads. The nearest railroad access
22 is approximately 100 mi (161 km) away, and one small airport near Beatty serves the area. The
23 Nevada Test Site (NTS) lies about 10 mi (16 km) east, and the Nellis Air Force Range lies a
24 similar distance northeast of the proposed SEZ.

25
26 A 138-kV transmission line runs along the northeast side of U.S. 95 and along the
27 northeast border of the SEZ. It is assumed that this transmission line could potentially provide
28 access from the SEZ to the transmission grid (see Section 11.1.1.1.2).

29
30 As of February 2010, there was one solar fast-track application within 50 mi (80 km) of
31 the SEZ (a fast-track application is a proposed project on Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
32 lands that is far along in the permitting process). In addition, there were 12 ROW applications
33 for solar projects and 3 wind site testing applications that would be located either within the
34 Amargosa Valley SEZ or within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ. These applications are discussed in
35 Section 11.1.22.2.1.

36
37 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is undeveloped and remote. The overall character of
38 the surrounding land is rural. The SEZ is located in the Amargosa Desert, which lies in a valley
39 between the Funeral Mountains to the southwest and Yucca Mountain to the northeast. The
40 valley extends to Amargosa Flat to the southeast, and the Bullfrog Hills border the northwest
41 end of the valley. The Amargosa River, an ephemeral river, drains the valley and passes across
42 the proposed SEZ from northwest to southeast. Land within the SEZ is undeveloped scrubland
43 characteristic of a semi-arid basin.

44
45 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ and other relevant information are shown in
46 Figure 11.1.1.1-1. The criteria used to identify the SEZ as an appropriate location for solar
47 energy development included proximity to existing transmission lines or designated corridors,
48 proximity to existing roads, a slope of generally less than 2%, and an area of more than



1

2 **FIGURE 11.1.1.1-1 Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ**

1 2,500 acres (10 km²). In addition, the area was identified as being relatively free of other types
2 of conflicts, such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) designated critical habitat for
3 threatened and endangered species, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), Special
4 Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs), and National Landscape Conservation System
5 (NLCS) lands (see Section 2.2.2.2 for the complete list of exclusions). Although these classes
6 of restricted lands were excluded from the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, other restrictions
7 might be appropriate. The analyses in the following sections address the affected environment
8 and potential impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy development in the proposed
9 SEZ for important environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic resources.

10
11 Subsequent to the study area scoping period, the boundaries of the proposed Amargosa
12 Valley SEZ were altered somewhat to facilitate the BLM's administration of the SEZ area.
13 Borders with irregularly shaped boundaries were adjusted to match the section boundaries of the
14 Public Lands Survey System (PLSS) (BLM and USFS 2010a). The revised SEZ is approximately
15 1,055 acres (4.3 km²) smaller than the original SEZ as published in June 2009.

16 17 18 **11.1.1.2 Development Assumptions for the Impact Analysis**

19
20 Maximum solar development of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is assumed to be
21 80% of the SEZ area over a period of 20 years, a maximum of 25,300 acres (102 km²). These
22 values are shown in Table 11.1.1.2-1, along with other development assumptions. Full
23 development of the Amargosa Valley SEZ would allow development of facilities with an
24 estimated total of 2,811 MW of electrical power capacity if power tower, dish engine, or
25 photovoltaic (PV) technologies were used, assuming 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land
26 required, and an estimated 5,060 MW of power if solar trough technologies were used,
27 assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.

28
29 Availability of transmission from SEZs to load centers will be an important consideration
30 for future development in SEZs. The nearest existing transmission line is a 138-kV line that runs
31 adjacent to the SEZ. It is possible that this existing line could be used to provide access from the
32 SEZ to the transmission grid, but the 138-kV capacity of that line would be inadequate for 2,811
33 to 5,060 MW of new capacity (note: a 500 kV line can accommodate approximately the load of
34 one 700 MW facility). At full build-out capacity, it is clear that substantial new transmission
35 and/or upgrades of existing transmission lines would be required to bring electricity from the
36 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ to load centers; however, at this time the location and size of
37 such new transmission facilities are unknown. Generic impacts of transmission and associated
38 infrastructure construction and of line upgrades for various resources are discussed in Chapter 5.
39 Project-specific analyses would need to identify the specific impacts of new transmission
40 construction and line upgrades for any projects proposed within the SEZ.

41
42 For the purposes of analysis in the PEIS, it was assumed that an existing 138-kV
43 transmission line which runs along the northeast border of the SEZ could provide initial access to
44 the transmission grid, and thus no additional acreage disturbance for transmission line access was
45 assessed. Access to an existing transmission line was assumed, without additional information on
46 whether this line would be available for connection of future solar facilities. If a connecting
47 transmission line were constructed in a different location outside of the SEZ in the future, site

TABLE 11.1.1.2-1 Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ—Assumed Development Acreages, Maximum Solar MW Output, Access Roads, and Transmission Line ROWs

Total Acreage and Assumed Developed Acreage (80% of Total)	Assumed Maximum SEZ Output for Various Solar Technologies	Distance to Nearest State, U.S., or Interstate Highway	Distance and Capacity of Nearest Existing Transmission Line	Assumed Area Transmission Line ROW and Road ROW	Distance to Nearest Designated Transmission Corridor ^e
31,625 acres and 25,300 acres ^a	2,811 MW ^b and 5,060 MW ^c	U.S. 95: 0 mi ^d	0 mi and 138 kV	0 acres and 0 acres	0 mi

- a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.
- b Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies, assuming 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required.
- c Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using solar trough technologies, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.
- d To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.
- e BLM-designated corridors are developed for federal land use planning purposes only and are not applicable to state-owned or privately owned land.

1
2
3 developers would need to determine the impacts from construction and operation of that line. In
4 addition, developers would need to determine the impacts of line upgrades if they were needed.
5

6 Existing road access to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ should be adequate to
7 support construction and operation of solar facilities, because U.S. 95 passes through the
8 northeast edge of the SEZ. Thus, no additional road construction outside of the SEZ was
9 assumed to be required to support solar development. While there are existing dirt/ranch roads
10 within the SEZ, additional internal road construction would likely be required to support solar
11 facility construction.
12
13

14 **11.1.1.3 Summary of Major Impacts and SEZ-Specific Design Features**
15

16 In this section, the impacts and SEZ-specific design features assessed in Sections 11.1.2
17 through 11.1.21 for the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ are summarized in tabular form.
18 Table 11.1.1.3-1 is a comprehensive list of the impacts discussed in these sections; the
19 reader may reference the applicable sections for detailed support of the impact assessment.
20 Section 11.1.22 discusses potential cumulative impacts from solar energy development in the
21 proposed SEZ.
22

23 Only those design features specific to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ are included in
24 Sections 11.1.2 through 11.1.21 and in the summary table. The detailed programmatic design
25 features for each resource area to be required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program, are presented
26 in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would also be required for
27 development in this and other SEZs.

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 Summary of Impacts of Solar Energy Development within the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ and SEZ-Specific Design Features^a

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Lands and Realty	<p>Full development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production (80% of the total area) could disturb up to 25,300 acres (102 km²) and would establish a large industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity. Since the SEZ is undeveloped and rural, utility-scale solar energy development would be a new and discordant land use to the area.</p> <p>Travel on existing dirt roads and in dry washes would be disrupted, resulting in the creation of isolated parcels of public land between the SEZ and the Death Valley NP boundary.</p>	None.
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	<p>Wilderness characteristics on 19,406 acres of designated wilderness within the Death Valley NP would be adversely affected. Night sky viewing from the NP could be impaired.</p> <p>Additional groundwater withdrawals could adversely affect portions of the Death Valley NP, the NWR, and three ACECs that are dependent on maintaining current water levels.</p>	<p>Design features for visual resources should be implemented to reduce impacts on wilderness characteristics.</p> <p>Water use for any solar energy development would be reviewed to ensure that impacts on Death Valley NP, the NWR, or ACECs would be neutral or positive.</p>
Rangeland Resources: Livestock Grazing	None.	None.
Rangeland Resources: Wild Horses and Burros	None.	None.

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Recreation	<p>Recreation use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ that would be developed for solar energy production. There would be impact on the existing OHV use in the area but the magnitude is not known. Portions of an approved desert racing and commercial tour route would be lost.</p> <p>Access to public land and NPS areas south and west of the SEZ would be lost or, at a minimum, made much more difficult by development of the SEZ.</p>	Relocation of the designated route used for desert racing and commercial tours should be considered at the time specific solar development proposals are analyzed.
Military and Civilian Aviation	<p>The military has expressed serious concern over solar energy facilities being constructed within the SEZ, and Nellis Air Force Base has indicated that any facilities of more than 50 ft (15 m) may be incompatible with low-level aircraft use of the MTR. Further, the NTTR has indicated that solar technologies requiring structures higher than 50 ft (15 m) above ground level may present unacceptable electromagnetic compatibility concerns for their test mission.</p> <p>The closest civilian municipal aviation facility is the Nye County Airport at Beatty, Nevada, about 7 mi (11 km) northwest of the SEZ but it is anticipated there would be no impact on the operation of the airport.</p>	None.
Geologic Setting and Soil Resources	Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase. Impacts would include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind, soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. These impacts may be impacting factors for other resources (e.g., air quality, water quality, and vegetation). A study may be required to evaluate the potential impacts of building a solar facility in close proximity to the Big Dune to the east of the site.	None.
Minerals (fluids, solids, and geothermal resources)	None.	None.

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Water Resources	<p>Ground-disturbance activities (affecting up to 28% of the total area in the peak construction year) could affect surface water quality due to surface runoff, sediment erosion, and contaminant spills.</p> <p>Construction activities may require up to 4,886 ac-ft (6.0 million m³) of water during peak construction year.</p> <p>Construction activities would generate as high as 222 ac-ft (273,800 m³) of sanitary wastewater.</p> <p>Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would use the following amounts of water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For parabolic trough facilities (5,060-MW capacity), 3,613 to 7,661 ac-ft/yr (4.5 million to 9.4 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; 25,371 to 75,971 ac-ft/yr (31.3 million to 93.7 million m³/yr) for wet-cooled systems. • For power tower facilities (2,811-MW capacity), 2,000 to 4,249 ac-ft/yr (2.5 million to 5.2 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; 14,088 to 42,199 ac-ft/yr (17.4 million to 52.1 million m³/yr) for wet-cooled systems. • For dish engine facilities (2,811-MW capacity), 1,438 ac-ft/yr (177,600 million m³/yr). • For PV facilities (2,811-MW capacity), 144 ac-ft/yr (176,400 m³/yr). <p>Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would generate up to 71 ac-ft/yr (87,600 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater and up to 1,437 ac-ft/yr (1.8 million m³/yr) of blowdown water.</p>	<p>Water resource analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be feasible; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures.</p> <p>Land disturbance activities should minimize impacts on natural drainage patterns near the Amargosa River to avoid erosion issues and clogging of groundwater recharge zones and affecting critical habitats.</p> <p>Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should be avoided within the 100-year floodplain of the Amargosa River (3,915 acres [16 km²]).</p> <p>Coordination with the NDWR should be conducted during the process of obtaining water rights in the over-allocated Amargosa Desert Basin in order to reduce basin-wide groundwater extractions and to comply with the State Engineer's Order 1197 (2008) addressing the priority water rights and protections pertaining to Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and Devils Hole.</p> <p>Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.</p> <p>Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in accordance with state standards.</p> <p>Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water quality standards in according to <i>Nevada Administrative Code</i>.</p>

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation ^b	<p>Up to 80% (25,300 acres [102.4 km²]) of the SEZ would be cleared of vegetation; re-establishment of shrub communities in temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult because of the arid conditions and might require extended periods of time.</p> <p>Noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in widespread habitat degradation.</p> <p>The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition.</p> <p>Groundwater discharges at a number of areas near the SEZ, such as the Amargosa River and the springs at Ash Meadows, and Death Valley National Park support wetland communities. Groundwater depletion related to solar development projects could result in subsequent reductions in groundwater discharges at the river and springs and could result in degradation of these habitats.</p> <p>Playa habitats, such as those on the SEZ and the large playas associated with the Amargosa River southeast of the SEZ; desert dry washes; desert chenopod scrub; greasewood flats communities; or other intermittently flooded areas downgradient from solar projects in the SEZ could be affected by ground-disturbing activities.</p>	<p>An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan addressing habitat restoration should be approved and implemented to increase the potential for successful restoration of affected habitats and minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species, such as Mediterranean grass. Invasive species control should focus on biological and mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use of herbicides.</p> <p>All playa, chenopod scrub, and desert dry wash habitats, shall be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated. A buffer area shall be maintained around playas and dry washes to reduce the potential for impacts on these habitats on or near the SEZ.</p> <p>Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on the Amargosa River, and dry wash, playa, riparian, marsh, and greasewood flat habitats, including downstream occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition to these habitats. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be determined through agency consultation. Appropriate measures to minimize impacts to Big Dunes habitats should be determined through agency consultation.</p>

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation ^b (Cont.)		Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect impacts on groundwater-dependent habitats in the Amargosa Desert groundwater basin, or in other hydraulically connected basins, such as springs at Ash Meadows and Death Valley National Park, other locations of groundwater discharge, such as the Amargosa River, or other groundwater-dependent habitats in the vicinity of the SEZ, such as mesquite bosque communities.
Wildlife: Amphibians and Reptiles ^b	Direct impacts on representative amphibian and reptile species from SEZ development would be moderate (i.e., loss of >1.0 to ≤10% of potentially suitable habitats) for the glossy snake and sidewinder and small (i.e., loss of ≤1% of potentially suitable habitats) for all other representative amphibian and reptile species. With implementation of design features, indirect impacts would be expected to be negligible for all amphibian and reptile species.	The Amargosa River should be avoided.
Wildlife: Birds ^b	<p>Direct impacts on the black-tailed gnatcatcher would be moderate (i.e., loss of >1.0 to ≤10% of potentially suitable habitats). Impacts on all other representative bird species from SEZ development would be small (i.e., loss of ≤1% of potentially suitable habitats).</p> <p>Other impacts on birds could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., buildings and fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment.</p>	<p>The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds will be followed.</p> <p>Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.</p>
		The Amargosa River should be avoided.

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Wildlife: Mammals ^b	Direct impacts on Botta's pocket gopher and western harvest mouse would be moderate (i.e., loss of >1.0 to ≤10% of potentially suitable habitats). Direct impacts on all other representative mammal species would be small (i.e., loss of ≤1% of potentially suitable habitats).	<p>The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free movement of mammals, particularly big game species.</p> <p>The Amargosa River should be avoided.</p>
Aquatic Biota ^b	<p>No permanent water bodies, wetlands, or streams are present within the boundaries of the Amargosa Valley SEZ or the area of indirect effects; the nearest permanent surface water is about 20 mi (32 km) from the SEZ boundary. Therefore, no direct impacts to permanent surface water features are expected.</p> <p>Ground disturbance for solar energy development within the SEZ could result in airborne and waterborne sediment deposition into the Amargosa River. However, the Amargosa River is typically dry near the SEZ and aquatic habitat is not likely to be present.</p> <p>Water quantity in aquatic habitats could also be affected if significant amounts of surface water or groundwater were utilized for solar energy facilities.</p>	<p>Appropriate engineering controls should be implemented to minimize the amount of contaminants and sediment entering the Amargosa River.</p> <p>If groundwater is used, withdrawal should not affect aquatic habitat in the Amargosa River ACEC and the Ash Meadows NWR.</p>
Special Status Species ^b	<p>Potentially suitable habitat for 52 special status species occurs in the affected area of the Amargosa Valley SEZ. For most of these special status species, less than 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region occurs in the area of direct effects. For several species, up to 2% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region occurs in the area of direct effects.</p> <p>There are 25 groundwater dependent species that occur outside of the areas of direct and indirect effects. Potential impacts on these species could range from small to large depending on the solar energy technology deployed, the scale of development within the SEZ, and the cumulative rate of groundwater withdrawals.</p>	<p>Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the area of direct effects to determine the presence and abundance of special status species. Disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing impacts to occupied habitats is not possible for some species, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy for special status species that used one or more of these options to</p>

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Special Status Species ^b (Cont.)		<p>offset the impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the appropriate federal and state agencies.</p> <p>Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash or riparian habitat on the SEZ could reduce or eliminate impacts on 3 special status species.</p> <p>Avoidance or minimization of groundwater withdrawals to serve solar energy development on the SEZ could reduce or eliminate impacts on 25 special status species. In particular, impacts on aquatic and riparian habitat associated with the Ash Meadows system should be avoided.</p> <p>Consultation with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted to address the potential for impacts on the following species currently listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA: Amargosa niterwort, Ash Meadows blazingstar, Ash Meadows gumplant, Ash Meadows ivesia, Ash Meadows sunray, spring-loving centauray, Ash Meadows naucorid, Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish, Ash Meadows speckled dace, Devils Hole pupfish, Warm Springs Amargosa pupfish, and desert tortoise. Consultation would identify an appropriate survey protocol, avoidance and minimization measures, and, if appropriate, reasonable and prudent alternatives, reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions for incidental take statements.</p>

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Special Status Species ^b (Cont.)		<p>Coordination with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted to address the potential for impacts on species under review for listing under the ESA that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ: Amargosa tryonia, Ash Meadows pebblesnail, crystal springsnail, distal gland springsnail, elongate gland springsnail, Fairbanks springsnail, median gland springsnail, minute tryonia, Oasis Valley springsnail, Point of Rocks tryonia, sporting goods tryonia, Amargosa naucorid, Oasis Valley speckled dace, and Amargosa toad. Coordination would identify an appropriate survey protocol, and mitigation requirements, which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or compensation.</p> <p>Coordination with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted to address potential indirect impacts (e.g. site runoff and erosion) and the effectiveness of design features for three special status species that are endemic to the Big Dune system.</p> <p>Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the affected area should be mitigated. This can be accomplished by identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.</p>

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Air Quality and Climate	<p><i>Construction:</i> Predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ and 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentrations could exceed the standard levels at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding areas during the construction of solar facilities. These concentrations would decrease quickly with distance. Modeling indicates that emissions from construction activities are anticipated to be slightly higher than Class I PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearest federal Class I area (John Muir WA in California, about 78 mi [126 km] west of the SEZ). Construction emissions from the engine exhaust from heavy equipment and vehicles could cause impacts on air-quality-related values (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at the nearby federal Class I areas; however, such emissions would be temporary and any impacts would be short term.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> Positive impact due to avoided emission of air pollutants from combustion-related power generation: 13 to 23% of total emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ from electric power systems in the state of Nevada avoided (up to 12,508 tons/yr SO₂, 10,728 tons/yr NO_x, 0.071 ton/yr Hg, and 6,885,000 tons/yr CO₂).</p>	None.
Visual Resources	<p>Solar development could produce large visual impacts on the SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed due to major modification of the character of the existing landscape; potential additional impacts could occur from construction and operation of transmission lines and access roads within the transmission line and road viewsheds.</p> <p>The SEZ is located within 1 mi (1.6 km) of the CDCA. Because of the open views of the SEZ and elevated viewpoints, weak to strong visual contrasts could be observed by CDCA visitors.</p> <p>The SEZ is located within 1 mi (1.6 km) of Death Valley NP and WA. Because of the open views of the SEZ and elevated viewpoints, weak to strong visual contrasts could be observed by NP and WA visitors.</p>	<p>Within the SEZ, in areas visible from and within 5 mi (8 km) of Death Valley NP, visual impacts associated with solar energy project operation should be consistent with VRM Class II management objectives, as experienced from KOPs (to be determined by BLM) within the NP.</p>

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Visual Resources (Cont.)	<p>The SEZ is located 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from Big Dune SRMA. Because of the open views of the SEZ and elevated viewpoints, strong visual contrasts could be observed by SRMA visitors.</p> <p>Approximately 31 mi (50 km) of U.S. 95 is within the SEZ viewshed, and 4.8 mi (7.7 km) of U.S. 95 is within the SEZ. Strong visual contrasts could be observed within the SEZ by travelers on U.S. 95.</p> <p>Approximately 9 mi (14 km) of State Route 374 is within the SEZ viewshed. Weak to moderate visual contrasts could be observed by travelers on that state road.</p> <p>Residents, workers, and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) as they travel area roads, including U.S. 95 and State Routes 374 and 373.</p>	
Acoustic Environment	<p><i>Construction.</i> For construction activities occurring near the southern SEZ boundary, estimated noise level at the nearest residence would be about 25 dBA, well below a typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. In addition, an estimated 40 dBA L_{dn} at this residence is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p><i>Operations.</i> For a facility located near the southern SEZ boundary, the predicted noise level from a parabolic trough or power tower facility would be about 29 dBA at the nearest residence located about 4.5 mi (7.2 km) from the SEZ boundary, which is much lower than typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. If TES were not used (i.e., if the operation were limited to daytime, 12 hours only), the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA (as L_{dn} for residential areas) would not be exceeded outside of the proposed SEZ boundary. In the case of 6-hour</p>	None.

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Acoustic Environment (Cont.)	<p>TES, the estimated sound level at the nearest residence would be 39 dBA, which is higher than typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. The day-night average noise level is estimated to be about 43 dBA L_{dn}, which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p>If the SEZ was developed with dish engine facilities, the estimated noise level at the nearest residence about 4.5 mi (7.2 km) from the SEZ boundary would be about 41 dBA, which is comparable to typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. If assuming 12-hour daytime operation, the estimated 42 dBA L_{dn} at this residence would be well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p>	
Paleontological Resources	Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely to occur in the proposed SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of the SEZ is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted.	None.
Cultural Resources	<p>Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur during site preparation and construction activities in the proposed SEZ. At least four sites have been recorded within the proposed SEZ, and at least one of them is considered potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP.</p> <p>A cultural resource survey of the entire area of potential effect, including consultation with affected Native American Tribes, would need to be conducted to identify archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and traditional cultural properties, and an evaluation would need to follow to determine whether any are eligible for listing in the NRHP as historic properties.</p>	SEZ-specific design features would be determined through consultation with the Nevada SHPO and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations.

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Native American Concerns	<p>While no comments specific to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ have been received from Native American tribes to date, the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley has commented on the scope of the PEIS. They recommend that the BLM preserve undisturbed lands intact, and that lands that have been recently disturbed, such as abandoned farm fields, rail yards, mines, and air fields be given primary consideration for solar energy development. Potential impacts on existing water supplies were also a primary concern. During energy development projects in adjacent areas, the Southern Paiute have expressed concern over adverse effects on a wide range of resources.</p> <p>As consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it is possible that Native American concerns will be expressed over potential visual and other effects of solar energy development within the SEZ on specific resources and culturally important landscapes.</p>	The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features would be determined during government-to-government consultation with the affected Tribes.
Socioeconomics	<p><i>Construction:</i> 662 to 8,765 total jobs; \$40.9 million to \$541.7 million income in ROI.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> 73 to 1,655 annual total jobs; \$2.5 million to \$62.7 million annual income in the ROI.</p>	None.
Environmental Justice	Using the aggregate numbers for the 50-mi (80-km) area around the proposed SEZ, there are no minority or low-income populations, as defined in CEQ guidelines; however, on an individual census block group basis, minority and low-income populations are present. Therefore, potential impacts (although likely small) could be incurred by low-income and minority populations as a result of the construction and operation of solar facilities.	None.

TABLE 11.1.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Transportation	<p>The primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day, with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum). The volume of traffic on U.S. 95 would represent an increase in traffic of about two-thirds in the area of the SEZ.</p> <p>Should up to three large projects with approximately 1,000 daily workers each be under development simultaneously, an additional 6,000 vehicle trips per day could be added to U.S. 95 in the vicinity of the SEZ, which is about a 200% increase in the current average daily traffic level on most segments of U.S. 95 near the SEZ.</p>	None.

Abbreviations: ACEC = Area of Critical Environmental Concern; BLM = Bureau of Land Management; CDCA = California Desert Conservation Area; CEQ = Council on Environmental Quality; CO₂ = carbon dioxide; dBA = A-weighted decibel; DoD = U.S. Department of Defense; EPA = U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; ESA = Endangered Species Act; FAA = Federal Aviation Administration; Hg = mercury; KOP = key observation point; L_{dn} = day-night average sound level; MTR = military training route; NDOW = Nevada Department of Wildlife; NDWR = Nevada Division of Water Resources; NNHP = Nevada Natural Heritage Program; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; NP = National Park; NPS = National Park Service; NRHP = *National Register of Historic Places*; NTTR = Nevada Test and Training Range; NWR = National Wildlife Refuge; OHV = off-highway vehicle; PEIS = programmatic environmental impact statement; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 μm or less; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 μm or less; PSD = prevention of significant deterioration; ROI = region of influence; SEZ = solar energy zone; SHPO = State Historic Preservation Office; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; SRMA = Special Recreation Management Area; TES = thermal energy storage; USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; VRM = visual resource management; WA = Wilderness Area.

- ^a The detailed programmatic design features for each resource area to be required under BLM's Solar Energy Program are presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would be required for development in the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ.
- ^b The scientific names of all plants, wildlife, aquatic biota, and special status species are provided in Sections 11.1.10 through 11.1.12.

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1 **11.1.2 Lands and Realty**

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4 **11.1.2.1 Affected Environment**

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6 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is a large, well-blocked area of public land
7 ownership with only one 80-acre (0.3-km²) parcel of private land along the northern border of
8 the area; this parcel is a low-level radioactive waste disposal facility that is located close to
9 U.S. 95. About 2,200 acres (9 km²), or about 7%, of the SEZ are separated from the majority of
10 the 31,625-acre (128-km²) SEZ by U.S. 95. The overall character of the land around the SEZ is
11 rural and undeveloped. Numerous well-developed and normally dry washes pass through the
12 area in a southeasterly direction. The major drainage of the SEZ is the Amargosa River, which
13 also is normally dry. Access to the Amargosa Valley SEZ from U.S. 95 is very good, and there
14 are several dirt roads that penetrate the area. The dry washes are used for vehicle travel, although
15 they would be unacceptable for permanent travel. There is an abandoned railroad grade that
16 passes through the area in a northwest–southeast orientation. A 138-kV transmission line passes
17 through the area on a route paralleling U.S. 95 about 0.5 mi (1 km) southwest of the highway,
18 and a Section 368 (of the Energy Policy Act of 2005) designated energy corridor borders the
19 northeastern corner of the SEZ.
20

21 U.S. 95 and the 138-kV transmission line are the only rights-of way (ROWs) currently
22 located within the SEZ. As of February 2010, there was one application for a solar energy
23 facility ROW on the SEZ. An additional seven solar applications, one of which is a fast-track
24 project, have been filed on BLM-administered lands within 15 mi (24 km) of the SEZ, and
25 additional applications have been filed farther to the southeast near U.S. 95.
26

27
28 **11.1.2.2 Impacts**

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30
31 ***11.1.2.2.1 Construction and Operations***

32
33 Full development of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ would disturb up to
34 25,300 acres (102 km²) (Table 11.1.1.2-1). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar
35 energy production would establish a large industrial area that would exclude many existing
36 and potential uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity. Since the SEZ is undeveloped and rural,
37 utility-scale solar energy development would be a new and discordant land use to the area.
38

39 Existing ROW authorizations on the SEZ would not be affected by solar energy
40 development since they are prior existing rights. Should the proposed SEZ be identified as an
41 SEZ in the Record of Decision (ROD) for this PEIS, the BLM would still have discretion to
42 authorize additional ROWs in the area until solar energy development was authorized, and then
43 future ROWs would be subject to the rights granted for solar energy development. Because the
44 area currently has so few ROWs, it is not anticipated that approval of solar energy development
45 would have a significant impact on ROW availability in the area.
46

1 The combination of how the SEZ is sited on the land, topographic features, and the
2 blockage of travel on existing dirt roads and in washes wherever solar development occurs
3 within the SEZ would result in the creation of isolated parcels of public land between the SEZ
4 and the National Park Service (NPS) boundary southwest of the SEZ
5
6

7 ***11.1.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***
8

9 An existing 138kV transmission line passes through the Amargosa Valley SEZ; this line
10 might be available to transport the power produced in this SEZ. Establishing a connection the
11 existing line would not involve the construction of a new transmission line outside of the SEZ. If
12 a connecting transmission line were constructed in a different location outside of the SEZ in the
13 future, site developers would need to determine the impacts from construction and operation of
14 that line. In addition, developers would need to determine the impacts of line upgrades if they
15 were needed. The presence of the Section 368 corridor that borders the northeast side of the SEZ
16 would provide a possible route for new transmission when and if new transmission construction
17 is required.
18

19 Road access to the area is readily available from U.S. 95 which passes through the SEZ,
20 so no new road access to the area would be required. Roads and transmission lines would be
21 constructed within the SEZ as part of development of the area.
22
23

24 **11.1.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
25

26 No SEZ-specific design features are required. Implementing the programmatic design
27 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
28 Program, would provide mitigation for impacts to the lands and realty program.
29
30

1 **11.1.3 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**

2
3
4 **11.1.3.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 There are nine specially designated areas near the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ
7 that could be affected by solar energy development. The first is Death Valley National Park
8 (NP), which includes a large amount of designated wilderness and is located about 1 mi (1.6 km)
9 southwest of the SEZ. The National Park is located primarily in California, but one portion of the
10 park is in Nevada, north of the SEZ. The unique Devil’s Hole unit, which is also in Nevada, is
11 located within the boundaries of the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The
12 developed trail system in Death Valley NP is limited, but backcountry hiking routes access the
13 ridge looking down on the proposed SEZ. Primary access to the National Park is via developed
14 roads that do not pass through the SEZ; there is informal access to the boundary of the National
15 Park through the SEZ along old roads/tracks and desert washes.

16
17 The proposed SEZ is not located within the California Desert Conservation Area
18 (CDCA), but development within the SEZ would be visible from portions of the CDCA.

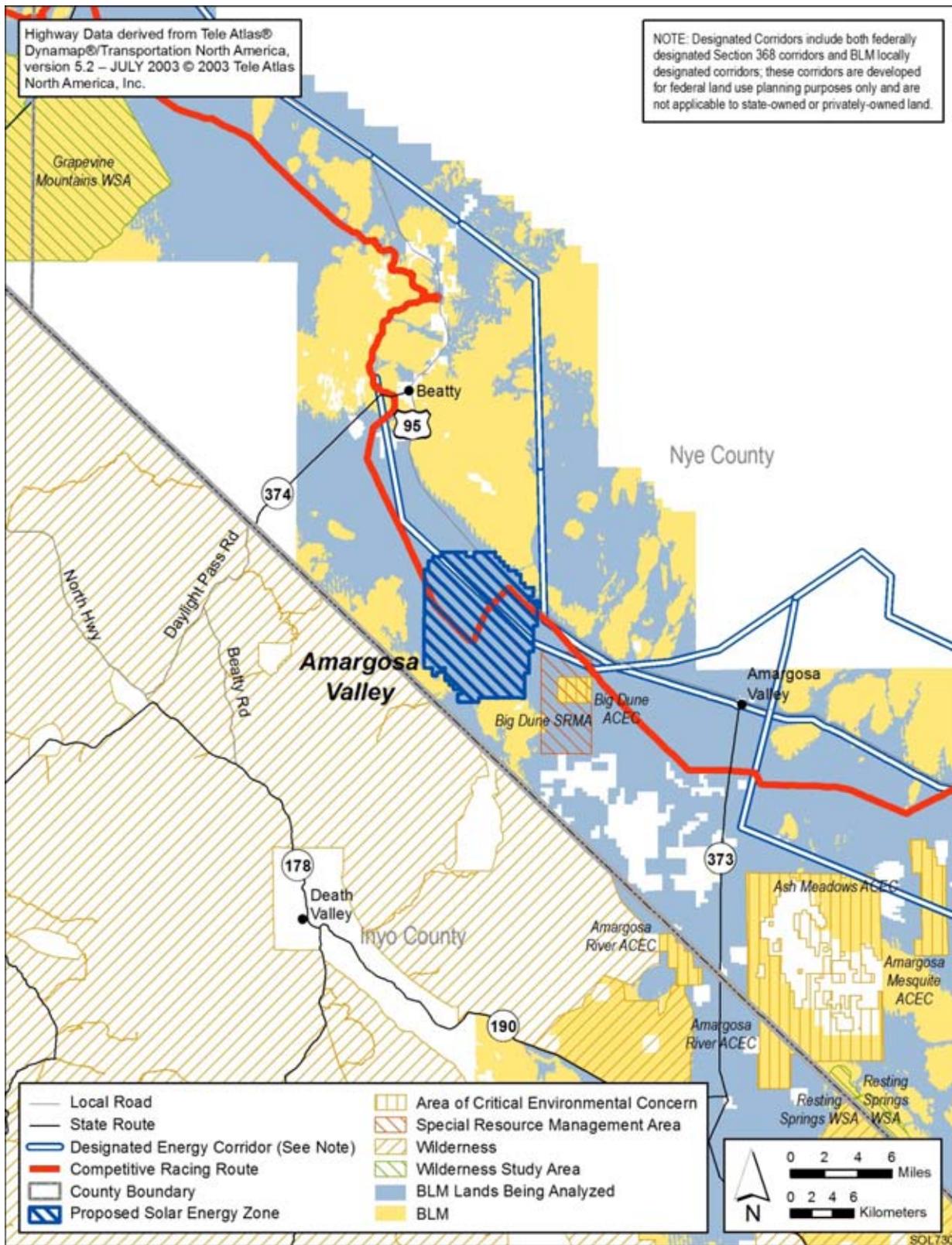
19
20 The BLM-administered Funeral Mountains Wilderness is located about 18 mi (29 km)
21 south–southeast of the SEZ, also in California and adjacent to Death Valley NP.

22
23 The Ash Meadows NWR is a unique 23,000 acre (97 m²) refuge located about 20 mi
24 (32 km) southeast of the SEZ and 90 mi (145 km) northwest of Las Vegas. The refuge includes
25 numerous spring-fed wetlands and is home to 24 species of plants and animals found nowhere
26 else in the world. Four fish and one plant found in the NWR are listed as endangered.

27
28 The Amargosa Mesquite Trees ACEC is about 25 mi (40 km) southeast of the SEZ, and
29 the Ash Meadows ACEC, which partially surrounds the NWR, is about 17 mi (27 km) southeast
30 of the SEZ. Both of these areas are administered by the BLM. These ACECs were established to
31 protect neo-tropical bird habitat and special status species habitat, respectively.

32
33 The BLM-administered Amargosa River ACEC is composed of three separate units and
34 was designated to protect riparian and wetland communities, scenic resources, and threatened
35 and endangered species. The unit nearest to the SEZ is located about 16 mi (26 km) south–
36 southeast of the SEZ in California.

37
38 The Big Dune ACEC, which is administered by the BLM, was designated to protect
39 special species habitat and is included within the boundaries of the Big Dune SRMA. The ACEC
40 and SRMA are located about 2 mi (3.2 km) east of the SEZ. The SRMA was established to
41 provide a management framework primarily for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use of the open
42 dune area included within the SRMA. The SRMA/ACEC has areas designated for OHV use as
43 open, limited to designated routes, and closed to OHV use. (See Figure 11.1.3.1-1 for the
44 locations of these areas.) The Big Dune SRMA receives about 31,330 recreation visitor days of
45 use per year (Sanchez 2010). This use is primarily motorized, although other uses or uses
46



1

2

FIGURE 11.1.3.1-1 Specially Designated Areas in the Vicinity of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

3

1 associated with motorized access include camping, hiking, small game hunting, and
2 photography. These uses also occur throughout the SEZ although at a much lower level.
3

4 The status of water supplies for portions of Death Valley NP, the NWR, and the Ash
5 Meadows and Amargosa River ACECs has been a major concern and a focus of litigation. The
6 Nevada State Engineer has declared the basin as over-appropriated and has stated that new water
7 right applications in the Amargosa Desert Basin would be denied, as would any application
8 seeking to change an existing point of diversion closer to Devils Hole (defined by a 25-mi
9 [40-km] radius around Devils Hole). Numerous applications for new groundwater withdrawals
10 have since been denied. For details on this issue see Section 11.1.9.1.3.
11

12 No lands with wilderness characteristics outside of designated wilderness areas or WSAs
13 have been identified within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ.
14

15 **11.1.3.2 Impacts**

16 ***11.1.3.2.1 Construction and Operations***

17
18
19
20
21 The primary potential impacts to specially designated areas generally are from visual
22 impacts of solar energy development that could affect scenic, recreational, or wilderness
23 characteristics of the areas. This visual impact is difficult to determine and would vary by solar
24 technology employed, the specific area being affected, and the perception of individuals viewing
25 the development. Assessment of the visual impact of solar energy projects must be done on a site
26 specific and technology specific basis to accurately identify impacts.
27

28 In general, the closer a viewer is to solar development, the greater the impact on an
29 individual's perception. From a visual analysis perspective, the most sensitive viewing distances
30 generally are from 0-5 mi (8 km). The viewing height above a solar energy development area,
31 the size of the solar development area, and the purpose for which a person is visiting an area is
32 also important. Individuals seeking a wilderness or scenic experience within these areas could be
33 expected to be more adversely affected than those simply traveling along a highway with another
34 destination in mind.
35

36 The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could potentially cause large though
37 temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities. The visual contrast levels
38 projected for sensitive visual resource areas that were used to assess potential impacts on
39 specially designated areas do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these
40 effects would be incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be
41 conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects.
42

43 The following areas could potentially be affected by development of the SEZ:
44
45
46

1 **Death Valley National Park and Designated Wilderness**
2

3 Visual impacts are a major concern for Death Valley NP, and based on viewshed
4 analysis¹ solar development within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ would be visible from
5 about 3% of the National Park that is within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ. Most of the National
6 Park is designated as wilderness, and about 2.2% of the designated WA is located within the
7 viewshed of the SEZ. Table 11.1.3.2-1 provides summary information from the viewshed
8 analysis broken down into three distance zones. The data presented in the table are based on
9 the assumption that power tower solar energy technology would be used, which, because of
10 the potential height of these facilities, could be visible from the largest amount of land of
11 the technologies being considered in the PEIS. The potential visual impact of solar energy
12 development in terms of the amount of acreage affected within the National Park and WA
13 within the viewshed of the SEZ, could be less for solar energy facilities with lower structures.
14 Assessment of the visual impact must be conducted on a site-specific and technology-specific
15 basis to accurately identify impacts
16

17 For the Amargosa Valley SEZ, the low-lying location of the SEZ in relation to portions
18 of Death Valley NP would highlight the industrial-like nature of solar energy development in the
19 SEZ. In addition, because of the generally undeveloped nature of the SEZ and surrounding area,
20 impacts on wilderness characteristics may be more significant than in areas with a less pristine
21 nature.
22

23 While the degree of impact is difficult to assess, scenic and wilderness characteristics
24 within the portions of the National Park that are within 5 mi (8 km) of the Amargosa Valley
25 SEZ, would be adversely affected by solar development within the SEZ. The areas primarily
26 affected would be located either in the Amargosa Range along the California–Nevada border or
27 at lower elevations in the Nevada portion of the National Park. Most views of the SEZ in these
28 areas would be from elevated viewpoints, and strong visual contrasts would be likely to occur
29 where clear views of the SEZ exist, even beyond 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ. As shown in
30 Table 11.1.3.2-1, large areas of Death Valley NP and wilderness would not have views of
31 development in the SEZ. Visibility of the SEZ from within Death Valley NP does extend beyond
32 25 mi (40 km), but because of topographic screening and the long distance to the SEZ from these
33 areas, expected visual contrasts would be very small and impacts would not be significant.
34

35 Because of the lack of development in the immediate region of the SEZ, the night sky is
36 very dark and night sky viewing is a popular activity in the National Park. The NPS has
37 identified concerns that solar facility development in the region adjacent to the National Park
38 could adversely affect the quality of the night sky environment. The amount of light that could
39 emanate from solar facilities is not known, but it could adversely affect Death Valley NP and
40 the adjoining wilderness.
41

42 Potential impacts of water withdrawals adjacent to or near the National Park have
43 historically been a concern. Additional or relocated groundwater withdrawals have the potential
44 to adversely affect resources within the National Park, especially the Devil’s Hole unit; however,

¹ See Section 11.1.14 for a thorough description of the viewshed analysis.

1 the existing State Engineer’s order currently has a protective effect that would not allow adverse
 2 impacts associated with water withdrawals to occur. Section 11.1.9 provides a more detailed
 3 analysis of the water resource issues.
 4
 5

6 **California Desert Conservation Area**
 7

8 The viewshed within 25 mi (40 km) of the Amargosa SEZ includes about
 9 94,485 acres (382 km²) or about 0.2% of the CDCA (Table 11.1.3.2-1). Full development
 10 of the SEZ would adversely affect wilderness characteristics in Death Valley NP, which
 11 is within the CDCA, but impacts on the CDCA would be minimal.
 12
 13

TABLE 11.1.3.2-1 Potentially Affected Specially Designated Areas within a 25-mi (40-km) Viewshed of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ^a

Feature Type	Feature Name (Total Acreage/Highway Length) ^{b,c}	Feature Area or Highway Length		
		Visible within 5 mi	Visible between	
			5 mi and 15 mi	15 mi and 25 mi
National Park	Death Valley (3,397,062 acres)	19,406 acres (0.6)	53,176 acres (2)	32,937 acres (1)
WAs	Death Valley (3,074,256 acres)	18,638 acres (0.6)	30,371 acres (1)	18,935 acres (0.6)
	Funeral Mountains (27,567 acres)	0	0	3,876 (14)
Wildlife Refuges	Ash Meadows (24,193 acres)	0	0	11,731 acres (49)
SRMA	Big Dune	– ^d	–	–
ACECs designated for outstanding scenic values	Amargosa River (27,797 acres)	0	0	2,919 acres (11)
National Conservation Areas	California Desert (25,919,319 acres)	19,699 acres (0.08)	34,626 acres (0.1)	40,160 acres (0.2)

^a Assuming power tower technology with a height of 650 ft (198.1 m)

^b To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047. To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

^c Total acres included in the feature in parentheses.

^d A dash indicates no GIS data available.

14
 15

1 **Funeral Mountains Wilderness Area**
2

3 The Funeral Mountains Wilderness Area (WA) is located about 18 mi (29 km) distant
4 from the SEZ and development within the SEZ would be visible from about 14% of the WA.
5 Because of the long distance, development in the SEZ would not be an important component of
6 the viewshed of the WA and would not be expected to have a significant impact on wilderness
7 characteristics of the area.
8
9

10 **Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge**
11

12 Although portions of the Ash Meadows NWR would have some visibility of solar
13 development within the SEZ, since the area is about 20 mi (32 km) from the SEZ, visual impacts
14 associated with solar development within the SEZ would not be significant.
15

16 The major concern for the refuge is maintenance of adequate groundwater levels to
17 support existing vegetation and the unique species that are present. While the NWR is down
18 gradient from the SEZ, current water withdrawal restrictions may prevent adverse effects from
19 solar energy development of the SEZ that could be associated with lowering the groundwater
20 level at the refuge. However, concerns still exist regarding the long-term future of withdrawals
21 and the relocation of existing withdrawals.
22
23

24 **Ash Meadows, Amargosa Mesquite Trees, and Amargosa River ACECs**
25

26 As is the case with the Ash Meadows NWR, the major concern for all three of the BLM-
27 administered ACECs is maintaining adequate groundwater levels to support existing vegetation
28 and the species that are present. Although the areas are down gradient from the SEZ, current
29 water withdrawal restrictions by the Nevada State Engineer may prevent adverse effects from
30 solar energy development of the SEZ that could be associated with lowering of groundwater
31 levels. However, concerns still exist regarding the long-term future of withdrawals and the
32 relocation of existing withdrawals and the potential to adversely affect these ACECs.
33

34 The Amargosa River ACEC consists of three separate units, and two of these are within
35 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ; the nearest is about 16 mi (26 km) from the SEZ and the second is
36 about 23 mi (37 km) distant. All of the units are located along the Amargosa River. The third
37 unit, which is slightly more than 50 mi (80 km) from the SEZ, surrounds a large portion of the
38 Amargosa Wild and Scenic River (WSR). It is not anticipated that there would be any effects
39 on water flow of the WSR in this unit. Additionally, although there is a scenic component to this
40 ACEC, because of the relatively long distance from the SEZ and the lower elevation of the
41 ACEC units to the SEZ, no visual impact on the scenic values of the ACEC is anticipated.
42
43

44 **Big Dune ACEC and SRMA**
45

46 With the proposed SEZ located within 2 mi (3 km) of the ACEC/SRMA, solar energy
47 development would be readily visible from these areas. Because of the nature of the activities in

1 these areas, it is difficult to assess the potential impact of solar development. Since the use of the
2 area is oriented to motorized recreation, it is possible that current users would not be adversely
3 affected by solar development. Alternatively, industrial-type development would create a
4 dramatically different landscape in which to recreate and may cause the displacement of users
5 to other areas. The impact on these areas is anticipated to be minor.

6 7 8 **11.1.3.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**

9
10 Since there is an existing 138-kV transmission line within the SEZ, no additional
11 construction of transmission facilities was assessed. Should additional transmission lines be
12 required outside of the SEZ, there may be additional impacts to specially designated areas.
13 See Section 11.1.1.2 for the development assumptions underlying this analysis.

14
15 Road access to the area is readily available from U.S. 95 which passes through the SEZ,
16 so no new road access to the area would be required. Roads and transmission lines would be
17 constructed within the SEZ as part of development of the area.

18 19 20 **11.1.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

21
22 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
23 as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would provide some mitigation for some
24 identified impacts. The exceptions would be: adverse impacts to wilderness characteristics in
25 Death Valley NP and potential impacts on night sky viewing.

26
27 Proposed design features specific to the Amargosa Valley SEZ include the following:

- 28
29 • Design features for visual resources presented in Section 11.1.14 should be
30 implemented to reduce impacts on wilderness characteristics. However, even
31 with the adoption of design features for visual resources, it is anticipated that
32 adverse impacts on wilderness characteristics would not be completely
33 mitigated.
 - 34
35 • Water use for any solar energy development would be reviewed to ensure that
36 impacts on Death Valley NP, Ash Meadows NWR, or the ACECs would be
37 neutral or positive.
- 38

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1 **11.1.4 Rangeland Resources**

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4 **11.1.4.1 Livestock Grazing**

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6
7 **11.1.4.1.1 Affected Environment**

8
9 The area within and around the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is not included within a
10 grazing allotment and is not used for grazing (Johnson 2010).
11

12
13 **11.1.4.1.2 Impacts**

14
15
16 **Construction and Operations**

17
18 There would be no impact since the area is currently not being used for grazing.
19
20

21 **Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**

22
23 There would be no impact on livestock grazing.
24
25

26 **11.1.4.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

27
28 No SEZ specific design features are required.
29
30

31 **11.1.4.2 Wild Horses and Burros**

32
33
34 **11.1.4.2.1 Affected Environment**

35
36 Section 4.4.2 discusses wild horses (*Equus caballus*) and burros (*E. asinus*) that occur
37 within the six-state study area. Nearly one hundred wild horse and burro herd management
38 areas (HMAs) occur within Nevada (BLM 2009e). Also, several HMAs in California are
39 located near the California–Nevada border. One HMA (Bullfrog) and portions of seven other
40 HMAs occur within the 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region for the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ
41 (Figure 11.1.4.2-1). The closest HMA is the Bullfrog HMA, located 5.3 mi (8.5 km) north of the
42 SEZ. The Bullfrog HMA contains an estimated population of 101 burros (BLM 2010a).
43

44 In addition to the HMAs managed by the BLM, the USFS has wild horse and burro
45 territories in Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah, and is the lead management
46 agency that administers 37 of the territories (Giffen 2009; USFS 2007). The closest territory to



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FIGURE 11.1.4.2-1 Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas and Territories within the Analysis Area for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (Sources: BLM 2009e; USFS 2007).

1 the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is the Johnnie Territory located within a portion of
2 the Toiyabe National Forest. It is located more than 35 mi (56 km) southeast of the SEZ
3 (Figure 11.1.4.2-1). Information on the management of this territory for wild horses and
4 burros was not available.

7 ***11.1.4.2.2 Impacts***

8
9 Because the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is 5.3 mi (8.5 km) or more from any wild
10 horse and burro HMA managed by the BLM and more than 35 mi (56 km) from any wild horse
11 and burro territory administered by the USFS, solar energy development within the SEZ would
12 not directly affect wild horses and burros that are managed by these agencies.

15 ***11.1.4.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

16
17 No SEZ-specific design features for solar development within the proposed Amargosa
18 Valley SEZ would be necessary to protect or minimize impacts on wild horses and burros.

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1 **11.1.5 Recreation**

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4 **11.1.5.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The site of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is relatively flat with numerous roads,
7 trails, and desert washes. Although there are no recreation use figures for the SEZ, OHV use is
8 likely the major recreational activity in the area; there are also camping, photography, and small
9 game hunting opportunities. Use in the area tends to be seasonal, with most use in the cooler
10 months, but the area is used year-round. The area in and around the proposed SEZ has been
11 designated as “Limited to existing roads, trails, and dry washes,” indicating that these features
12 are open to vehicle travel (BLM 2010b). Much of the use in the area is likely spillover from the
13 Big Dune SRMA that is located just east of the SEZ, since the SRMA is the focus for OHV use
14 in the area. There is a designated route that accommodates desert racing and commercial tours
15 that passes through the SEZ. Twelve race events have been held in the past seven years using this
16 designated route as a portion of the race course (Sanchez 2010). The SEZ provides a good view
17 of the Amargosa Mountains that are located in Death Valley NP southwest of the SEZ. A site
18 visit in September 2009 showed signs of recent vehicle and OHV use in the SEZ.
19

20
21 **11.1.5.2 Impacts**

22
23
24 ***11.1.5.2.1 Construction and Operations***

25
26 Recreational use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ that would be developed
27 for solar energy production. Since the SEZ sits astride numerous trails and desert washes,
28 construction of solar energy facilities would cause impact to the existing OHV use. The
29 magnitude of this impact is unknown. Whether recreational visitors would continue to use any
30 remaining undeveloped portions of the SEZ is unknown. Access to public land and NPS areas
31 south and west of the SEZ would be lost or would be made much more difficult by development
32 of the SEZ, unless access routes were identified and retained. If solar development obstructs the
33 route currently permitted for desert racing and for commercial use, those uses would be lost
34 unless it would be possible to relocate the route outside the development area.
35

36 Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes
37 designated open and available for public use. If open routes within a proposed project area
38 were identified during project-specific analyses, they would be re-designated as closed
39 (see Section 5.5.1 for more details on how routes coinciding with proposed solar facilities
40 would be treated).
41

42
43 ***11.1.5.2.1 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***

44
45 Since there is an existing 138-kV transmission line within the SEZ, no additional
46 construction of transmission facilities was assessed. Should additional transmission lines be

1 required outside of the SEZ, there may be additional impacts to specially designated areas. See
2 Section 11.1.1.2 for the development assumptions underlying this analysis.

3
4 Road access to the area is readily available from U.S. 95 which passes through the SEZ,
5 so no new road access to the area would be required. Roads and transmission lines would be
6 constructed within the SEZ as part of development of the area.

7 8 9 **11.1.5.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

10
11 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
12 as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would provide some mitigation for some
13 impacts. The exceptions may be that recreational use of the area developed for solar energy
14 production would be lost and would not be mitigatable, and possible loss of the desert racing and
15 commercial tour route.

16
17 Proposed design features specific to the Amargosa Valley SEZ include the following:

- 18
19 • Relocation of the designated route used for desert racing and commercial
20 tours should be considered at the time specific solar development proposals
21 are analyzed.

1 **11.1.6 Military and Civilian Aviation**

2
3
4 **11.1.6.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is completely covered by several military training
7 routes (MTRs) that include both visual and instrument routes. One of the training routes has an
8 operating elevation from ground level up to 9,400 ft (2,865 m) mean sea level (MSL). The
9 closest military installations to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ are the Nevada Test and
10 Training Range (NTTR), which is located just to the north and east of the SEZ, and Nellis Air
11 Force Base, which is located about 90 mi (145 km) southeast of the area.

12
13 The closest civilian municipal aviation facility is the Nye County Airport at Beatty,
14 Nevada, located about 7 mi (11 km) northwest of the SEZ.

15
16
17 **11.1.6.2 Impacts**

18
19 The military has expressed serious concern over solar energy facilities being constructed
20 within the SEZ, and Nellis Air Force Base has indicated that any facilities higher than 50 ft
21 (15 m) may be incompatible with low-level aircraft use of the MTR. Further, the NTTR has
22 indicated that solar technologies requiring structures higher than 50 ft (15 m) above ground level
23 may present unacceptable electromagnetic compatibility concerns for its test mission. The NTTR
24 maintains that a pristine testing environment is required for the unique national security missions
25 conducted on the NTTR. The potential electromagnetic interference impacts from solar facilities
26 on testing activities at the NTTR, coupled with potential training route obstructions created by
27 taller structures, make it likely that solar facilities exceeding 50 ft (15 m) would significantly
28 affect military operations.

29
30 Because the Beatty Airport is located 7 mi (11 km) from the SEZ it is not anticipated
31 there would be any impacts on airport operation. It is assumed that through the application of
32 standard Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) clearance and marking requirements, there
33 would be no impact on airport operations.

34
35
36 **11.1.6.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

37
38 No SEZ specific design features are required. The programmatic design features
39 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, would require early coordination with the DoD
40 to identify and mitigate, if possible, potential impacts on the use of MTRs.

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1 **11.1.7 Geologic Setting and Soil Resources**

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4 **11.1.7.1 Affected Environment**

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7 **11.1.7.1.1 Geologic Setting**

8
9
10 **Regional Setting**

11
12 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located in the Amargosa Desert region of the
13 Basin and Range physiographic province in southern Nevada. The desert lies between the
14 Funeral Mountains to the southwest and Yucca Mountain to the northeast and extends to
15 Amargosa Flat to the southeast. The Bullfrog Hills border the northwest end of the valley
16 (Figure 11.1.7.1-1).

17
18 The Amargosa Desert is one of the largest intermontane basins in Nevada. Basin fill
19 consists of Quaternary and Tertiary river channel, alluvial fan, and playa deposits of variable
20 thickness and induration. Sediments are thickest in the southern part of the basin near Amargosa
21 Flat and Ash Meadows, ranging from 3,500 to 5,000 ft (1,070 to 1,520 m). In the north area,
22 sediments are up to 3,500 ft (1,070 m) thick, but thin to about 1,400 ft (430 m) near Lathrop
23 Wells. Tertiary conglomerates of alluvial fan sediments are moderately indurated. Tertiary
24 rhyolite flows and tuffs interbedded with basin-fill sediments occur at depth and in outcrops
25 along the edge of the basin. Several thousand feet of rhyolite tuffs are exposed in the Bullfrog
26 Hills. Paleozoic carbonate rocks are known to occur in the southeastern end of the basin beneath
27 Amargosa Flat and may be limited in extent. The surrounding mountains are composed primarily
28 of thick sequences of Paleozoic limestone and Paleozoic and Precambrian metamorphic rocks
29 (quartzite) (Burbey 1997; Kilroy 1991; Winograd and Thordarson 1975). A geologic map of the
30 Amargosa Desert region is shown in Figure 11.1.7.1-2.

31
32 The structural geology of the southern Basin and Range province is complex, and
33 interpretations vary among investigators. The Amargosa Desert lies within the Walker Lane Belt,
34 a 61-mi (100-km) wide seismic region that extends northwestward from the Las Vegas area
35 along the Nevada–California state border and into northern California (Figure 11.1.7.1-1).
36 Strike-slip faulting predominates within the Walker Lane Belt and to the southwest; however, in
37 the area to the northeast, extensional faulting predominates. An important structural feature in
38 the region is the Amargosa Desert rift zone (trough), which extends from north of Crater Flat and
39 Yucca Mountain southward to the Ash Meadows area in the southern part of the Amargosa
40 Desert (and possibly on into Death Valley). The northern part of the rift zone is marked by
41 north–northeast striking normal faults and a series of caldera complexes (Brocher et al. 1993;
42 Byers et al. 1989; Hamilton 1988; McKee 1997; Stuckless and O’Leary 2007; Wright 1989).
43 Burbey (1997) attributes the presence of springs in Ash Meadows to movement along high-angle
44 normal faults intersecting the southern part of the Amargosa Desert that “juxtapose” the highly
45



FIGURE 11.1.7.1-1 Physiographic Features of the Amargosa Desert Region

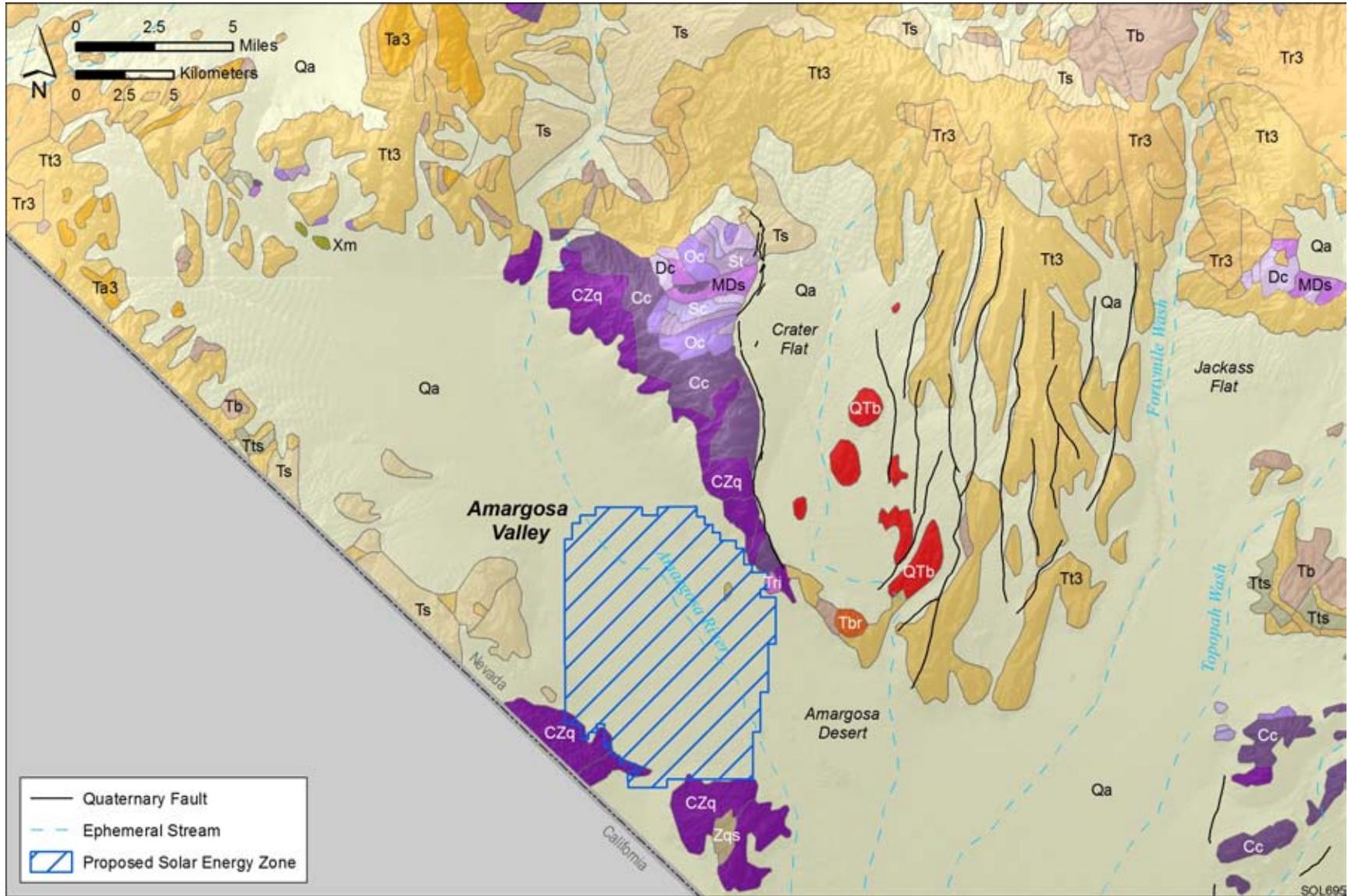
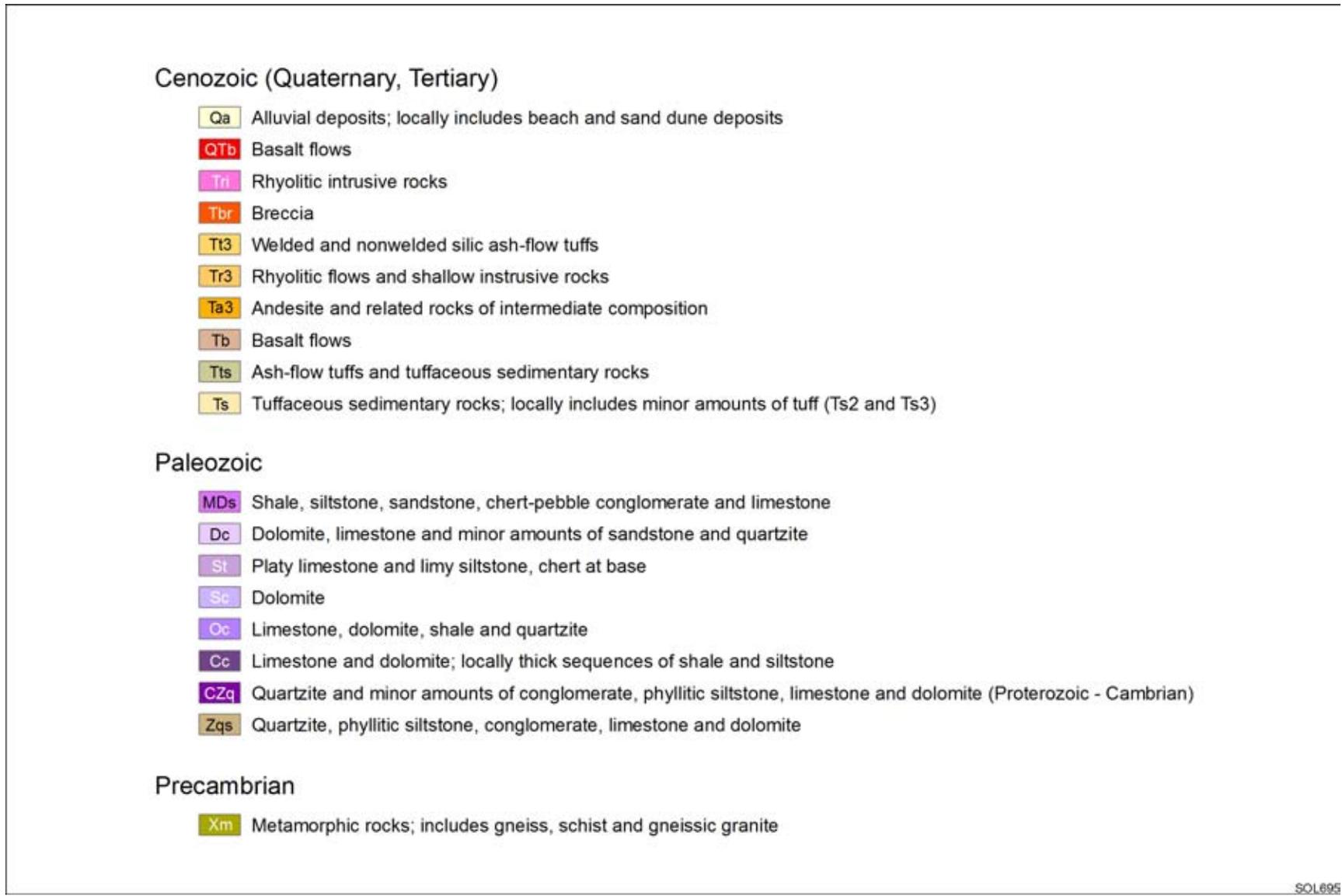


FIGURE 11.1.7.1-2 Geologic Map of the Amargosa Desert Region (Sources: Ludington et al. 2007; Stewart and Carlson 1978)



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FIGURE 11.1.7.1-2 (Cont.)

1 permeable Paleozoic carbonate rock aquifer against low-permeability Tertiary basin-fill
2 sediments.

3 4 5 **Topography**

6
7 The Amargosa Valley is a northwest-trending basin, about 50 mi (80 km) long and 20 mi
8 (30 km) wide (Stuckless and O’Leary 2007). Elevations along the valley axis range from about
9 3,610 ft (1,100 m) near the northwest end and along the valley sides to about 2,330 ft (710 m)
10 at the southwestern end of the valley within Amargosa Flat (Figure 11.1.7.1-1). Gently to
11 moderately sloping alluvial fan deposits occur along the mountain fronts. The valley is drained
12 by the Amargosa River, an ephemeral river that is essentially dry except along short segments
13 fed by springs that flow seasonally (Stonestrom et al. 2007; USGS 2001) The river originates in
14 the mountains to the north and flows to the southeast, draining into the southern part of Death
15 Valley. The valley floor is broad and flat; topographic features include sand dunes and volcanic
16 cones (in Crater Flat). There is an alkali playa in Amargosa Flat.

17
18 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located in the northwest part of Amargosa Valley,
19 immediately south of Bare Mountain and southwest of Crater Flat (Figure 11.1.7.1-3). Its terrain
20 slopes gently to the southeast. Elevations range from about 2,800 ft (850 m) in the northwest
21 corner to 2,520 ft (770 m) in the southeast corner. A large sand dune known as the Big Dune lies
22 immediately to the east of the southeast corner of the SEZ, on the opposite side of the Amargosa
23 River; the dune is protected as a BLM ACEC because it provides habitat for sensitive beetle
24 species (Section 11.1.10).

25 26 27 **Geologic Hazards**

28
29 The types of geologic hazards that could potentially affect solar project sites and their
30 mitigation are discussed in Sections 5.7.3 and 5.7.4. The following sections provide a
31 preliminary assessment of these hazards at the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Although
32 extensive geologic studies have been conducted in the region as part of the hazards assessment
33 for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository, solar project developers may need to conduct a
34 geotechnical investigation to identify and assess geologic hazards locally to better identify
35 facility design criteria and site-specific mitigation measures to minimize their risk.

36
37
38 **Seismicity.** The Amargosa Desert is located within the Walker Lane Belt, a northwest-
39 trending seismic region along the Nevada–California border that accommodates (right-lateral
40 shear) strain from movement between the Pacific and North American plates. The proposed
41 Amargosa Valley SEZ lies just to the west–southwest of two extensional (normal) fault systems:
42 the Bare Mountain fault, which runs along the base of Bare Mountain, separating it from the
43 down-faulted Crater Flat basin to the east, and the eastern and western fault groups of the Yucca
44 Mountain fault system, located within Crater Flat and on the southern flank of the southwestern
45 Nevada volcanic field (Figure 11.1.7.1-4).

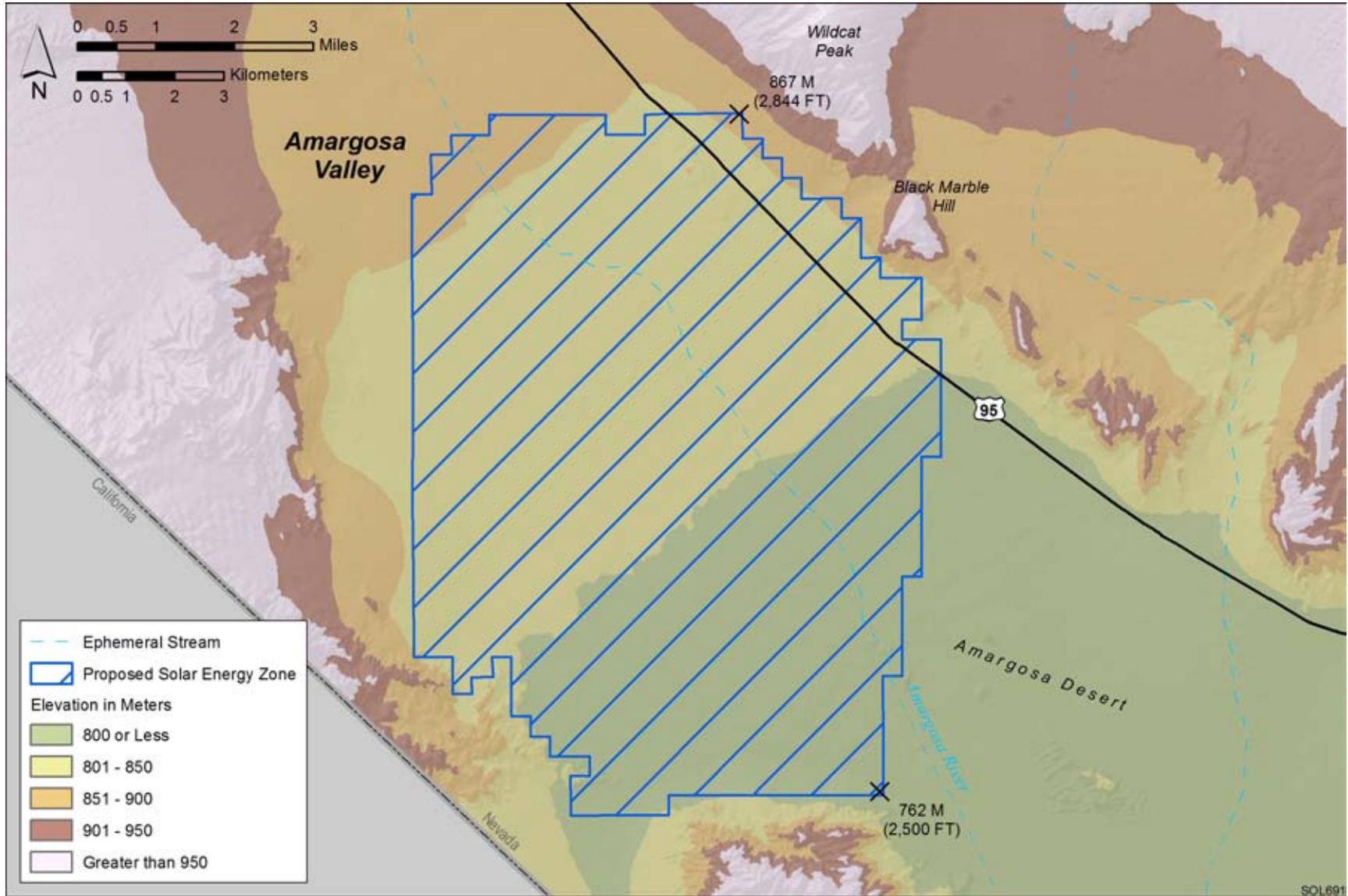


FIGURE 11.1.7.1-3 General Terrain of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

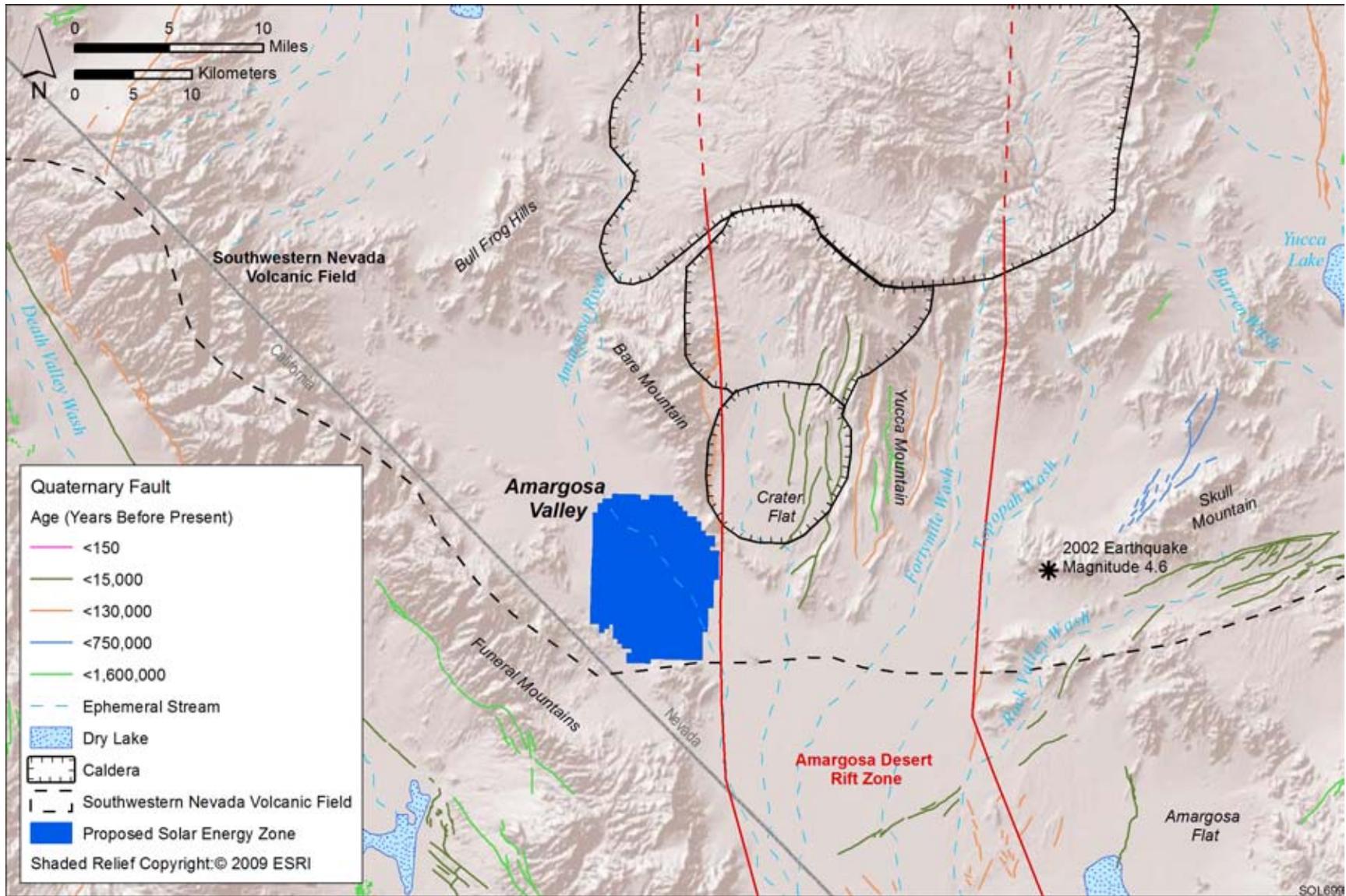


FIGURE 11.1.7.1-4 Quaternary Faults in Amargosa Valley Region (USGS and NBMG 2010; USGS 2010c)

1 The Bare Mountain fault extends 12 mi (20 km) along the eastern front of Bare
2 Mountain, from Joshua Hollow south to the southeastern end of Black Marble Hill; its surface
3 trace is mostly concealed by alluvial deposits but is generally thought to be defined by the sharp
4 change in slope at the contact between mountain bedrock and valley alluvium. Displacement of
5 about 10 ft (3 m) has been reported along a few scarps. Displaced sediments are predominantly
6 Late Pleistocene (10,000 to 130,000 years old) or older, although displacements as recent as
7 9,000 years ago have been reported by Reheis (1988) near Wildcat Peak. Slip rates along the
8 fault have been estimated to be less than 0.008 in./yr (0.2 mm/yr). Recurrence intervals are on
9 the order of many tens of thousands of years (Anderson 1998a).

10
11 The western group of Yucca Mountain faults is located in the central part of Crater Flat,
12 about 7 mi (11 km) east of the Amargosa Valley SEZ (Figure 11.1.7.1-4). This north-striking
13 group of extensional (normal) faults displaces Quaternary deposits and Tertiary (Miocene)
14 volcanic rocks. The faults tend to branch and splay to the north. Quaternary displacement within
15 this group of faults is discontinuous and considered minor. Where there are scarps in Quaternary
16 alluvium, they are typically less than 10 ft (3 m) high. Offsets of Holocene and Pleistocene age
17 deposits place the most recent activity at less than 15,000 years ago. Slip rates along these faults
18 are low, ranging from 0.001 to 0.03 mm/yr. Recurrence intervals are estimated at 17,000 to
19 40,000 years (Anderson 1998b).

20
21 Faults in the Yucca Mountain eastern group run along the eastern and western sides of
22 Yucca Mountain (Figure 11.1.7.1-4). This group also consists of north-striking extensional
23 (normal) faults with down displacement mainly to the west. The latest movement along the
24 west-side faults was more recent than that along the east-side faults. Offsets of Pleistocene
25 age deposits place the most recent activity at less than 130,000 years ago, with more recent
26 movement along some individual faults (as recent as 5,000 to 10,000 years ago). Slip rates along
27 these have been estimated to be less than 0.008 in./yr (0.2 mm/yr). Recurrence intervals are
28 estimated at 17,000 to 40,000 years (Anderson 1998c).

29
30 From June 1, 2000 to May 31, 2010, 101 earthquakes were recorded within a 61-mi
31 (100-km) radius of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. The largest earthquake during that
32 period occurred on June 14, 2002. It was located 20 mi (34 km) due east of the SEZ near
33 Little Skull Mountain and was assigned a moment magnitude (M_w^2) of 4.6 (Figure 11.1.7.1-4).
34 An earthquake with a moment magnitude of 5.6 also occurred in this area on June 29, 1992
35 (USGS 2010c).

36
37
38 **Liquefaction.** The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ lies within an area where the peak
39 horizontal acceleration with a 10% probability of exceedance in 50 years is between 0.15 and
40 0.20 g. Shaking associated with this level of acceleration is generally perceived as strong to
41

² Moment magnitude (M_w) is used for earthquakes with magnitudes greater than 3.5 and is based on the moment of the earthquake, equal to the rigidity of the earth times the average amount of slip on the fault times the amount of fault area that slipped (USGS 2010e).

1 very strong; however, potential damage to structures is light to moderate (USGS 2008). Given
2 the deep water table (generally over 300 ft (90 m) deep; USGS [2010b]) and the low to moderate
3 intensity of ground shaking estimated for Amargosa Valley, the potential for liquefaction in
4 valley sediments is likely to be low.
5
6

7 ***Volcanic Hazards.*** The Amargosa Desert is situated within the southwestern Nevada
8 volcanic field, which consists of volcanic rocks (tuffs and lavas) of the Timber Mountain-Oasis
9 Valley caldera complex and Silent Canyon and Black Mountain calderas. The area has been
10 studied extensively because of its proximity to the Nevada Test Site and Yucca Mountain
11 repository. Two types of fields are present in the region: (1) large-volume, long-lived fields with
12 a range of basalt types associated with more silicic volcanic rocks produced by melting of the
13 lower crust, and (2) small-volume fields formed by scattered basaltic scoria cones during brief
14 cycles of activity, called rift basalts because of their association with extensional structural
15 features. The basalts of the region typically belong to the second group; examples include the
16 basalts of Silent Canyon and Sleeping Butte (Byers et al. 1989; Crowe et al. 1983).
17

18 The oldest basalts in the region were erupted during the waning stages of silicic
19 volcanism in the southern Great Basin in the Late Miocene and are associated with silicic
20 volcanic centers like Dome Mountain (the first group). Rates of basaltic volcanic activity in the
21 region have been relatively constant but generally low. Basaltic eruptions closest to the proposed
22 Amargosa Valley SEZ occurred from 1.7 million to 700,000 years ago, creating the cinder cones
23 within Crater Flat (Stuckless and O'Leary 2007). The most recent episode of basaltic eruptions
24 occurred at the Lathrop Wells Cone complex about 80,000 years ago (about 8 mi [13 km] east of
25 the SEZ) (Stuckless and O'Leary 2007). There has been no silicic volcanism in the region in the
26 past 5 million years. Current silicic volcanic activity occurs entirely along the margins of the
27 Great Basin (Crowe et al. 1983).
28

29 Crowe et al. (1983) determined that the annual probability of a volcanic event for the
30 region is very low (3.3×10^{-10} to 4.7×10^{-8}), similar to the probability of 1.7×10^{-8} calculated
31 for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository (Cline et al. 2005). The volcanic risk in the region is
32 associated only with basaltic eruptions; the risk of silicic volcanism is negligible. Perry (2002)
33 cites geologic data that could indicate an increase in the recurrence rate (and thus the probability
34 of disruption). These data include hypothesized episodes of an anomalously high strain rate, the
35 hypothesized presence of a regional mantle hot spot, and new aeromagnetic data that suggest that
36 previously unrecognized volcanoes may be buried in the alluvial-filled basins in the region.
37
38

39 ***Slope Stability and Land Subsidence.*** The incidence of rock falls and slope failures can
40 be moderate to high along mountain fronts and can present a hazard to facilities on the relatively
41 flat terrain of valley floors like the Amargosa Valley, if they are located at the base of steep
42 slopes. The risk of rock falls and slope failures decreases toward the flat valley center.
43

44 Katzenstein and Bell (2005) report ground subsidence of (2.5 to 3.5 cm) related to
45 groundwater withdrawal in the region, which has caused compaction in the underlying aquifer.
46 Subsidence is not generally a serious hazard if it occurs as a broad depression over a large region

1 (except in flood-prone areas sensitive to changes in elevation). The major problems associated
2 with subsidence occur as a result of differential vertical subsidence, horizontal displacement, and
3 earth fissures (Burbey 2002).
4
5

6 **Other Hazards.** Other potential hazards at the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ include
7 those associated with soil compaction (restricted infiltration and increased runoff), expanding
8 clay soils (destabilization of structures), and hydro-compactable or collapsible soil (settlement).
9 Disturbance of soil crusts and desert pavement on soil surfaces may increase the likelihood of
10 soil erosion by wind.
11

12 Alluvial fan surfaces, such as those found in the Amargosa Valley, can be the sites
13 of damaging high-velocity flash floods and debris flows during periods of intense and prolonged
14 rainfall. The nature of the flooding and sedimentation processes (e.g., stream flow versus debris
15 flow) will depend on specific morphology of the fan (National Research Council 1996).
16 Section 11.1.9.1.1 provides further discussion of flood risks within the Amargosa Valley SEZ.
17
18

19 **11.1.7.1.2 Soil Resources**

20

21 Soils within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ are gravelly sandy loams and gravelly
22 loams of the Yermo, hot-Yermo, and Arizo Series, which together make up about 91% of the soil
23 coverage at the site (Figure 11.1.7.1-5). Soil map units within the Amargosa Valley SEZ are
24 described in Table 11.1.7.1-1. The level to nearly level soils are derived from alluvium from
25 mixed sources, typical of soils on alluvial fans and fan remnants. They are characterized as deep
26 and well to excessively drained. Most soils on the site have moderate surface runoff potential and
27 moderate permeability. The natural soil surface is suitable for roads with a slight erosion hazard
28 when used as roads or trails. Several of the soils (e.g., the Arizo very gravelly sandy loam and
29 the Yermo-Greyeagle-Arizo association) are not suitable for roads (because of high flooding
30 potential or severe erosion hazard when used as roads). The water erosion potential is low for
31 most soils. The susceptibility to wind erosion is moderate, with as much as 56 tons (51 metric
32 tons) of soil eroded by wind per acre (4,000 m²) each year (NRCS 2010). Desert pavement is
33 common on alluvial surfaces throughout the valley (Pelletier et al. 2007). Biological soil crusts
34 and desert pavement have not been documented within the SEZ, but may be present.
35

36 None of the soils within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is rated as hydric.³ Flooding
37 is rare for most soils at the site except for the Arizo very gravelly sandy loam along the
38 Amargosa River, which covers about 3,961 ac (km²) and has an occasional flooding rating (with
39 a 5 to 50% chance in any year). None of the soils is classified as prime or unique farmland
40 (NRCS 2010).
41

³ A hydric soil is a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding (NRCS 2010).

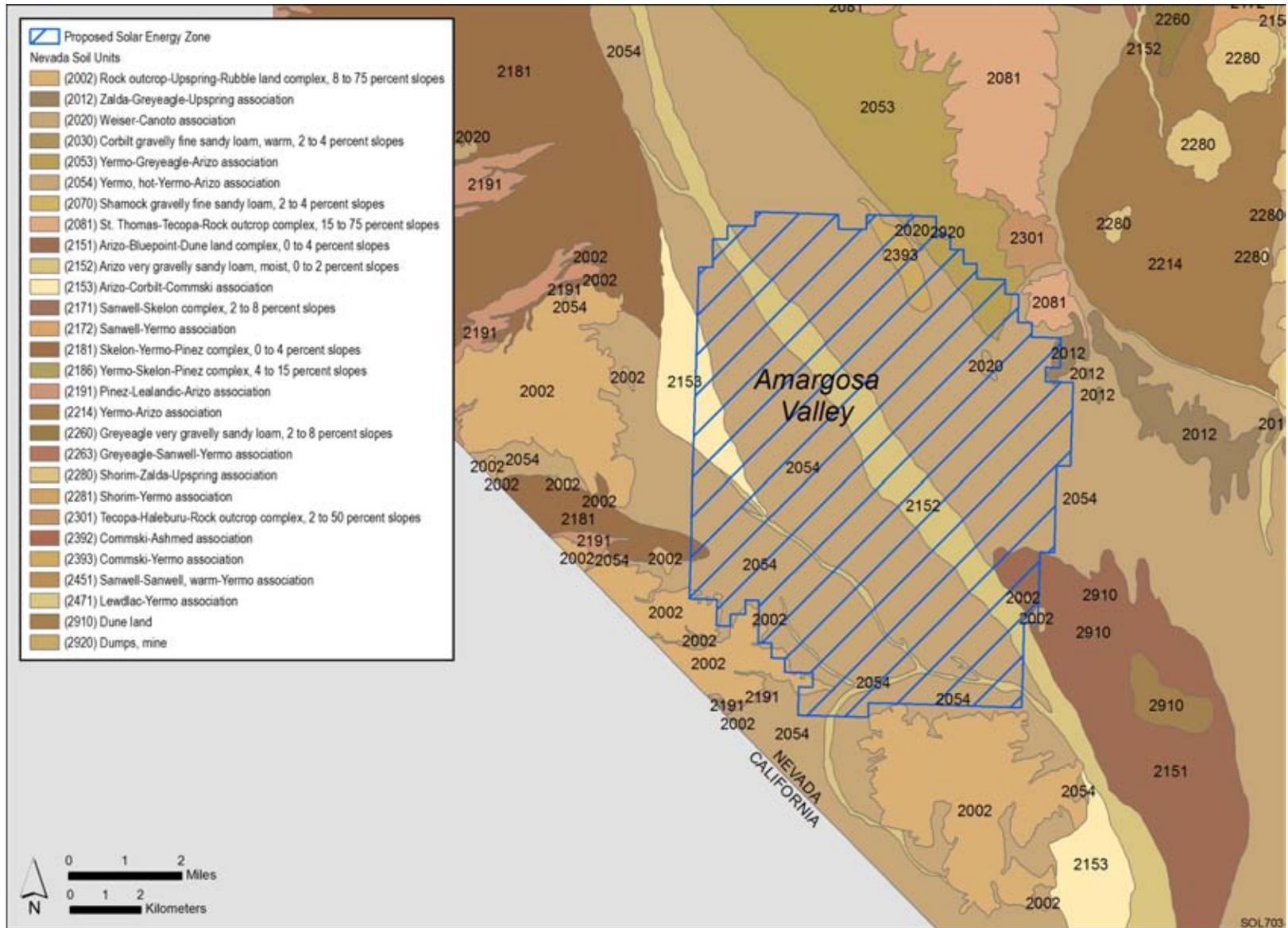


FIGURE 11.1.7.1-5 Soil Map for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (Source: NRCS 2008)

TABLE 11.1.7.1-1 Summary of Soil Map Units within the Proposed Amargosa SEZ

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
2054	Yermo, hot-Yermo-Arizo association (2 to 4% slopes)	Low (0.05)	Moderate (WEG 5) ^d	Consists of about 30% Yermo stratified extremely gravelly sandy loam to gravelly loam, 40% hot-Yermo very gravelly sandy loam, and 15% Arizo very gravelly sandy loam. Level to nearly level soils on inset fans and fan remnants. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources. Deep to very deep and well to excessively drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately rapid to very rapid permeability. Available water capacity is low. Slight rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland and wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	24,801 (78)
2152	Arizo very gravelly sandy loam, moist (0 to 2% slopes)	Low (0.10)	Moderate (WEG 5)	Level to nearly level soils on inset fans and flood plains. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources. Deep to very deep, well to excessively drained, with low surface runoff potential (high infiltration rate) and rapid to very rapid permeability. Available water capacity is low. Slight rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland and wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	3,961 (13)
2053	Yermo-Greyeagle-Arizo association	Low (0.05)	Moderate (WEG 5)	Consists of 60% Yermo stratified extremely gravelly sandy loam to gravelly loam, 20% Greyeagle very gravelly sandy loam, and 15% Arizo very stony sandy loam. Sloping soils on alluvial fans, inset fans, and fan remnants. Parent material consists of alluvium from mixed sources. Shallow to moderately deep and well to excessively drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately rapid to very rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low to low. Slight rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland, wildlife habitat, and recreation land; unsuitable for cultivation.	804 (3)

TABLE 11.1.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
2153	Arizo-Corbilt-Commski association	Low (0.10)	Moderate (WEG 5)	Consists of 35% Arizo very gravelly sandy loam, 25% Corbilt very gravelly sandy loam, and 25% Commski very gravelly fine sandy loam. Level to nearly level soils on inset fans, fan skirts, and fan remnants. Parent material consists of alluvium from mixed sources, including limestone and dolomite. Deep to very deep and well to excessively drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate to very rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low to low. Slight rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland and wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	761 (2)
2393	Commski-Yermo association	Low (0.15)	Moderate (WEG 5)	Consists of 70% Commski very gravelly fine sandy loam and 25% Yermo stratified extremely gravelly sandy loam to gravelly loam. Nearly level soils formed on inset fans and fan remnants. Parent material consists of alluvium derived from mixed sources, including limestone and dolomite. Moderately deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate to very rapid permeability. Low resistance to compaction. Available water capacity is high. Slight rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland and wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	458 (1)
2151	Arizo-Bluepoint-Dune land complex (0 to 4% slopes)	Low (0.10)	Moderate (WEG 5)	Consists of 40% Arizo very gravelly sandy loam, 35% Bluepoint loamy fine sand, and 15% Dune land fine sand. Level to nearly level soils on inset fans, sand sheets, and dunes. Parent material consists of alluvium from mixed sources and eolian sands. Deep to very deep and somewhat excessively to excessively drained, with low surface runoff potential (high infiltration rate) and rapid to very rapid permeability. Available water capacity is low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland and wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	415 (1)

TABLE 11.1.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
2002	Rock outcrop-Upspring-Rubble land complex (8 to 75% slopes)	Not rated	Not rated	Consists of 45% rock outcrop, 30% Upspring very gravelly sandy loam, and 15% rubble land fragments. Steeply sloping soils on hills. Very shallow and somewhat excessively to excessively drained. Parent material (Upspring) consists of colluvium from volcanic rocks over residuum weathered from volcanic rocks. Available water capacity is moderate. Available water capacity is very low. Slight rutting hazard. Upspring soils used mainly for watershed, wildlife habitat, and recreation land.	228 (<1)

^a Water erosion potential rates based on soil erosion factor K, which indicates the susceptibility of soil to sheet and rill erosion by water. Values range from 0.02 to 0.69 and are provided in parentheses under the general rating; a higher value indicates a higher susceptibility to erosion. Estimates based on the percentage of silt, sand, and organic matter and on soil structure and saturated hydraulic conductivity.

^b Wind erosion potential here is based on the wind erodibility group (WEG) designation: groups 1 and 2, high; groups 3 through 6, moderate; and groups 7 and 8 low (see footnote d for further explanation).

^c To convert from acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d WEG = wind erodibility group. WEGs are based on soil texture, content of organic matter, effervescence of carbonates, content of rock fragments, and mineralogy, and also take into account soil moisture, surface cover, soil surface roughness, wind velocity and direction, and the length of unsheltered distance (USDA 2004). Groups range in value from 1 (most susceptible to wind erosion) to 8 (least susceptible to wind erosion). The NRCS provides a wind erodibility index, expressed as an erosion rate in tons per acre per year, for each of the wind erodibility groups: WEG 5, 56 tons (51 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year.

^e To convert from in. to cm, multiply by 2.54.

Source: NRCS (2010).

1 **11.1.7.2 Impacts**
2

3 Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities
4 (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase of a solar
5 project. These include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind,
6 soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. Such impacts are
7 common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities in varying degrees and are described in more
8 detail for the four phases of development in Section 5.7.1.
9

10 Because impacts on soil resources result from ground-disturbing activities in the project
11 area, soil impacts would be roughly proportional to the size of a given solar facility, with larger
12 areas of disturbed soil having a greater potential for impacts than smaller areas (Section 5.7.2).
13 The magnitude of impacts would also depend on the types of components built for a given
14 facility since some components would involve greater disturbance and would take place over a
15 longer timeframe.
16

17 It is not known whether construction within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ would
18 affect the eolian processes that maintain the Big Dune to the east of the site. Because the area is
19 a designated ACEC and provides habitat for sensitive species, the BLM may require a study to
20 evaluate the impacts of building a solar facility in close proximity to the landform and to develop
21 specific mitigation measures to avoid or minimize them.
22
23

24 **11.1.7.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
25

26 No SEZ-specific design features were identified for soil resources at the proposed
27 Amargosa SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features described under both Soils and
28 Air Quality in Appendix A, Section A.2.2., as required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program,
29 would reduce the potential for soil impacts during all project phases.
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1 **11.1.8 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)**

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4 **11.1.8.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 There are no locatable mining claims within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ
7 (BLM and USFS 2010c). The land of the SEZ was closed to locatable mineral entry in June
8 2009, pending the outcome of this solar energy PEIS. There is a closed oil and gas lease in the
9 northwest corner of the SEZ, but no development has occurred (BLM and USFS 2010b). The
10 area remains open for discretionary mineral leasing for oil and gas and other leasable minerals
11 and for disposal of salable minerals. There is an area just outside the northeast boundary of the
12 SEZ that has been nominated for geothermal leasing, but no geothermal leasing or development
13 has occurred within or adjacent to the Amargosa Valley SEZ (BLM and USFS 2010b).
14

15
16 **11.1.8.2 Impacts**

17
18 If the area is identified as a solar energy development zone, it will continue to be closed
19 to all incompatible forms of mineral development. Since the SEZ does not contain existing
20 mining claims, it is assumed there would be no future loss of locatable mineral production.
21

22 For the purpose of this analysis, it is assumed that future development of oil and gas and
23 geothermal resources would continue to be possible, since such development could occur from
24 directional drilling from outside of the SEZ.
25

26 The production of common minerals, such as sand and gravel and mineral materials used
27 for road construction, might take place in areas not directly developed for solar energy
28 production.
29

30
31 **11.1.8.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

32
33 No SEZ-specific design features are required. Implementing the programmatic design
34 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
35 Program, would provide adequate mitigation for impacts to mineral resources.
36
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1 **11.1.9 Water Resources**

2
3
4 **11.1.9.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located within the Northern Mojave-Mono Lake
7 subbasin of the California hydrologic region (USGS 2010a) and the Basin and Range
8 physiographic province characterized by intermittent mountain ranges and desert valleys
9 (Planert and Williams 1995). The Amargosa Desert Valley is oriented from northwest to
10 southeast with surface elevations in the surrounding mountains reaching up to 6,275 ft (1,913 m)
11 in the Bare Mountains (Figure 11.1.9.1-1), and surface elevations in the valley region of the
12 proposed SEZ ranging between 2,500 and 2,825 ft (762 and 861 m). The climate in this region
13 of Nevada is characterized as having low humidity and precipitation, with mild winters and hot
14 summers (Planert and Williams 1995; WRCC 2010a). The average annual precipitation in the
15 Amargosa Desert Valley is 4 in./yr (10 cm/yr), with average annual snowfalls in the surrounding
16 mountains near the town of Beatty on the order of 3 in./yr (8 cm/yr) (WRCC 2010b,c). Water
17 losses by evapotranspiration often exceed precipitation amounts in the Basin and Range
18 physiographic province (Planert and Williams 1995), and pan evaporation rates are on the order
19 of 93 in./yr (236 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010d). Reference crop evapotranspiration
20 has been estimated at 70 in./yr (178 cm/yr) near the Amargosa Farms area (Huntington and
21 Allen 2010).
22
23

24 ***11.1.9.1.1 Surface Waters (Including Drainages, Floodplains, and Wetlands)***

25
26 There are no perennial surface water features in the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ.
27 The Amargosa River is an intermittent stream that enters the valley out of the Bare Mountains
28 to the northwest and flows south and southeast across the valley and through the proposed SEZ
29 (Figure 11.1.9.1-1). In the region of the proposed SEZ, the Amargosa River forms a braided
30 pattern of poorly defined ephemeral stream channels that cover a total width ranging from 0.5 to
31 1.0 mi (0.8 to 1.6 km). The Amargosa River is typically dry except for peak flows that typically
32 last hours to days as the result of regional precipitation events; the peak flows typically generate
33 substantial debris flows, channel incision, and erosion (Beck and Glancy 1995). Peak flows in
34 the Amargosa River range from 1 to 1,300 ft³/s (0.03 to 37 m³/s) coming out of the Bear
35 Mountains near the town of Beatty, Nevada (USGS 2010b; gauges 10251217, 10251220), and
36 from 0 to 700 ft³/s (0 to 20 m³/s) in the desert valley near the proposed SEZ (USGS 2010b;
37 gauges 10251223, 10251225). The recorded peak flows in the Amargosa River have typically
38 occurred during the late spring and summer months as the result of either short or moderate
39 duration rainfall events with the potential of snowpack melting contributing to the rainfall runoff
40 (Tanko and Glancy 2001).
41

42 Several ephemeral drainages and intermittent streams also drain the surrounding
43 mountains of the Amargosa Desert Valley. Three intermittent streams are located to the east of
44 the proposed SEZ and drain into the Amargosa River approximately 25 mi (40 km) to the
45 southeast of the SEZ: an unnamed intermittent stream, located 4 mi (6.4 km) east; Fortymile
46 Wash, located 9.5 mi (15.3 km) east; and Topopah Wash, located 13 mi (21 km) east of the SEZ
47 (Figure 11.1.9.1-1). Other surface water features near the proposed SEZ include the reservoirs,



FIGURE 11.1.9.1-1 Surface Water Features near the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

1 wetlands, streams, and springs located near Ash Meadows NWR, Devils Hole (a unit of Death
2 Valley NP), and the Alkali Flats area, which are located approximately 25 mi (40 km) southeast
3 of the proposed SEZ (Figure 11.1.9.1-1).
4

5 The majority of the northern portion of the Amargosa Desert Valley is classified as
6 having minimal to moderate flood hazard potential (Zone X) and is within the 500-year
7 floodplain (FEMA 2009). The intermittent stream channels of the Amargosa River are within the
8 100-year floodplain (Zone A) that covers an area of 3,915 acres (16 km²) within the proposed
9 SEZ (Figure 11.1.9.1-1). As mentioned previously, flooding in the Amargosa River occurs
10 during large rainfall events lasting hours to days and can cause significant debris flows, erosion,
11 and sedimentation issues (Beck and Glancy 1995; Tanko and Glancy 2001). For the rest of the
12 proposed SEZ, intermittent flooding may occur with temporary ponding and erosion.
13

14 No wetlands have been identified on the proposed SEZ according to the National
15 Wetlands Inventory (NWI) (USFWS 2009). The most significant wetlands within the Amargosa
16 Desert Valley are located within Ash Meadows NWR, located approximately 25 mi (40 km)
17 southeast of the proposed SEZ (Figure 11.1.9.1-1). A few small wetlands (less than 35 acres
18 [0.1 km²]) are located along the Amargosa River near the town of Beatty in the Bare Mountains
19 to the north of the proposed SEZ. Further information regarding the wetlands within the region
20 of the proposed SEZ is described in Section 11.1.10.1.
21
22

23 ***11.1.9.1.2 Groundwater*** 24

25 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located within the Amargosa Desert groundwater
26 basin (NDWR 2010a). The primary groundwater resources available to the proposed SEZ are in
27 the basin-fill aquifer of the northern portion of the Amargosa Desert Valley. The basin-fill
28 aquifer consists of river channel, playa, alluvial fan, freshwater limestone, and conglomerate
29 units of Quaternary and late Tertiary age deposits. The river channel, alluvial fan, and
30 conglomerate units consist of well-sorted clay to gravel; the limestone and playa units consist of
31 fine-grained sediments (Kilroy 1991). The basin-fill deposits are on the order of 1,500 ft (457 m)
32 thick in the region of the proposed SEZ and up to 5,000 ft (1,524 m) in thickness towards the
33 southern portion of the Amargosa Desert Basin (Burbey 1997; Sweetkind et al. 2001). The
34 bedrock below the basin-fill deposits is primarily Precambrian and Cambrian noncarbonate rocks
35 in the north and Paleozoic carbonate rocks in the southeastern part of the Amargosa Desert Basin
36 (Burbey 1997). The carbonate rocks are a part of the carbonate rock province (covering a large
37 portion of eastern Nevada and western Utah, along with portions of Arizona and California),
38 which forms several hydraulically-connected, interbasin groundwater flow systems (Harrill and
39 Prudic 1998).
40

41 Flow in the basin-fill aquifer generally follows the Amargosa River from northwest to
42 southeast in the northwestern portion of the Amargosa Desert Basin, and then south into
43 California (Kilroy 1991). Complex faulting occurs within the Amargosa Desert Valley (see
44 Section 11.1.7.1.1) and near the vicinity of Ash Meadows NWR, a series of northwest-southeast
45 trending faults (referred to as the Gravity Fault) creates a juxtaposition between the low-
46 permeability, basin-fill deposits and the highly-permeable, carbonate-rock aquifer (Burbey 1997;

1 Sweetkind et al. 2004). The hydraulic connectivity along the Gravity Fault is not fully realized;
2 however, historical groundwater withdrawals in the basin-fill aquifer have been linked with
3 declines in water levels of surface springs and seeps in Ash Meadows NWR and at geothermal
4 groundwater pool at Devils Hole (Faunt et al. 2004). Transmissivity values in the basin-fill
5 aquifers of the Amargosa Desert Valley and adjacent valleys range from 0.02 to 64,600 ft²/day
6 (0.002 to 6,000 m²/day), and from 0.05 to 366,000 ft²/day (0.005 to 34,000 m²/day) in the
7 regional-scale carbonate-rock aquifer (Belcher et al. 2001).
8

9 The carbonate-rock aquifer in this region is a part of an interbasin groundwater system
10 flowing from northeast to southwest, and the geologic and hydraulic interactions occurring at the
11 Gravity Fault causes groundwater discharge to a series of approximately 30 springs near Ash
12 Meadows NWR (Faunt et al. 2004). The springs located at Ash Meadows NWR support 26
13 species of endemic plants and animals (see Sections 11.1.10.1 and 11.1.12.1 for further details)
14 (NPS 2007). Additionally, the collapsed limestone cavern and geothermal pool at Devils Hole
15 (referred to as a “skylight to the water table”) is the only remaining habitat for an endangered
16 species of pupfish (Riggs and Deacon 2004).
17

18 The Amargosa Desert Basin is a part of the regional-scale Death Valley Regional
19 Groundwater Flow System (DVRFS) (information on the DVRFS is available at
20 <http://regmod.wr.usgs.gov>) that encompasses several surrounding valleys in southern Nevada
21 and portions of California. Groundwater recharge is primarily derived from snow and
22 precipitation runoff in the high-elevation mountains, with interbasin transfers primarily through
23 the regional-scale carbonate-rock aquifers (San Juan et al. 2004). The proposed Amargosa Valley
24 SEZ is situated over a basin-fill aquifer that receives approximately 90 ac-ft/yr (111,000 m³/yr)
25 groundwater recharge from infiltration of the Amargosa River as it enters the Amargosa Desert
26 Valley near the town of Beatty, a location of intermittent flow that becomes ephemeral within
27 approximately 2 mi (3 km) downstream into the desert valley (Stonestrom et al. 2007).
28 Estimates of groundwater recharge from precipitation in the valley and the surrounding
29 mountains range from 600 ac-ft/yr (740,000 m³/yr) (NDWR 2007) to 1,200 ac-ft/yr
30 (1.5 million m³/yr) (Burbey 1997). Another source of recharge to the basin-fill aquifer of the
31 Amargosa Desert Basin is discharge from the carbonate-rock aquifer in the area of Ash
32 Meadows NWR (Faunt et al. 2004), with estimates of recharge ranging from 19,000 to
33 44,000 ac-ft/yr (23.4 million to 54.3 million m³/yr) (Burbey 1997; NDWR 2007). Discharge
34 of groundwater from the Amargosa Desert Basin is largely driven by evapotranspiration,
35 groundwater withdrawals, discharge to springs near Ash Meadows, and subsurface outflow
36 (San Juan et al. 2004). Evapotranspiration from phreatophytes, bare soils, and surface springs
37 combined is from 17,000 to 24,000 ac-ft/yr (Burbey 1997). Groundwater withdrawals were
38 16,380 ac-ft/yr (22 million m³/yr) in 2009 (NDWR 2010b).
39

40 Groundwater flows from northwest to southeast under the proposed Amargosa Valley
41 SEZ with groundwater surface elevations ranging from 2,365 to 2,470 ft (721 to 753 m) in
42 the western portion of the SEZ and from 2,349 to 2,358 ft (716 to 719 m) in the eastern
43 portion of the SEZ (USGS 2010b; well numbers 364246116445701, 364600116410901,
44 364141116351402). Groundwater surface elevations have been relatively steady over time in
45 the northern portion of the Amargosa Desert Valley, with significant groundwater drawdown
46 occurring near the irrigated fields of the Amargosa Farms region located approximately 10 to

1 15 mi (16 to 24 km) southeast of the proposed SEZ. Groundwater surface elevations have
2 fallen at a rate of 0.5 to 1.5 ft/yr (0.2 to 0.5 m/yr) since the late 1980s near Amargosa Farms
3 (USGS 2010b; well numbers 363310116294001, 363317116270801), where groundwater
4 surface elevations had previously declined an approximate 27 ft (8 m) from 1962 to 1984
5 (Nichols and Akers 1985). Groundwater surface elevations have been steady over the past two
6 decades at Ash Meadows (Fenelon and Moreo 2002), with depth to groundwater approximately
7 20 ft (6 m) below the land surface (USGS 2010b; well number 362425116181001). The Devils
8 Hole geothermal pool gauge measures water table levels relative to a set datum. Water table
9 elevations in Devils Hole were drastically lowered during the 1960s and 1970s as a result of
10 nearby groundwater withdrawals for irrigation, which were then ceased by the mid-1970s (Riggs
11 and Deacon 2004; Section 11.1.9.1.3). The water table levels reached a low of 3.7 ft (1.2 m)
12 below the datum between 1972 to 1973, and slowly recovered by the late 1980s to a level around
13 2 ft (0.6 m) below the datum (USGS 2010b; well number 362532116172700). From 1988 to
14 2004, water table elevations in Devils Hole have gradually declined, which has been suspected to
15 be a result of regional-scale groundwater withdrawals and changes to groundwater recharge rates
16 (Bedinger and Harrill 2006).

17
18 Groundwater quality varies across the Amargosa Desert Valley in relation to the locations
19 of the dominant basin-fill and carbonate-rock aquifers, respectively (Claassen 1985). Overall, the
20 water quality is relatively good with exceptions for elevated total dissolved solids (TDS, 200 to
21 1,100 mg/L), arsenic (0.01 to 0.02 mg/L), fluoride (1.6 to 3.4 mg/L), and sulfate (18 to
22 420 mg/L) concentrations (DOE 2002; USGS 2010b). Primary drinking water maximum
23 contaminant levels (MCL) are 0.01 mg/L arsenic and 4.0 mg/L for fluoride, and in Nevada,
24 secondary MCL standards are 1,000 mg/L for TDS and 500 mg/L for sulfate (*Nevada*
25 *Administrative Code* 445A.455 [NAC 445A.455]). An additional water quality concern is the
26 potential for the transport of radioactive compounds from the Nevada Test Site in groundwater.
27 However, several studies investigating the potential Yucca Mountain Repository project found
28 concentrations of radionuclides in the Amargosa Desert Valley to be well below primary
29 drinking water MCLs (DOE 2002). Elevated concentrations of naturally occurring radon and
30 uranium also occur in the Amargosa Desert Valley that are below the MCL for uranium and
31 above the proposed MCL for radon (DOE 2008).

32 33 34 **11.1.9.1.3 Water Use and Water Rights Management**

35
36 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Nye County were
37 76,859 ac-ft/yr (94.8 million m³/yr), of which 41% came from surface waters and 59% came
38 from groundwater. The largest water use category was irrigation, at 56,583 ac-ft/yr
39 (69.8 million m³/yr), of which 55% came from surface waters and 45% came from groundwater.
40 Groundwater supplied the majority of the remaining water uses, with 12,431 ac-ft/yr
41 (15.3 million m³/yr) for domestic supply and 6,580 ac-ft/yr (8.1 million m³/yr) for mining
42 (Kenny et al. 2009).

43
44 All waters in Nevada are the property of the public in the State of Nevada and subject
45 to the laws described in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS), Chapters 532 through 538 (available at
46 <http://leg.state.nv.us/nrs>). The Nevada Division of Water Resources (NDWR), led by the State

1 Engineer, is the agency responsible for managing both the surface water and groundwater
2 resources, which includes overseeing water right applications, appropriations, and interbasin
3 transfers (NDWR 2010c). The two principle ideas behind water rights in Nevada are the prior
4 appropriations doctrine and the concept of beneficial use. A water right establishes an
5 appropriation amount and date such that more senior water rights have priority over newer
6 water rights. Additionally, water rights are treated as both real and personal property, such that
7 water rights can be transferred without affecting the land ownership (NDWR 2010c). Water
8 rights applications (new or transfer of existing) are approved if the water is available to be
9 appropriated, if existing water rights will not be affected, and if the proposed use is not deemed
10 to be harmful to the public interest. If these conditions are satisfied according to the State
11 Engineer, a proof of beneficial use of the approved water must be provided within a certain time
12 period, and following that a certificate of appropriation is issued (BLM 2001).
13

14 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located in the Amargosa Desert groundwater
15 basin (NDWR 2010a). The NDWR estimates the perennial yield for each groundwater basin
16 as the amount of water that can be economically withdrawn for an indefinite period without
17 depleting the source (NDWR 1999). The perennial yield for the Amargosa Desert basin
18 (in combination with five smaller adjacent basins to the north and east) is 24,000 ac-ft/yr
19 (29.6 million m³/yr), of which 17,000 ac-ft/yr (21.0 million m³/yr) is committed to the USFWS
20 for wildlife purposes and accounted for as discharge to the system of springs at Ash Meadows
21 NWR (NDWR 2007). The remaining 7,000 ac-ft/yr (8.6 million m³/yr) of the perennial yield is
22 over-appropriated in the Amargosa Desert Basin, with 25,335 ac-ft/yr (31.5 million m³/yr)
23 committed to beneficial uses (NDWR 2010d). In 2009, the actual amount of groundwater
24 withdrawal was 16,380 ac-ft/yr (22.0 million m³/yr), which is slightly more than double the
25 amount of available allocations of the perennial yield (NDWR 2010b).
26

27 Groundwater management in the Amargosa Desert Basin is largely affected by the
28 U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Cappaert v. U.S.* (1976), which recognized the water right at
29 Devils Hole (a set water level relative to the gauge datum) and subsequently limited groundwater
30 withdrawals in the nearby vicinity (NPS 2007). In 1979, in order to maintain the Devils Hole
31 water level and to prevent overuse of the region's groundwater, the State Engineer declared the
32 Amargosa Desert Basin a designated groundwater basin (NDWR 1979; Order 724), which
33 essentially limits well drilling prior to the permit application, with exception to domestic wells
34 (NDWR 1999). Numerous applications for new groundwater withdrawals were denied by State
35 Engineer's Ruling 5750 (NDWR 2007), which stated that the Amargosa Desert Basin was over-
36 appropriated. In 2008, the State Engineer's Order 1197 (NDWR 2008) stated that new water
37 right applications in the Amargosa Desert Basin would be denied, as would any application
38 seeking to change the point of diversion closer to Devils Hole (defined by a 25-mi [40-km]
39 radius around Devils Hole). There were five exemptions regarding water right transfer
40 applications listed in Order 1197, and the one most applicable to potential solar energy
41 development is that the NDWR would assess the potential impacts at Devils Hole on a case-by-
42 case basis for projects seeking to transfer multiple existing water rights (presumably moving
43 points of diversion away from Devils Hole in order to reduce impacts). This exception suggests
44 that developers need to assess the location and connectivity of existing water right locations to
45 Devils Hole when seeking available water right transfers.
46
47

1 **11.1.9.2 Impacts**

2
3 Potential impacts on water resources related to utility-scale solar energy development
4 include direct and indirect impacts on surface waters and groundwater. Direct impacts occur at
5 the place of origin and at the time of the proposed activity, while indirect impacts occur away
6 from the place of origin or later in time. Impacts on water resources considered in this analysis
7 are the result of land disturbance activities (construction, final developed site plan, and off-site
8 activities such as road and transmission line construction) and water use requirements for solar
9 energy technologies that take place during the four project phases: site characterization,
10 construction, operations, and decommissioning/reclamation. Both land disturbance and
11 consumptive water use activities can affect groundwater and surface water flows, cause
12 drawdown of groundwater surface elevations, modify natural drainage pathways, obstruct natural
13 recharge zones, and alter surface water–wetland–groundwater connectivity. Water quality can
14 also be degraded through the generation of wastewater, chemical spills, increased erosion and
15 sedimentation, and increased salinity (e.g., by the excessive withdrawal from aquifers).

16
17
18 ***11.1.9.2.1 Land Disturbance Impacts on Water Resources***

19
20 Impacts related to land disturbance activities are common to all utility-scale solar energy
21 facilities, which are described in more detail for the four phases of development in Section 5.9.1;
22 these impacts will be minimized through the implementation of design features described in
23 Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Land disturbance activities should be minimized in the vicinity of
24 the ephemeral stream channels of the Amargosa River. During large storm events, peak flows in
25 the Amargosa River can cause substantial debris flow that could damage any structures related
26 to a solar energy facility. In addition, extensive alterations to the natural drainage pattern of the
27 Amargosa River could enhance erosion processes, disrupt groundwater recharge, and negatively
28 affect plant and animal habitats associated with the ephemeral channels.

29
30
31 ***11.1.9.2.2 Water Use Requirements for Solar Energy Technologies***

32
33
34 **Analysis Assumptions**

35
36 A detailed description of the water use assumptions for the four utility-scale solar energy
37 technologies (parabolic trough, power tower, dish engine, and PV systems) is presented in
38 Appendix M. Assumptions regarding water use calculations specific to the proposed Amargosa
39 Valley SEZ include the following:

- 40
41 • On the basis of a total area of 31,625 acres (128 km²), it is assumed that three
42 solar projects would be constructed during the peak construction year;
43
44 • Water needed for making concrete would come from an off-site source;

- The maximum land disturbance for an individual solar facility during the peak construction year is 3,000 acres (12 km²);
- Assumptions on individual facility size and land requirements (Appendix M), along with the assumed number of projects and maximum allowable land disturbance, results in the potential to disturb up to 28% of the SEZ total area during the peak construction year; and
- Water use requirements for hybrid cooling systems are assumed to be on the same order of magnitude as those using dry cooling (see Section 5.9.2.1).

Site Characterization

During site characterization, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust and for providing the workforce potable water supply. Impacts on water resources during this phase of development are expected to be negligible since activities would be limited in area, extent, and duration; water needs could be met by trucking water in from an off-site source.

Construction

During construction, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust and the workforce potable water supply. Because there are no significant surface water bodies on the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, the water requirements for construction activities could be met by either trucking water to the sites or by using on-site groundwater resources. Water requirements for dust suppression and potable water supply during construction are shown in Table 11.1.9.2-1 and could be as high as 4,886 ac-ft (6.0 million m³). The assumptions underlying these estimates for each solar energy technology are described in Appendix M.

TABLE 11.1.9.2-1 Estimated Water Requirements during the Peak Construction Year for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Water use requirements ^a				
Fugitive dust control (ac-ft) ^{b,c}	3,168	4,752	4,752	4,752
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft)	222	135	56	28
Total water use requirements (ac-ft)	3,390	4,886	4,808	4,780
Wastewater generated				
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft)	222	135	56	28

^a Assumptions of water use for fugitive dust control, potable supply for workforce, and wastewater generation are presented in Table M.9-1 (Appendix M0).

^b Fugitive dust control estimation assumes a local pan evaporation rate of 93 in./yr (236 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010d).

^c To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

1 Groundwater wells would have to yield an estimated 2,100 to 3,027 gpm (7,949 to
2 11,458 L/min) to meet the estimated construction water requirements. These well yields are on
3 the same order of magnitude as large municipal and agricultural production wells (Harter 2003),
4 so multiple wells may be needed in order to obtain the water requirements. Groundwater to be
5 used for potable water supply needs to meet or be treated to meet drinking water standards
6 according to NAC (445A.453-445A.455). In addition, up to 222 ac-ft (273,800 m³) of sanitary
7 wastewater would be generated and would need to be treated either on-site or sent to an
8 off-site facility.

9
10 The estimated total water use requirements during the peak construction year are
11 substantial given the limited groundwater resources available in the Amargosa Desert Basin.
12 Obtaining groundwater sources in the Amargosa Desert Basin is difficult because of over-
13 allocated condition of water rights in the basin. The senior water rights of the USFWS constitute
14 a substantial portion of the perennial yield in the Amargosa Desert Basin with the remaining
15 7,000 ac-ft/yr (8.6 million m³/yr) of perennial yield being over-allocated by approximately a
16 factor of two (see Section 11.1.9.1.3). The water use needs during the peak construction year
17 represent as much as 70% of the available perennial yield available to the basin, and all water
18 rights would need to be purchased and transferred. While groundwater surface elevations have
19 been relatively steady in the northern portion of the Amargosa Desert Basin where the proposed
20 SEZ is located, the addition of groundwater withdrawals for the peak construction year could
21 potentially cause drawdown of the groundwater similar to that experienced near the irrigated
22 fields of the Amargosa Farms area.

23 24 25 **Operations**

26
27 During operations, water would be required for mirror/panel washing, the workforce
28 potable water supply, and cooling (parabolic trough and power tower only) (Table 11.1.9.2-2).
29 Water needs for cooling are a function of the type of cooling used (dry, hybrid, wet). Further
30 refinements to water requirements for cooling would result from the percentage of time the
31 option was employed (30 to 60% range assumed) and the power of the system. The differences
32 between the water requirements reported in Table 11.1.9.2-2 for the parabolic trough and power
33 tower technologies are attributable to the assumptions of acreage per MW. As a result, the water
34 usage for the more energy-dense parabolic trough technology is estimated to be almost twice as
35 large as that for the power tower technology.

36
37 At full build-out capacity, water needs for mirror/panel washing are estimated to range
38 from 141 to 2,530 ac-ft/yr (173,900 to 3.1 million m³/yr), and the workforce potable water
39 supply from 3 to 71 ac-ft/yr (3,700 to 87,600 m³/yr). Groundwater used for the potable supply
40 may need treatment to conform to drinking water quality standards, described previously.
41 The determination of water quality for potable water supply would be done during the site
42 characterization phase. The maximum total water usage during normal operation at full build-out
43 capacity would be greatest for those technologies using the wet-cooling option and is estimated
44 to be as high as 75,971 ac-ft/yr (93.7 million m³/yr). Water usage for dry-cooling systems would
45 be as high as 7,661 ac-ft/yr (9.4 million m³/yr), approximately a factor of 10 times less than the
46 wet-cooling option. Non-cooled technologies, dish engine and PV systems, require substantially

TABLE 11.1.9.2-2 Estimated Water Requirements during Operations at the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Full build-out capacity (MW) ^{a,b}	5,060	2,811	2,811	2,811
Water use requirements				
Mirror/panel washing (ac-ft/yr) ^{c,d}	2,530	1,406	1,406	141
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft/yr)	71	32	32	3
Dry-cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	1,012–5,060	562–2,811	NA ^f	NA
Wet-cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	22,770–73,370	12,650–40,761	NA	NA
Total water use requirements				
Non-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	NA	NA	1,438	144
Dry-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	3,613–7,661	2,000–4,249	NA	NA
Wet-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	25,371–75,971	14,088–42,199	NA	NA
Wastewater generated				
Blowdown (ac-ft/yr) ^g	1,437	799	NA	NA
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft/yr)	71	32	32	3

^a Land area for parabolic trough was estimated at 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW); land area for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies was estimated at 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW).

^b Water needs are linearly related to power. Water usage for any other size project can be estimated by using the multipliers provided in Table M.9-2 (Appendix M).

^c Value assumes a usage rate of 0.5 ac-ft/yr/MW for mirror washing for parabolic trough, power tower, and dish engine technologies and a rate of 0.05 ac-ft/yr/MW for panel washing for PV systems.

^d To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

^e Dry-cooling value assumes 0.2 to 1.0 ac-ft/yr per MW and wet-cooling value assumes 4.5 to 14.5 ac-ft/yr per MW (range in these values represents 30 and 60% operating times) (DOE 2009).

^f NA = not applicable.

^g Value scaled from 250-MW Beacon Solar project with an annual discharge of 44 gpm (167 L/min) (AECOM 2009). Blowdown estimates are relevant to wet cooling only.

1
2
3 less water at full build-out capacity, at 1,438 ac-ft/yr (1.8 million m³/yr) for dish engine and
4 144 ac-ft/yr (177,600 m³/yr) for PV (Table 11.1.9.2-2). Operations would produce up to
5 71 ac-ft/yr (87,600 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater; in addition, for wet-cooled technologies,
6 799 to 1,437 ac-ft/yr (1 million to 1.8 million m³/yr) of cooling system blowdown water would
7 need to be treated either on- or off-site. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to
8 ensure that treatment ponds are effectively lined in order to prevent any groundwater
9 contamination.

10
11 Groundwater is the primary water resource available for solar energy development at
12 the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Water use requirements for parabolic trough and power
13 tower facilities using wet cooling are typically greater than the perennial yield for the Amargosa

1 Desert Basin. Therefore, wet-cooling would not be a feasible option for development at the
2 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. The water use estimates for dry-cooling range from 2,000 to
3 7,661 ac-ft/yr (2.5 million to 9.4 million m³/yr), which could potentially cause impacts
4 associated with the drawdown of groundwater surface elevations at the upper ends of this water
5 use range. In addition, obtaining water rights in the Amargosa Desert Basin requires the transfer
6 of existing rights, as well as the review process of the NDWR to ensure more senior rights and
7 the aquifer's sustainability are not impaired. Given that the higher values of water use for dry-
8 cooling are of similar magnitude to the available portion of the perennial yield for the Amargosa
9 Desert Basin, securing water rights may be cost or time prohibitive. Dish engine and PV
10 facilities would be the preferred technologies for use at the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ
11 with respect to water use requirements.
12
13

14 **Decommissioning/Reclamation**

15
16 During decommissioning/reclamation, all surface structures associated with the solar
17 project would be dismantled and the site reclaimed to its pre-construction state. Activities and
18 water needs during this phase would be similar to those during the construction phase (dust
19 suppression and potable supply for workers) and may also include water to establish vegetation
20 in some areas, but the total volume of water needed is expected to be less. Because quantities of
21 water needed during the decommissioning/reclamation phase would be less than those for
22 construction, impacts on surface and groundwater resources also would be less.
23
24

25 ***11.1.9.2.3 Off-Site Impacts: Roads and Transmission Lines***

26
27 Impacts associated with the construction of roads and transmission lines primarily deal
28 with water use demands for construction, water quality concerns relating to potential chemical
29 spills, and land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology. The extent of the impacts on water
30 resources is proportional to the amount and location of land disturbance needed to connect the
31 proposed SEZ to major roads and existing transmission lines. The proposed Amargosa Valley
32 SEZ is located adjacent to existing roads and transmission lines, as described in Section 11.1.1.2,
33 so it is assumed that impacts associated with the construction of roads and transmission lines
34 outside of the SEZ would be negligible.
35
36

37 ***11.1.9.2.4 Summary of Impacts on Water Resources***

38
39 The impacts on water resources associated with developing solar energy at the proposed
40 Amargosa Valley SEZ are associated with land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology,
41 water quality concerns, and water use requirements for the various solar energy technologies.
42 Land disturbance activities can cause localized erosion and sedimentation issues, as well as
43 altering groundwater recharge and discharge processes. The multithread channels of the
44 Amargosa River should be avoided for siting infrastructure for solar energy development
45 (an area of 3,915 acres [16 km²] within the proposed SEZ), as this area is within a 100-year
46 floodplain and has a history of conveying substantial debris flows during large storm events

1 (Beck and Glancy 1995; Tanko and Glancy 2001). In addition, alterations to ephemeral washes
2 that feed into the Amargosa River should be minimized to avoid potential erosion issues and to
3 maintain the infiltration capacity of the channels, which are a primary groundwater recharge
4 source for the basin-fill aquifer. The water quality of the groundwater in the Amargosa Desert
5 Basin is relatively good, but it may need some treatment if used for a potable water supply
6 source.

7
8 Impacts relating to water use requirements vary depending on the type of solar
9 technology built and, for technologies using cooling systems, the type of cooling (wet, dry, or
10 hybrid) used. Groundwater is the primary water resource available to solar energy facilities in the
11 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. The water use requirements for technologies using wet cooling
12 are greater than the perennial yield of the Amargosa Desert groundwater basin, so wet cooling
13 would not be feasible for the full build-out scenario. Dry-cooling technologies for the full build-
14 out scenario have the potential to cause drawdown of groundwater surface elevations, especially
15 at higher operating times. Additionally, the upper ranges of water use requirements for dry-
16 cooling technologies are on the same order of magnitude as the transferrable portion of the
17 perennial yield available to the Amargosa Desert Basin. Given that all water rights must be
18 purchased and transferred, which involves a substantial review process by the NDWR, securing
19 water rights for dry-cooling technologies may become cost and time prohibitive. Facilities
20 seeking to use dry-cooling technologies should implement water conservation practices to limit
21 water needs. Dish engine and PV systems would be the preferred technologies for development
22 at the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ in terms of water use requirements.

23
24 The limited groundwater resources available in the Amargosa Desert Basin and its
25 designated status means that water right transfer applications face scrutiny with respect to
26 potential drawdown effects in the basin and with particular emphasis on discharges to the springs
27 at Ash Meadows and water table elevations at Devils Hole. While the perennial yield of the
28 Amargosa Desert Basin is 24,000 ac-ft/yr (29.6 million m³/yr), 17,000 ac-ft/yr (20.9 million
29 m³/yr) is committed to wildlife purposes as discharge to the system of springs located within Ash
30 Meadows NWR. The remaining 7,000 ac-ft/yr (8.6 million m³/yr) of the perennial yield is over-
31 allocated with 25,335 ac-ft/yr (31.2 million m³/yr) committed for beneficial uses, of which
32 16,380 ac-ft/yr (22.0 million m³/yr) was used in 2009 (see Section 11.1.9.1.3 for details). Given
33 these constraints of limited water resources and over-allocated water rights, solar energy
34 developers will need to limit water requirements through whatever means are available, which
35 could potentially include any combination of the following: choosing low-water demanding dish
36 engine and PV technologies, implementing water conservation measures including the use of
37 recycled water sources, and by purchasing water rights in excess of the needed requirements in
38 order to retire over-allocated water rights.

39 40 41 **11.1.9.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

42
43 The program for solar energy development on BLM-administered lands will require the
44 programmatic design features given in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, to be implemented, thus
45 mitigating some impacts on water resources. Programmatic design features would focus on
46 coordinating with federal, state, and local agencies that regulate the use of water resources to

1 meet the requirements of permits and approvals needed to obtain water for development, and
2 conducting hydrological studies to characterize the aquifer from which groundwater would be
3 obtained (including drawdown effects, if a new point of diversion is created). The greatest
4 consideration for mitigating water impacts would be in the selection of solar technologies. The
5 mitigation of impacts would be best achieved by selecting technologies with low water demands.
6

7 Design features specific to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ include the following:
8

- 9 • Water resource analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be
10 feasible; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures;
11
- 12 • Land disturbance activities should minimize impacts on natural drainage
13 patterns near the Amargosa River to avoid erosion issues and clogging of
14 groundwater recharge zones and affecting critical habitats;
15
- 16 • Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should be avoided within
17 the 100-year floodplain of the Amargosa River (3,915 acres [16 km²]);
18
- 19 • Coordination with the NDWR should be conducted during the process of
20 obtaining water rights in the over-allocated Amargosa Desert Basin in order
21 to reduce basin-wide groundwater extractions and to comply with the State
22 Engineer's Order 1197 (NDWR 2008) addressing the priority water rights
23 and protections pertaining to Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and
24 Devils Hole;
25
- 26 • Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards
27 developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
28 (NDEP 2010);
29
- 30 • Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in
31 accordance with state standards (NDWR 2006); and
32
- 33 • Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water quality
34 standards in according to NAC (445A.453-445A.455).
35

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1 **11.1.10 Vegetation**
2

3 This section addresses vegetation that could occur or is known to occur within the
4 potentially affected area of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. The affected area considered
5 in this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect effects. The area of direct effects is
6 defined as the area that would be physically modified during project development (i.e., where
7 ground-disturbing activities would occur) and included only the SEZ. The area of indirect effects
8 was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, where ground-disturbing
9 activities would not occur but that could be indirectly affected by activities in the area of direct
10 effects. No area of direct or indirect effects was assumed for new access roads or transmission
11 lines outside of the SEZ because they are not expected to be needed for development due to the
12 proximity of an existing U.S. highway and existing transmission lines.
13

14 Indirect effects considered in the assessment included effects from surface runoff, dust,
15 and accidental spills from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities because these
16 would not take place outside of the SEZ. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease
17 with increasing distance away from the SEZ. This area of indirect effects was identified on the
18 basis of professional judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area that
19 would potentially be subject to indirect effects. The affected area is the area bounded by the
20 areas of direct and indirect effects. These areas are defined and the impact assessment approach
21 is described in Appendix M.
22

23
24 **11.1.10.1 Affected Environment**
25

26 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located within the Amargosa Desert Level IV
27 ecoregion, which primarily supports a creosotebush (*Larrea tridentata*) and white bursage
28 (*Ambrosia dumosa*) community (Bryce et al. 2003). Additional commonly occurring species
29 include wolfberry (*Lycium torreyi*), shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*), Joshua tree (*Yucca*
30 *brevifolia*) and other *Yucca* species, and Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), a perennial
31 grass. This internally drained ecoregion includes nearly level to rolling valleys and scattered
32 hills. Extensive underground water systems discharge within this ecoregion, resulting in many
33 springs and seeps, including those at Ash Meadows NWR. Wetland oases form where the
34 Amargosa River surfaces, and intermittent and ephemeral washes and streams commonly have
35 subsurface flow. Many endemic plants occur in this ecoregion, particularly at Ash Meadows.
36

37 The Amargosa Desert lies within the Mojave Basin and Range Level III ecoregion (see
38 Appendix I). This ecoregion is characterized by broad basins and scattered mountains.
39 Communities of sparse, scattered shrubs and grasses including creosotebush, white bursage, and
40 big galleta grass (*Pleuraphis rigida*) occur in basins; Joshua tree, other *Yucca* species, and cacti
41 occur on arid footslopes; woodland and shrubland communities occur on mountain slopes,
42 ridges, and hills (Bryce et al. 2003). Creosotebush, all-scale (*Atriplex polycarpa*), brittlebush
43 (*Encelia farinosa*), desert holly (*Atriplex hymenelytra*), white burrobrush (*Hymenoclea salsola*),
44 shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*), blackbrush (*Coleogyne ramosissima*), and Joshua tree are
45 dominant species within the Mojave desertscrub biome (Turner 1994). Precipitation in the
46 Mojave Desert occurs primarily in winter. Many ephemeral species (winter annuals) germinate

1 in response to winter rains (Turner 1994). Annual precipitation in the vicinity of the SEZ is very
2 low, averaging 4.4 in. (11.3 cm) at Amargosa Farms Garey (see Section 11.1.13).

3
4 The area surrounding the SEZ also includes the Arid Footslopes Level IV ecoregion.
5 This ecoregion supports a sparse mixture of Mojave desert species, such as creosotebush, white
6 bursage, and *Yucca* species, including Joshua tree, on alluvial fans, basalt flows, hills, and low
7 mountains. Cacti occur in rocky areas. Blackbrush is dominant on upper-elevation slopes.

8
9 Land cover types described and mapped under the Southwest Regional Gap Analysis
10 Project (SWReGAP) (USGS 2005a) were used to evaluate plant communities in and near the
11 SEZ. Each cover type encompasses a range of similar plant communities. Land cover types
12 occurring within the potentially affected area of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ are shown
13 in Figure 11.1.10.1-1. Table 11.1.10.1-1 provides the surface area of each cover type within the
14 potentially affected area.

15
16 Lands within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ are classified primarily as Sonora–
17 Mojave Creosotebush–White Bursage Desert Scrub. Additional cover types within the SEZ are
18 given in Table 11.1.10.1-1. Creosotebush was observed to be the dominant species in the low
19 scrub communities present throughout the SEZ in August 2009, with white bursage co-dominant
20 in portions of the SEZ. Sensitive habitats on the SEZ include desert dry washes, desert chenopod
21 scrub/mixed salt desert scrub, and playas.

22
23 The indirect impact area, including the area surrounding the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km),
24 includes 18 cover types, which are listed in Table 11.1.10.1-1. The predominant cover type is
25 Sonora–Mojave Creosotebush–White Bursage Desert Scrub. Big Dune, a large dune area
26 mapped as North American Active and Stabilized Dune, is located southeast of the SEZ within
27 the indirect impact area.

28
29 There are no wetlands mapped by the National Wetland Inventory within the SEZ
30 (USFWS 2009). However, one palustrine wetland with an emergent plant community occurs
31 southeast of the SEZ, in the indirect impact area. This wetland is intermittently flooded, and
32 7.9 acres (0.03 km²) of this 11.2-acre (0.05-km²) wetland lie within the indirect impact area. It
33 is mapped as Sonora-Mojave Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. Numerous dry washes occur within the
34 SEZ, generally flowing to the southeast. These washes typically do not support wetland or
35 riparian habitats and many convey surface runoff to the Amargosa River or to playa areas,
36 such as those located in the southern portion of the SEZ. Several terminate in the dune area.
37 The Amargosa River occurs within the SEZ and consists of a wide, shallow, braided channel,
38 supporting a higher shrub density along much of the margin or in protected areas of the channel.
39 Large playa areas are located southeast of the SEZ and are associated with the Amargosa River.
40 These playas and dry washes and the Amargosa River typically contain water for short periods
41 during or following precipitation events. Springs occur southeast of the SEZ at Ash Meadows
42 and support significant wetland communities.

43
44 The State of Nevada maintains an official list of weed species that are designated noxious
45 species. Table 11.1.10.1-2 summarizes the noxious weed species regulated in Nevada that are
46 known to occur in Nye County (USDA 2010), which includes the proposed Amargosa Valley

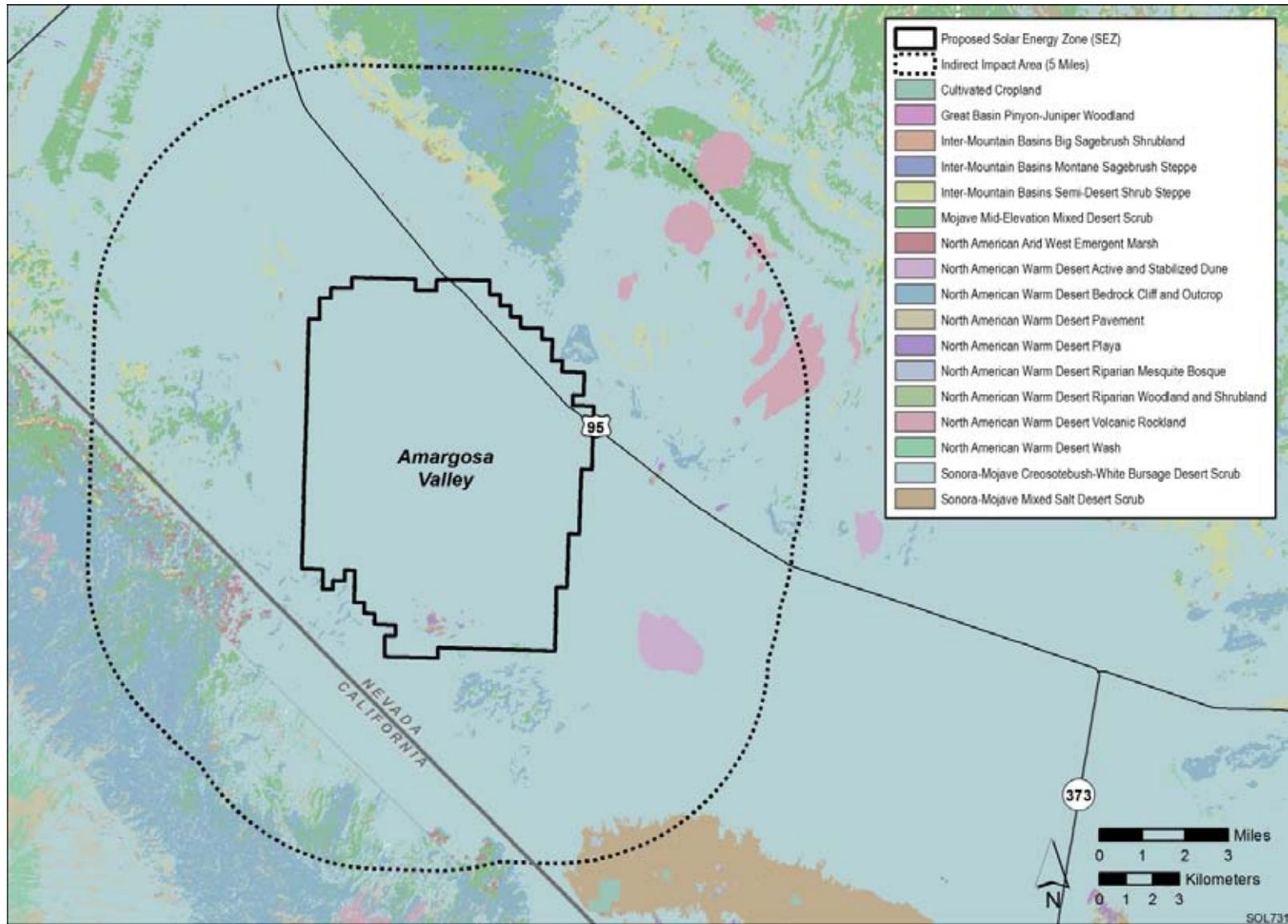


FIGURE 11.1.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (Source: USGS 2004)

TABLE 11.1.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Potentially Affected Area of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ and Potential Impacts

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b		
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Overall Impact Magnitude ^e
5264 Sonora–Mojave Creosotebush–White Bursage Desert Scrub: Occurs in broad valleys, lower bajadas, plains, and low hills in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts. Shrubs form a sparse to moderately dense cover (2–50%), although the ground surface may be mostly barren. The dominant species are typically creosotebush (<i>Larrea tridentata</i>) and white bursage (<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>). Other shrubs, dwarf-shrubs, and cacti may also be dominant or form sparse understories. Herbaceous species are typically sparse, but may be seasonally abundant.	31,474 acres ^f (2.0%, 4.3%)	109,036 acres (7.1%)	Moderate
3161 North American Warm Desert Playa: Consists of barren and sparsely vegetated areas (generally <10% plant cover) that are intermittently flooded; salt crusts are common. Sparse shrubs occur around the margins, and patches of grass may form in depressions. In large playas, vegetation forms rings in response to salinity. Herbaceous species may be periodically abundant.	63 acres (<0.1%, 0.1%)	94 acres (0.1%)	Small
5265 Sonora-Mojave Mixed Salt Desert Scrub: Extensive open-canopied shrublands in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts, usually occurring around playas and in valley bottoms or basins with saline soils. Vegetation is typically composed of one or more <i>Atriplex</i> species; other salt-tolerant plants are often present or even co-dominant. Grasses occur at varying densities.	59 acres (<0.1%, 0.1%)	1,122 acres (0.8%)	Small
9151 North American Warm Desert Wash: Consists of intermittently flooded linear or braided strips within desert scrub or grassland landscapes on bajadas, mesas, plains, and basin floors. Although often dry, washes are associated with rapid sheet and gully flow. The vegetation varies from sparse and patchy to moderately dense and typically occurs along the banks, but may occur within the channel. Shrubs and small trees are typically intermittent to open. Common upland shrubs often occur along the edges.	21 acres (<0.1%, 1.1%)	234 acres (0.5%)	Small

TABLE 11.1.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b		
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Overall Impact Magnitude ^e
3120 North American Warm Desert Bedrock Cliff and Outcrop: Occurs on subalpine to foothill steep cliff faces, narrow canyons, rock outcrops, and unstable scree and talus slopes. Consists of barren and sparsely vegetated areas (generally <10% plant cover) with desert species, especially succulents. Lichens are predominant in some areas.	0 acres	13,942 acres (1.8%)	Small
5259 Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub: The vegetation composition is quite variable. Dominant species include shrubs forbs, and grasses and may include <i>Yucca</i> spp.	0 acres	7,492 acres (0.9%)	Small
3180 North American Warm Desert Volcanic Rockland: Consists of barren and sparsely vegetated (<10% plant cover) areas. Vegetation is variable and typically includes scattered desert shrubs.	0 acres	2,385 acres (2.6%)	Small
S079 Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe: Generally consists of perennial grasses with an open shrub and dwarf shrub layer.	0 acres	1,986 acres (0.8%)	Small
3121 North American Warm Desert Active and Stabilized Dune: Consists of unvegetated to sparsely vegetated (generally <10% plant cover) active dunes and sandsheets. Vegetation includes shrubs, forbs, and grasses. Includes unvegetated “blowouts” and stabilized areas.	0 acres	1,040 acres (2.9%)	Small
S100 North American Arid West Emergent Marsh: Occurs in natural depressions, such as ponds, or bordering lakes, or slow-moving streams or rivers. Alkalinity is highly variable. The plant community is characterized by herbaceous emergent, submergent, and floating leaved species.	0 acres	789 acres (19.1%)	Small
3143 North American Warm Desert Pavement: Consists of unvegetated to very sparsely vegetated (<2% plant cover) areas, usually in flat basins, with ground surfaces of fine to medium gravel coated with “desert varnish.” Desert scrub species are usually present. Herbaceous species may be abundant in response to seasonal precipitation.	0 acres	384 acres (0.1%)	Small

TABLE 11.1.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b		
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Overall Impact Magnitude ^e
S071 Inter-Mountain Basins Montane Sagebrush Steppe: Occurs on flats, ridges, level ridgetops, and mountain slopes. Mountain big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata vaseyana</i>) and related taxa such as big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata spiciformis</i>) are typically the dominant species. Perennial herbaceous species, especially grasses, are usually abundant, although shrublands are also present.	0 acres	76 acres (4.5%)	Small
S054 Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland: Dominated by basin big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata tridentata</i>), Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis</i>), or both. Other shrubs may be present. Perennial herbaceous plants are present but not abundant.	0 acres	66 acres (<0.1%)	Small
9182 North American Warm Desert Riparian Woodland and Shrubland: Occurs along medium to large perennial streams in canyons and desert valleys. Consists of a mix of riparian woodlands and shrublands. Vegetation is dependent upon annual or periodic flooding, along with substrate scouring, and/or a seasonally shallow water table.	0 acres	36 acres (0.5%)	Small
3139 Inter-Mountain Basins Shale Badland: Typically occurs on rounded hills and plains. Consists of barren and sparsely vegetated areas (<10% plant cover) with high rate of erosion and deposition. Vegetation consists of sparse dwarf shrubs and herbaceous plants.	0 acres	29 acres (0.3%)	Small
9178 North American Warm Desert Riparian Mesquite Bosque: Occurs along perennial and intermittent streams as relatively dense riparian corridors composed of trees and shrubs. Honey mesquite (<i>Prosopis glandulosa</i>) and velvet mesquite (<i>P. velutina</i>) are the dominant trees. Vegetation is supported by groundwater when surface water is absent.	0 acres	28 acres (0.5%)	Small

TABLE 11.1.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b		
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Overall Impact Magnitude ^e
S040 Great Basin Pinyon-Juniper Woodland: Occurs on low-elevation slopes and ridges. Singleleaf pinyon (<i>Pinus monophylla</i>), Utah juniper (<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i>), or both are the dominant species, generally associating with curl-leaf mountain mahogany (<i>Cercocarpus ledifolius</i>). Understory species include shrubs and grasses.	0 acres	6 acres (<0.1%)	Small
9103 Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat: Dominated or co-dominated by greasewood (<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>) and generally occurring in areas with saline soils, a shallow water table, and intermittent flooding, although remaining dry for most growing seasons. This community type generally occurs near drainages or around playas. These areas may include or be co-dominated by other shrubs and include a graminoid herbaceous layer.	0 acres	4 acres (0.2%)	Small

^a Land cover descriptions are from USGS (2005a). Full descriptions of land cover types, including plant species, can be found in Appendix I.

^b Area in acres, determined from USGS (2004).

^c Includes the area of the cover type within the SEZ, the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region (i.e., a 50-mi [80-km] radius from the center of the SEZ), and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type on BLM lands within the SEZ region. The SEZ region intersects portions of Nevada and California. However, the SEZ occurs only in Nevada.

^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, and other factors from project development. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ. Includes the area of the cover type within the indirect effects area and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region. The area of indirect effects intersects portions of Nevada and California.

^e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and include (1) *small*: a relatively small proportion ($\leq 1\%$) of the cover type within the SEZ region would be lost; (2) *moderate*: an intermediate proportion (>1 but $\leq 10\%$) of a cover type would be lost; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a cover type would be lost.

^f To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

TABLE 11.1.10.1-2 Designated Noxious Weeds of Nevada Occurring in Nye County

Common Name	Scientific Name	Category
Johnsongrass	<i>Sorghum halepense</i>	C
Malta star thistle	<i>Centaurea melitensis</i>	A
Musk thistle	<i>Carduus nutans</i>	B
Puncture vine	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	C
Russian knapweed	<i>Acroptilon repens</i>	B
Saltcedar	<i>Tamarix</i> spp.	C
Sow thistle	<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>	A
Spotted knapweed	<i>Centaurea maculosa</i>	A
Water hemlock	<i>Cicuta maculata</i>	C
White horse-nettle	<i>Solanum elaeagnifolium</i>	B

Sources: NDA (2010); USDA (2010).

SEZ. No species included in Table 11.1.10.1-2 were observed on the SEZ in August 2009. Mediterranean grass (*Schismus arabicus*, *S. barbatus*), an invasive species known to occur within the SEZ, is not included in this table.

The Nevada Department of Agriculture classifies noxious weeds into one of three categories (NDA 2010):

- “Category A: Weeds not found or limited in distribution throughout the state; actively excluded from the state and actively eradicated wherever found; actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; control required by the state in all infestations.”
- “Category B: Weeds established in scattered populations in some counties of the state; actively excluded where possible, actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; control required by the state in areas where populations are not well established or previously unknown to occur.”
- “Category C: Weeds currently established and generally widespread in many counties of the state; actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; abatement at the discretion of the state quarantine officer.”

11.1.10.2 Impacts

The construction of solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ would result in direct impacts on plant communities due to the removal of vegetation within the facility footprint during land-clearing and land-grading operations. Approximately 80% of the SEZ (25,300 acres [102.4 km²]) is assumed to be cleared with full development of the SEZ. The

1 plant communities affected would depend on facility locations, and could include any of the
2 communities occurring on the SEZ. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, all the area
3 of each cover type within the SEZ is considered to be directly affected by removal with full
4 development of the SEZ.

5
6 Indirect effects (caused, for example, by surface runoff or dust from the SEZ) have the
7 potential to degrade affected plant communities and may reduce biodiversity by promoting the
8 decline or elimination of species sensitive to disturbance. Indirect effects can also cause an
9 increase in disturbance-tolerant species or invasive species. High impact levels could result in
10 the elimination of a community or the replacement of one community type by another. The
11 proper implementation of programmatic design features, however, would reduce indirect effects
12 to a minor or small level of impact.

13
14 Possible impacts from solar energy facilities on vegetation that are encountered within
15 the SEZ are described in more detail in Section 5.10.1. Any such impacts would be minimized
16 through the implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
17 Section A.2.2, and from any additional mitigation applied. Section 11.1.10.2.3 identifies design
18 features of particular relevance to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ.

19 20 21 ***11.1.10.2.1 Impacts on Native Species***

22
23 The impacts of construction, operation, and decommissioning were considered small if
24 the impact affected a relatively small proportion (<1%) of the cover type in the SEZ region
25 (within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ); a moderate impact (>1 but <10%) could affect
26 an intermediate proportion of cover type; a large impact could affect greater than 10% of a
27 cover type.

28
29 Solar facility construction and operation in the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ would
30 primarily affect communities of the Sonora–Mojave Creosotebush–White Bursage Desert
31 Scrub cover type. Additional cover types that would be affected within the SEZ include North
32 American Warm Desert Playa, Sonora–Mojave Mixed Salt Desert Scrub, and North American
33 Warm Desert Wash. Table 11.1.10.1-1 summarizes the potential impacts on land cover types
34 resulting from solar energy facilities in the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Most of these cover
35 types are relatively common in the SEZ region; however, North American Warm Desert Wash is
36 relatively uncommon, representing 0.9% of the land area within the SEZ region. Desert dry
37 washes, desert chenopod scrub/mixed salt desert scrub, and playas are important sensitive
38 habitats on the SEZ.

39
40 The construction, operation, and decommissioning of solar projects within the proposed
41 Amargosa Valley SEZ would result in moderate impacts on Sonora–Mojave Creosotebush–
42 White Bursage Desert Scrub. Solar project development within the SEZ would result in small
43 impacts on the remaining cover types in the affected area.

44
45 Because of the arid conditions, re-establishment of shrub communities in temporarily
46 disturbed areas would likely be very difficult and might require extended periods of time. In

1 addition, noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize adjacent
2 undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in widespread
3 habitat degradation. Cryptogamic soil crusts occur in many of the shrubland communities in the
4 region. Damage to these crusts, as by the operation of heavy equipment or other vehicles, can
5 alter important soil characteristics, such as nutrient cycling and availability, and affect plant
6 community characteristics (Lovich and Bainbridge 1999).

7
8 The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside a
9 solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community
10 composition. Fugitive dust deposition could affect plant communities of each of the cover types
11 occurring within the indirect impact area identified in Table 11.1.10.1-1. The construction of
12 solar projects within the SEZ could alter deposition processes within the Big Dune area
13 southeast, potentially affecting dune habitats.

14
15 Communities associated with playa habitats, such as those on the SEZ and the large
16 playas southeast of the SEZ associated with the Amargosa River, greasewood flats communities,
17 riparian habitats, marshes, or other intermittently flooded areas downgradient from solar projects
18 in the SEZ could be affected by ground-disturbing activities. Site clearing and grading could
19 disrupt surface-water flow patterns, resulting in changes in the frequency, duration, depth, or
20 extent of inundation or soil saturation, and could potentially alter playa, riparian, or greasewood
21 flats plant communities and affect community function. Increases in surface runoff from a solar
22 energy project site could also affect hydrologic characteristics of these communities. The
23 introduction of contaminants into these habitats could result from spills of fuels or other
24 materials used on a project site. Soil disturbance could result in sedimentation in these areas,
25 which could degrade or eliminate sensitive plant communities. Grading could also affect dry
26 washes within the SEZ. Alteration of surface drainage patterns or hydrology could adversely
27 affect downstream dry wash communities. Vegetation within these communities could be lost by
28 erosion or desiccation. Several dry washes terminate in the Big Dune area. The construction of
29 solar projects within the SEZ could alter sediment deposition in the area of the Big Dune,
30 potentially affecting the maintenance of dune habitats.

31
32 Land-disturbance activities can also alter groundwater recharge and discharge processes,
33 and alter surface water-wetland-groundwater connectivity (see Section 11.1.9.2). Extensive
34 alterations to the ephemeral channels of the natural drainage pattern of the Amargosa River could
35 disrupt groundwater recharge. These effects could affect wetland habitats that are associated with
36 areas of groundwater discharge.

37
38 The use of groundwater within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ for technologies with
39 high water requirements, such as dry-cooling systems, has the potential to cause drawdown of
40 groundwater surface elevations (see Section 11.1.9.2). Groundwater-dependent plant
41 communities within the Amargosa Desert groundwater basin, or in other hydraulically connected
42 basins, could be affected by changes in groundwater elevations. Springs occur at Ash Meadows
43 and in Death Valley National Park and support extensive wetland communities. Groundwater
44 depletion and subsequent reductions in groundwater discharges at the springs could result in
45 degradation of these habitats. Groundwater depletion could also potentially affect other wetland
46 habitats in the vicinity of the SEZ, such as those associated with the Amargosa River. Other

1 communities that depend on accessible groundwater, such as mesquite bosque communities,
2 which occur in the indirect affects area, could also become degraded or lost as a result of lowered
3 groundwater levels. Studies of the Amargosa Valley groundwater recharge and discharge
4 processes would be necessary to determine potential effects of groundwater withdrawals within
5 the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ on these springs and other locations of groundwater
6 discharge.

9 **11.1.10.2 Impacts from Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plant Species**

10
11 Executive Order (E.O.) 13112, “Invasive Species,” directs federal agencies to prevent
12 the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic,
13 ecological, and human health impacts of invasive species (*Federal Register*, Volume 64, page
14 61836, Feb. 8, 1999). Potential effects of noxious weeds and invasive plant species that could
15 result from solar energy facilities are described in Section 5.10.1. Noxious weeds and invasive
16 species could inadvertently be brought to a project site by equipment previously used in infested
17 areas, or they may be present on or near a project site. Despite required programmatic design
18 features to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, project disturbance could potentially increase
19 the prevalence of noxious weeds and invasive species in the affected area of the proposed
20 Amargosa Valley SEZ, and increase the probability that weeds could be transported into areas
21 that were previously relatively weed-free. This could result in reduced restoration success and
22 possible widespread habitat degradation.

23
24 Noxious weeds, including Mediterranean grass, occur on the SEZ. Additional species
25 designated as noxious weeds in Nevada, and those known to occur in Nye County, are given in
26 Table 11.1.10.1-2. Past or present land uses, such as OHV use, may affect the susceptibility of
27 plant communities to the establishment of noxious weeds and invasive species. Disturbance may
28 promote the establishment and spread of invasive species. Disturbance associated with existing
29 roads and transmission lines within the SEZ area of potential impacts also likely contributes to
30 the susceptibility of plant communities to the establishment and spread of noxious weeds and
31 invasive species.

32 33 34 **11.1.10.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

35
36 In addition to the programmatic design features, SEZ-specific design features would
37 reduce the potential for impacts on plant communities. While the specifics of some of these
38 practices are best established when considering specific project details, some SEZ-specific
39 design features can be identified at this time, as follows:

- 40
41 • An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species
42 control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
43 addressing habitat restoration should be approved and implemented to
44 increase the potential for successful restoration of affected habitats and
45 minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species, such as

1 Mediterranean grass. Invasive species control should focus on biological and
2 mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use of herbicides.

- 3
- 4 • All playa, chenopod scrub, and desert dry wash habitats, shall be avoided to
5 the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated. A buffer
6 area shall be maintained around playas and dry washes to reduce the potential
7 for impacts on these habitats on or near the SEZ.
- 8
- 9 • Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on the
10 Amargosa River, and dry wash, playa, riparian, marsh, and greasewood flat
11 habitats, including downstream occurrences, resulting from surface water
12 runoff, erosion, sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive
13 dust deposition to these habitats. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls
14 would be determined through agency consultation. Appropriate measures to
15 minimize impacts to Big Dunes habitats should be determined through agency
16 consultation.
- 17
- 18 • Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for
19 indirect impacts on groundwater-dependent habitats in the Amargosa Desert
20 groundwater basin, or in other hydraulically connected basins, such as
21 springs at Ash Meadows and Death Valley National Park, other locations of
22 groundwater discharge, such as the Amargosa River, or other groundwater-
23 dependent habitats in the vicinity of the SEZ, such as mesquite bosque
24 communities.
- 25

26 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to other programmatic
27 design features, it is anticipated that a high potential for impacts from invasive species and
28 impacts to dry washes, playas, greasewood flats, chenopod scrub, mesquite bosque, springs,
29 riparian habitats, and wetlands would be reduced to a minimal potential for impact.

30
31

1 **11.1.11 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota**
2

3 This section addresses wildlife (amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals) and aquatic
4 biota that could occur within the potentially affected area of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ.
5 Wildlife known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined
6 from the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CWHRS) (CDFG 2008) and
7 SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from
8 SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). The amount of aquatic habitat within the SEZ region
9 was determined by estimating the length of linear perennial stream and canal features and the
10 area of standing water body features (i.e., ponds, lakes, and reservoirs) within 50 mi (80 km) of
11 the SEZ by using available geographical information system (GIS) surface water datasets.
12

13 The affected area considered in this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect
14 effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified
15 during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur) within the
16 SEZ. The maximum developed area within the SEZ would be 25,300 acres (102 km²). No areas
17 of direct effects would occur for either a new transmission line or a new access road because
18 existing transmission line and road corridors are adjacent to or through the SEZ.
19

20 The area of indirect effects was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ
21 boundary where ground-disturbing activities would not occur, but that could be indirectly
22 affected by activities in the area of direct effects (e.g., surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and
23 accidental spills in the SEZ). Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the
24 maximum of 25,300 acres (102 km²) of direct effects was also included as part of the area of
25 indirect effects. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance
26 away from the SEZ. The area of indirect effects was identified on the basis of professional
27 judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be
28 subject to indirect effects. These areas of direct and indirect effects are defined and the impact
29 assessment approach is described in Appendix M.
30

31 The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is Sonora–Mojave
32 creosotebush white bursage desert scrub (see Section 11.1.10). Potentially unique habitats in
33 the affected area include cliffs and rock outcrops, washes, and playa habitats. Wash and playa
34 habitats occur within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. The Amargosa River flows
35 northwest to southeast within the SEZ and the area of indirect effects. This feature is one of
36 two intermittent streams known to occur within the affected area. The other intermittent stream
37 is an unnamed wash east of the SEZ in the area of indirect effects (see Figure 11.1.9.1-1).
38
39

40 **11.1.11.1 Amphibians and Reptiles**
41

42
43 ***11.1.11.1.1 Affected Environment***
44

45 This section addresses amphibian and reptile species that are known to occur, or for
46 which potentially suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the
47 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. The list of amphibian and reptile species potentially present in

1 the SEZ area was determined from species lists available from the Nevada Natural Heritage
2 Program (NNHP) (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available from the
3 CWHRS (CDFG 2008) and SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each
4 species were determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See Appendix M for
5 additional information on the approach used.

6
7 On the basis of species distributions within the area of the proposed Amargosa Valley
8 SEZ and habitat preferences of the amphibian species, the Amargosa toad (*Bufo nelsoni*) and
9 red-spotted toad (*Bufo punctatus*) would be expected to occur within the SEZ (USGS 2007;
10 Stebbins 2003). Because of its special status standing, information on the Amargosa toad is
11 provided in Section 11.1.12. As the red-spotted toad prefers dry, rocky areas near temporary
12 sources of standing water, its occurrence within the SEZ would be spatially limited. It would
13 most likely occur in the portion of the SEZ that overlaps Amargosa River.

14
15 More than 25 reptile species occur within the area that encompasses the proposed
16 Amargosa Valley SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) is
17 a federal- and state-listed threatened species. This species is discussed in Section 11.1.12. Lizard
18 species expected to occur within the SEZ include the desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma*
19 *platyrhinos*), Great Basin collared lizard (*Crotaphytus bicinctores*), long-nosed leopard lizard
20 (*Gambelia wislizenii*), side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus*
21 *occidentalis*), western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris*), and zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus*
22 *draconoides*). Snake species expected to occur within the SEZ include the coachwhip
23 (*Masticophis flagellum*), glossy snake (*Arizona elegans*), gophersnake (*Pituophis catenifer*),
24 groundsnake (*Sonora semiannulata*), and nightsnake (*Hypsiglena torquata*). The sidewinder
25 (*Crotalus cerastes*) would be the most common poisonous snake species expected to occur on
26 the SEZ.

27
28 Table 11.1.11.1-1 provides habitat information for representative amphibian and reptile
29 species that could occur within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Special status amphibian
30 and reptile species are addressed in Section 11.1.12.

31 32 33 **11.1.11.1.2 Impacts**

34
35 The types of impacts that amphibians and reptiles could incur from construction,
36 operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in
37 Section 5.10.2.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
38 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2 and through the
39 application of any additional mitigation measures. Section 11.1.11.1.3, below, identifies SEZ-
40 specific design features of particular relevance to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ.

41
42 The assessment of impacts on amphibian and reptile species is based on available
43 information on the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.1.11.1.1
44 following the analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional National Environmental
45 Policy Act (NEPA) assessments and coordination with state natural resource agencies may be

TABLE 11.1.11.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Amphibian and Reptile Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Amphibians				
Red-spotted toad (<i>Bufo punctatus</i>)	Dry, rocky areas at lower elevations near desert springs and persistent pools along rocky arroyos; desert streams and oases; open grassland; scrubland oaks; and dry woodlands. About 2,871,700 acres ^g of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,874 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.3% of available suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash and playa habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Lizards				
Desert horned lizard (<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>)	Deserts dominated by sagebrush, creosotebush, greasewood, or cactus. Occurs on sandy flats, alluvial fans, washes, and edge of dunes. Burrows in soil during periods of inactivity. About 4,670,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	144,180 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Lizards (Cont.)				
Great Basin collared lizard (<i>Crotaphytus bicinctores</i>)	Usually inhabits alluvia, lava flows, mountain slopes, canyons, buttes, rock outcrops, washes, and rocky plains. Limiting factors are the presence of large boulders and open/sparse vegetation. About 3,918,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	142,436 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Long-nosed leopard lizard (<i>Gambelia wislizenii</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas with scattered . Prefers sandy or gravelly flats and plains. Also prefers areas with abundant rodent burrows that they occupy when inactive. About 2,990,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,934 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Lizards (Cont.)				
Side-blotched lizard (<i>Uta stansburiana</i>)	Low to moderate elevations in washes, arroyos, boulder-strewn ravines, rocky cliff bases, and flat shrubby areas in canyon bottoms. Often along sandy washes. Usually in areas with a lot of bare ground. About 3,499,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	136,890 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Western fence lizard (<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>)	Disturbed areas, roadsides, gravel beds, rock quarries, lava flows, outcrops, talus slopes, shrublands, riparian areas, and coniferous woodlands. About 3,620,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	134,873 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Lizards (Cont.)				
Western whiptail (<i>Cnemidophorus tigris</i>)	Arid and semiarid habitats with sparse plant cover. About 3,235,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	125,002 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Zebra-tailed lizard (<i>Callisaurus draconoides</i>)	Open, warm-desert habitats, especially dry washes and canyons with fine gravel and sand. About 3,387,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	128,153 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Snakes				
Coachwhip (<i>Masticophis flagellum</i>)	Creosotebush desert, shortgrass prairie, shrub-covered flats and hills. Sandy to rocky substrates. Avoids dense vegetation. About 3,313,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,315 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Glossy snake (<i>Arizona elegans</i>)	Light shrubby to barren deserts, sagebrush flats, grasslands, and chaparral-covered slopes and woodlands. Prefers sandy grasslands, shrublands and woodlands. About 2,122,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	118,618 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Snakes (Cont.)				
Gophersnake (<i>Pituophis catenifer</i>)	Plains grasslands, sandhills, riparian areas, marshes, edges of ponds and lakes, rocky canyons, semidesert and mountain shrublands, montane woodlands, rural and suburban areas, and agricultural areas. Likely inhabits pocket gopher burrows in winter. About 3,510,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	125,456 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Groundsnake (<i>Sonora semiannulata</i>)	Arid and semiarid regions with rocky to sandy soils. River bottoms, desert flats, sand hummocks, and rocky hillsides. About 3,332,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,809 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Snakes (Cont.)				
Nightsnake (<i>Hypsiglena torquata</i>)	Arid and semiarid desert flats, plains, and woodlands; areas with rocky and sandy soils are preferred. During cold periods of the year, it seeks refuge underground, in crevices, or under rocks. About 3,029,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,198 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Sidewinder (<i>Crotalus cerastes</i>)	Windblown sand habitats near rodent burrows. Most common in areas of sand hummocks topped with creosote, mesquite, or other desert plants. About 2,403,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,763 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimated the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 25,300 acres of direct effects within the SEZ was assumed.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.1.11.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with the construction and maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 25,300 acres of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- ^e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^f Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^g To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 needed to address project-specific impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and
2 consultations could result in additional required actions to avoid or mitigate impacts on
3 amphibians and reptiles (see Section 11.1.11.1.3).

4
5 In general, impacts on amphibians and reptiles would result from habitat disturbance
6 (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration) and from disturbance, injury, or mortality
7 to individual amphibians and reptiles. On the basis of the magnitude of impacts on amphibians
8 and reptiles summarized in Table 11.1.11.1-1, direct impacts on amphibian and reptile species
9 would be moderate for the glossy snake and sidewinder, as 1.2% and 1.1%, respectively, of
10 potentially suitable habitats identified for these species in the SEZ would be lost. Direct impacts
11 on all other representative amphibian and reptile species would be small, as 0.9% or less of
12 potentially suitable habitats identified for the species in the SEZ region would be lost. Larger
13 areas of potentially suitable habitats for the amphibian and reptile species occur within the area
14 of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 5.6% of available habitat for the glossy snake). Other
15 impacts on amphibians and reptiles could result from surface water and sediment runoff from
16 disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental spills, collection, and
17 harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with implementation of
18 programmatic design features.

19
20 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts
21 on individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
22 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially
23 long term benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas.
24 Section 5.10.2.1.4 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation
25 on wildlife. Of particular importance for amphibian and reptile species would be the restoration
26 of original ground surface contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with
27 semiarid shrublands.

30 ***11.1.11.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

31
32 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
33 Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on amphibians and reptiles, especially for
34 those species that utilize habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., washes and playas). Indirect
35 impacts could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those
36 engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While
37 SEZ-specific design features are best established when considering specific project details, one
38 design feature that can be identified at this time is:

- 39
40 • The Amargosa River should be avoided.

41
42 If this SEZ-specific design feature is implemented in addition to the programmatic design
43 features, impacts on amphibian and reptile species could be reduced. However, as potentially
44 suitable habitats for a number of the amphibian and reptile species occur throughout much of the
45 SEZ, additional species-specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult
46 or infeasible.

1 **11.1.11.2 Birds**

2
3
4 **11.1.11.2.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section addresses bird species that are known to occur, or for which potentially
7 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Amargosa
8 Valley SEZ. The list of bird species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined from the
9 NNHP (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available from the CWHRS
10 (CDFG 2008) and SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were
11 determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See Appendix M for additional
12 information on the approach used.

13
14 Ten bird species that could occur on or
15 in the affected area of the SEZ are considered
16 focal species in the *Desert Bird Conservation*
17 *Plan* (CalPIF 2009): ash-throated flycatcher
18 (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), black-tailed
19 gnatcatcher (*Polioptila melanura*), black-
20 throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*),
21 burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), common
22 raven (*Corvus corax*), Costa’s hummingbird (*Calypte costae*), ladder-backed woodpecker
23 (*Picoides scalaris*), Le Conte’s thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*), phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*),
24 and verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*). Habitats for most of these species are described in
25 Table 11.1.11.2-1. Because of their special species status, the burrowing owl and phainopepla
26 are discussed in Section 11.1.12.

Desert Focal Bird Species

Bird species whose requirements define spatial attributes, habitat characteristics, and management regimes representative of a healthy desert system (Chase and Geupel 2005).

27
28
29 **Waterfowl, Wading Birds, and Shorebirds**

30
31 As discussed in Section 4.6.2.2.2, waterfowl (ducks, geese, and swans), wading birds
32 (herons and cranes), and shorebirds (avocets, gulls, plovers, rails, sandpipers, stilts, and terns)
33 are among the most abundant groups of birds in the six-state solar study area. However, within
34 the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebird species would be
35 mostly absent to uncommon. Playa and wash habitats within the SEZ may attract shorebird
36 species, but the perennial stream, canal, lake, and reservoir habitats within 50 mi (80 km) of
37 the SEZ would provide more viable habitat for this group of birds. The killdeer (*Charadrius*
38 *vociferus*) is the shorebird species most likely to occur within the SEZ.

39
40
41 **Neotropical Migrants**

42
43 As discussed in Section 4.6.2.2.3, neotropical migrants represent the most diverse
44 category of birds within the six-state solar energy study area. Species expected to occur within
45 the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ include the ash-throated flycatcher, Bewick’s wren
46 (*Thryomanes bewickii*), black-tailed gnatcatcher, black-throated sparrow, common poorwill

1 (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), common raven, Costa’s hummingbird, greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx*
2 *californianus*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), ladder-backed woodpecker, Le Conte’s
3 thrasher, lesser nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*),
4 northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), rock wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), sage sparrow
5 (*Amphispiza belli*), Say’s phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), verdin, and western kingbird (*Tyrannus*
6 *verticalis*) (CDFG 2008; USGS 2007).
7
8

9 **Birds of Prey**

10
11 Section 4.6.2.2.4 gives an overview of the birds of prey (raptors, owls, and vultures)
12 within the six-state solar study area. Raptor species that could occur within the proposed
13 Amargosa Valley SEZ include the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), golden eagle (*Aquila*
14 *chrysaetos*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), red-tailed hawk
15 (*Buteo jamaicensis*), and turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*) (CDFG 2008; USGS 2007). Several
16 other special status birds of prey are discussed in Section 11.1.12. These include the northern
17 goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) and burrowing owl.
18
19

20 **Upland Game Birds**

21
22 Section 4.6.2.2.5 gives an overview of the upland game birds (primarily pheasants,
23 grouse, quail, and doves) that occur within the six-state solar study area. Upland game species
24 that could occur within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ include the chukar (*Alectoris*
25 *chukar*), Gambel’s quail (*Callipepla gambelii*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), and white-
26 winged dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) (CDFG 2008; USGS 2007).
27

28 Table 11.1.11.2-1 provides habitat information for representative bird species that could
29 occur within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Special status bird species are discussed in
30 Section 11.1.12.
31
32

33 **11.1.11.2.2 Impacts**

34
35 The types of impacts that birds could incur from construction, operation, and
36 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
37 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
38 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the application of any additional
39 mitigation measures. Section 11.1.11.2.3 identifies design features of particular relevance to the
40 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ.
41

42 The assessment of impacts on bird species is based on available information on the
43 presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.1.11.2.1 following the analysis
44 approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination with federal
45 or state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts more
46 thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions to
47 avoid or mitigate impacts on birds (see Section 11.1.11.2.3).

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Bird Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Shorebirds				
Killdeer (<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>)	Open areas such as fields, meadows, lawns, mudflats, and shores. Nests on ground in open dry or gravelly locations. About 208,044 acres ^g of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	63 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.03% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	883 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.4% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoidance of playa and wash habitats. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants</i> Ash-throated flycatcher (<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>)	Common in scrub and woodland habitats, including desert riparian and desert washes. Requires hole/cavity for nesting. Uses shrubs or small trees for foraging perches. About 3,369,523 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,263 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.4% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i> Bewick's wren (<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>)	Generally associated with dense, brushy habitats. It is a permanent resident of lowland deserts and pinyon-juniper forests of southern Utah. Breeding occurs in brushy areas of open woodlands and other open habitats. It is a cavity nester with nests constructed in small enclosed areas such as tree cavities, nesting boxes, rock crevices, or the center of a brush pile. About 3,343,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,594 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Black-tailed gnatcatcher (<i>Poliophtila melanura</i>)	Nests in bushes mainly in wooded desert washes with dense mesquite, palo verde, ironwood, and acacia. Also occurs in desert scrub habitat. About 1,624,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	116,518 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.2% of potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Black-throated sparrow (<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>)	Chaparral and desert scrub habitats with sparse to open stands of shrubs. Often in areas with scattered Joshua trees. Nests in thorny shrubs or cactus. About 3,035,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,559 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.2% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Common poorwill (<i>Phalaenoptilus nuttallii</i>)	Scrubby and brushy areas, prairie, desert, rocky canyons, open woodlands, and broken forests. Mostly in arid and semiarid habitats. Nests in open areas on a bare site. About 4,132,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	138,253 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation also provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i> Common raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	Occurs in most habitats. Trees and cliffs provide cover. Roosts primarily in trees. Nests on cliffs, bluffs, tall trees, or human-made structures. Forages in sparse, open terrain. About 3,619,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,859 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i> Costa's hummingbird (<i>Calypte costae</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas, arid brushy foothills, and chaparral. Main habitats are desert washes, edges of desert riparian and valley foothill riparian areas, coastal shrub, desert scrub, desert succulent shrub, lower-elevation chaparral, and palm oasis. Also in mountains, meadows, and gardens during migration and winter. Most common in canyons and washes when nesting. Nests are located in trees, shrubs, vines, or cacti. About 2,569,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.0% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,187 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.8% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)				
Greater roadrunner (<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>)	Desert scrub, chaparral, edges of cultivated lands, and arid open areas with scattered brush. Fairly common in all desert habitats. Requires thickets, large bushes, or small trees for shade, refuge, and roosting. Usually nests low in trees, shrubs, or clumps of cactus. Rarely nests on ground. About 4,385,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	139,391 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Horned lark (<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>)	Common to abundant resident in a variety of open habitats. Breeds in grasslands, sagebrush, semidesert shrublands, and alpine tundra. During migration and winter, inhabits the same habitats other than tundra, and occurs in agricultural areas. Usually occurs where plant density is low and there are exposed soils. About 3,253,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	125,996 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Ladder-backed woodpecker (<i>Picoides scalaris</i>)	Fairly common in Mojave and Colorado Deserts. Variety of habitats including deserts, arid scrub, riparian woodlands, mesquite, scrub oak, pinyon-juniper woodlands. Digs nest hole in rotted stub or dead or dying branches of various trees. Also nests in saguaro, agave, yucca, fence posts, and utility poles. Nests on ledges; branches of trees, shrubs, and cactus; and holes in trees or walls. About 2,986,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,193 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.2% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Le Conte's thrasher (<i>Toxostoma lecontei</i>)	Open desert wash, alkali desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats. Prefers to nest and forage in arroyos and washes lined with dense stands of creosotebush and salt bush. About 2,544,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.0% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,010 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Lesser nighthawk (<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>)	Open country, desert regions, scrub, savanna, and cultivated areas. Usually near water, including open marshes, salt ponds, large rivers, rice paddies, and beaches. Roosts on low perches or the ground. Nests in the open on bare sites. About 4,218,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	141,997 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)				
Loggerhead shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	Open country with scattered trees and shrubs, savanna, desert scrub, desert riparian, Joshua tree, and occasionally, open woodland habitats. Perches on poles, wires, or fence posts (suitable hunting perches are important aspect of habitat). Nests in shrubs and small trees. About 3,652,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,315 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Northern mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	Parkland, cultivated lands, second-growth habitats, desert scrub, and riparian areas at low elevations. Forages on ground in short, grassy to nearly barren substrates. About 4,460,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	142,096 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Rock wren (<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>)	Arid and semiarid habitats. It breeds in areas with talus slopes, scrublands, or dry washes. Nests, constructed of plant materials, are located in rock crevices, and the nest entrance is paved with small rocks and stones. About 4,593,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	141,884 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Sage sparrow (<i>Amphispiza belli</i>)	Prefers shrubland, grassland, and desert habitats. The nest, constructed of twigs and grasses, is located either low in a shrub or on the ground. About 1,717,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	122 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	4,807 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i> Say's phoebe (<i>Sayornis saya</i>)	Arid open country, deserts, sagebrush plains, dry barren foothills, canyons, cliffs, ranches, and rural homes. Nests in cliff crevices, holes in banks, sheltered ledges, tree cavities, under bridges and roofs, and in mines. About 3,695,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	137,956 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Verdin (<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>)	Desert riparian, desert wash, desert scrub, and alkali desert scrub areas with large shrubs and small trees. Nests in shrubs, small trees, or cactus. About 2,422,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.0% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,006 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.1% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)				
Western kingbird (<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>)	Occurs in a variety of habitats, including riparian forests and woodlands, savannahs, shrublands, agricultural lands, deserts, and urban areas. Nesting occurs in trees, bushes, and other raised areas, such as buildings. It migrates to Central America or the southeastern United States for the winter. About 3,192,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,879 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Birds of Prey				
American kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius</i>)	Occurs in most open habitats, in various shrub and early successional forest habitats, forest openings, and various ecotones. Perches on trees, snags, rocks, utility poles and wires, and fence posts. Uses cavities in trees, snags, rock areas, banks, and buildings for nesting and cover. About 2,934,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	59 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	27,143 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)				
Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)	Grasslands, shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine forests. Occasionally in most other habitats, especially during migration and winter. Nests on cliffs and sometimes trees in rugged areas, with breeding birds ranging widely over surrounding areas. About 4,632,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	142,781 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
Great horned owl (<i>Bubo virginianus</i>)	Needs large abandoned bird nest or large cavity for nesting. Usually lives on forest edges and hunts in open areas. In desert areas, requires wooded cliff areas for nesting. About 5,026,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	145,051 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)				
Long-eared owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)	Nests and roosts in dense vegetation and hunts in open areas (e.g., creosotebush-bursage flats, desert scrub, grasslands, and agricultural fields). About 3,439,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,889 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Red-tailed hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	Wide variety of habitats from deserts, mountains, and populated valleys. Open areas with scattered, elevated perch sites such as scrub desert, plains and montane grassland, agricultural fields, pastures urban parklands, broken coniferous forests, and deciduous woodland. Nests on cliff ledges or in tall trees. About 1,596,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	59 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	10,666 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.
Turkey vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>)	Occurs in open stages of most habitats that provide adequate cliffs or large trees for nesting, roosting, and resting. Migrates and forages over most open habitats. Will roost communally in trees, exposed boulders, and occasionally transmission line support towers. About 3,664,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	137,880 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Upland Game Birds				
Chukar (<i>Alectoris chukar</i>)	Steep, semiarid slopes with rocky outcrops and shrubs with a grass and forb understory. Sources of water are required during hot, dry periods, with most birds during the brooding period found within 0.25 mi (0.4 km) of water. About 3,527,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,038 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. However, avoidance of the Amargosa River would protect a potential occasional source of water.
Gambel's quail (<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>)	Deserts, especially in areas with brushy or thorny growth, and adjacent cultivated areas. Usually occurs near water. Nests on the ground under cover of small trees, shrubs, and grass tufts. About 4,043,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	140,185 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Upland Game Birds (Cont.)				
Mourning dove (<i>Zenaida macroura</i>)	Habitat generalist, occurring in grasslands, shrublands, croplands, lowland and foothill riparian forests, ponderosa pine forests, deserts, and urban and suburban areas. Rarely in aspen and other forests, coniferous woodlands, and alpine tundra. Nests on ground or in trees. Winters mostly in lowland riparian forests adjacent to cropland. About 3,699,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,511 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.48% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
White-winged dove (<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>)	Nests in low to medium height trees with dense foliage and fairly open ground cover. Feeds on wild seeds, grains and fruit. About 2,593,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.0% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	125,191 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.8% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.1.11.2-1 (Cont.)

-
- b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimated the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 25,300 acres of direct effects within the SEZ was assumed.
- c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with the construction and maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 25,300 acres of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- f Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- g To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 In general, impacts on birds would result from habitat disturbance (i.e., habitat reduction,
2 fragmentation, and alteration), and from disturbance, injury, or mortality to individual birds.
3 Table 11.1.11.2-1 summarizes the magnitude of potential impacts on representative bird species
4 resulting from solar energy development in the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Direct impacts
5 on the black-tailed gnatcatcher would be moderate as SEZ development could cause the loss of
6 1.6% of its potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ region. For the remaining representative
7 bird species, direct impacts would be small as 1.0% or less of potentially suitable habitat could
8 be lost (Table 11.1.11.2-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitat for bird species occur
9 within the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 7.2% of potentially suitable habitat for the
10 black-tailed gnatcatcher). Other impacts on birds could result from collision with vehicles and
11 infrastructure (e.g., buildings and fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed
12 areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species,
13 accidental spills, and harassment. Indirect impacts on areas outside the SEZ (e.g., impacts
14 caused by dust generation, erosion, and sedimentation) are expected to be negligible with
15 implementation of programmatic design features.

16
17 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts
18 on individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
19 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
20 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
21 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
22 particular importance for bird species would be the restoration of original ground surface
23 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with semiarid shrublands.

24 25 26 ***11.1.11.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

27
28 The successful implementation of programmatic design features presented in Appendix
29 A, Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on birds, especially for those species that
30 depend on habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., wash and playa habitats). Indirect impacts
31 could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those
32 engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While
33 SEZ-specific design features important for reducing impacts on birds are best established when
34 considering specific project details, some design features can be identified at this time:

- 35
36 • For solar energy facilities within the SEZ, the requirements contained within
37 the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and USFWS to
38 promote the conservation of migratory birds will be followed.
- 39
40 • Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation
41 regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the
42 USFWS and the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW). A permit may be
43 required under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
- 44
45 • The Amargosa River should be avoided.

1 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to the programmatic
2 design features, impacts on bird species could be reduced. However, as potentially suitable
3 habitats for a number of the bird species occur throughout much of the SEZ, additional species-
4 specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.
5

6 7 **11.1.11.3 Mammals**

8 9 10 ***11.1.11.3.1 Affected Environment***

11
12 This section addresses mammal species that are known to occur, or for which potentially
13 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Amargosa
14 Valley SEZ. The list of mammal species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined
15 from the NNHP (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available from the
16 CWHRs (CDFG 2008) and SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each
17 species were determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See Appendix M for
18 additional information on the approach used.
19

20 More than 55 species of mammals have ranges that encompass the area of the proposed
21 Amargosa Valley SEZ (NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007); however, suitable habitats for a number of
22 these species are limited or nonexistent within the SEZ (USGS 2007). Similar to the overview of
23 mammals provided for the six-state solar energy study area (Section 4.6.2.3), the following
24 discussion for the SEZ emphasizes big game and other mammal species that (1) have key
25 habitats within or near the SEZ, (2) are important to humans (e.g., big game, small game, and
26 furbearer species), and/or (3) are representative of other species that share important habitats.
27

28 29 **Big Game**

30
31 The big game species that could occur within the vicinity of the proposed Amargosa
32 Valley SEZ are the cougar (*Puma concolor*), elk (*Cervis canadensis*), mule deer (*Odocoileus*
33 *hemionus*), Nelson's bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*), and pronghorn (*Antilocapra*
34 *americana*) (USGS 2007). Because of its special species status, the Nelson's bighorn sheep is
35 addressed in Section 11.1.12. Among the other big game species, potentially suitable habitat for
36 the cougar and mule deer occur throughout most of the SEZ. No potentially suitable habitat for
37 elk or pronghorn occur within the SEZ, while only limited potentially suitable habitat for these
38 species occurs within the area of indirect effects. Figure 11.1.11.3-1 shows the location of the
39 SEZ relative to mapped elk habitat; Figure 11.1.11.3-2 shows the location of the SEZ relative to
40 the mapped range of mule deer habitat; and Figure 11.1.11.3-3 shows the location of the SEZ
41 relative to mapped pronghorn habitat.
42
43

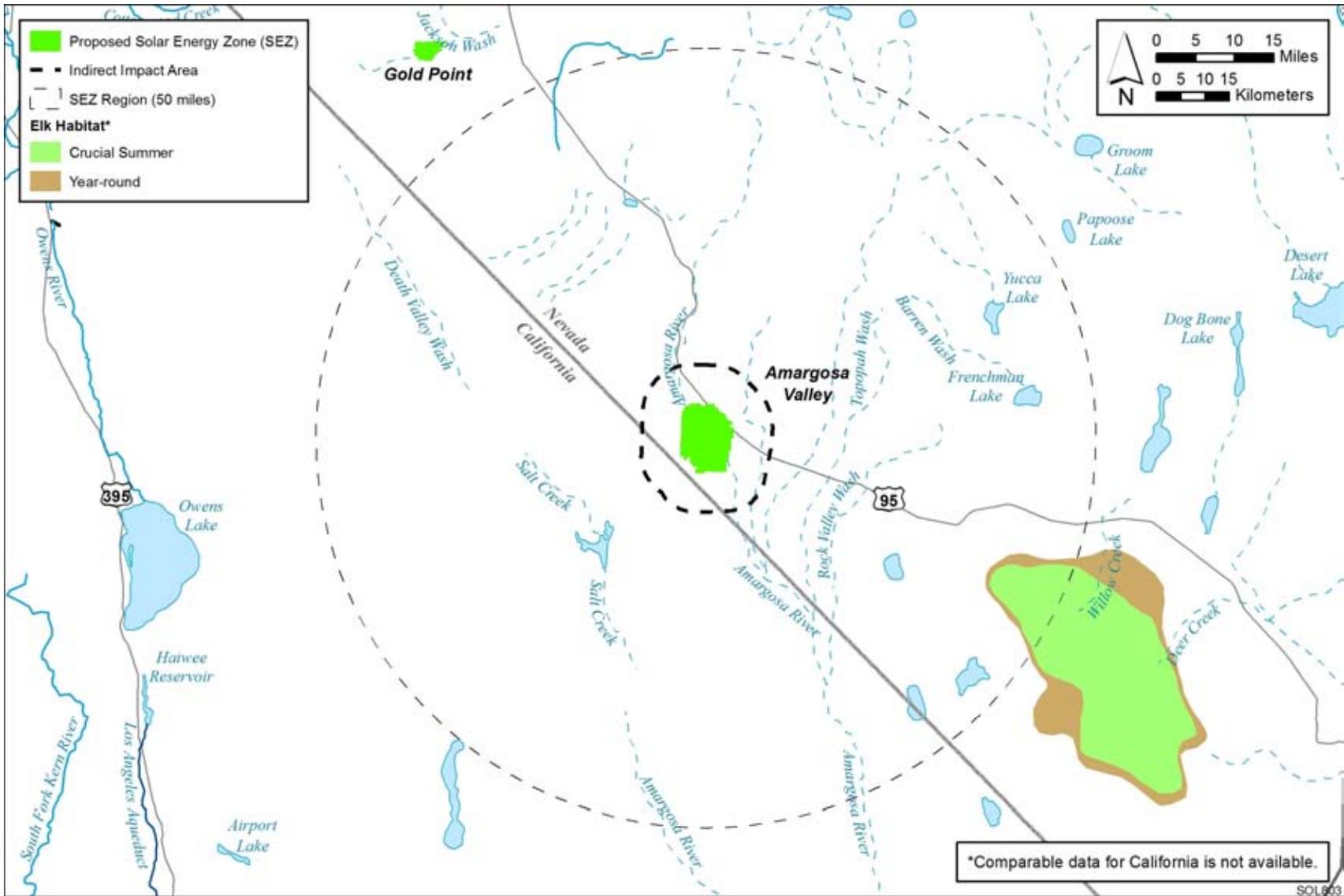
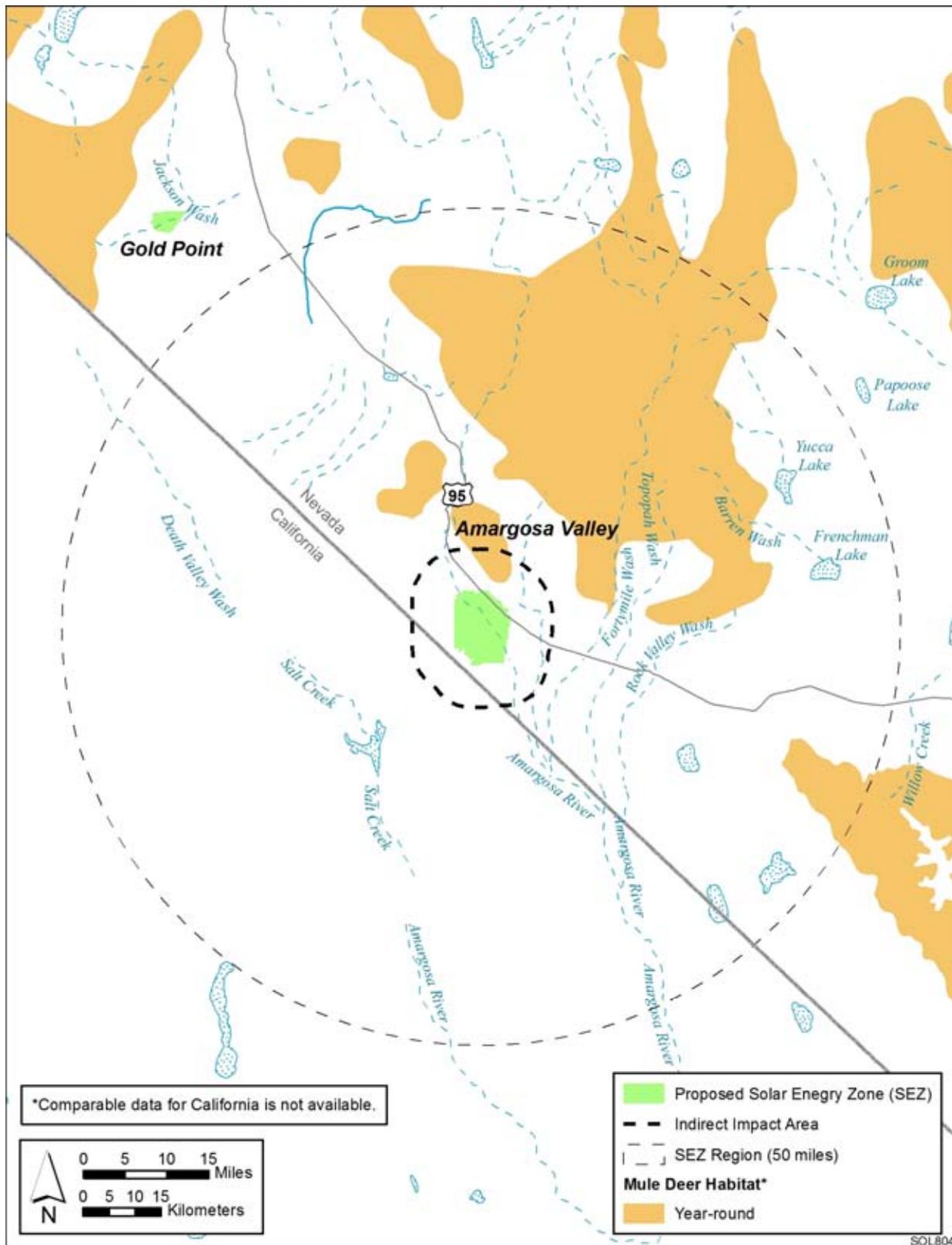


FIGURE 11.1.11.3-1 Location of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ Relative to the Mapped Range of Elk (Source: NDOW 2010)

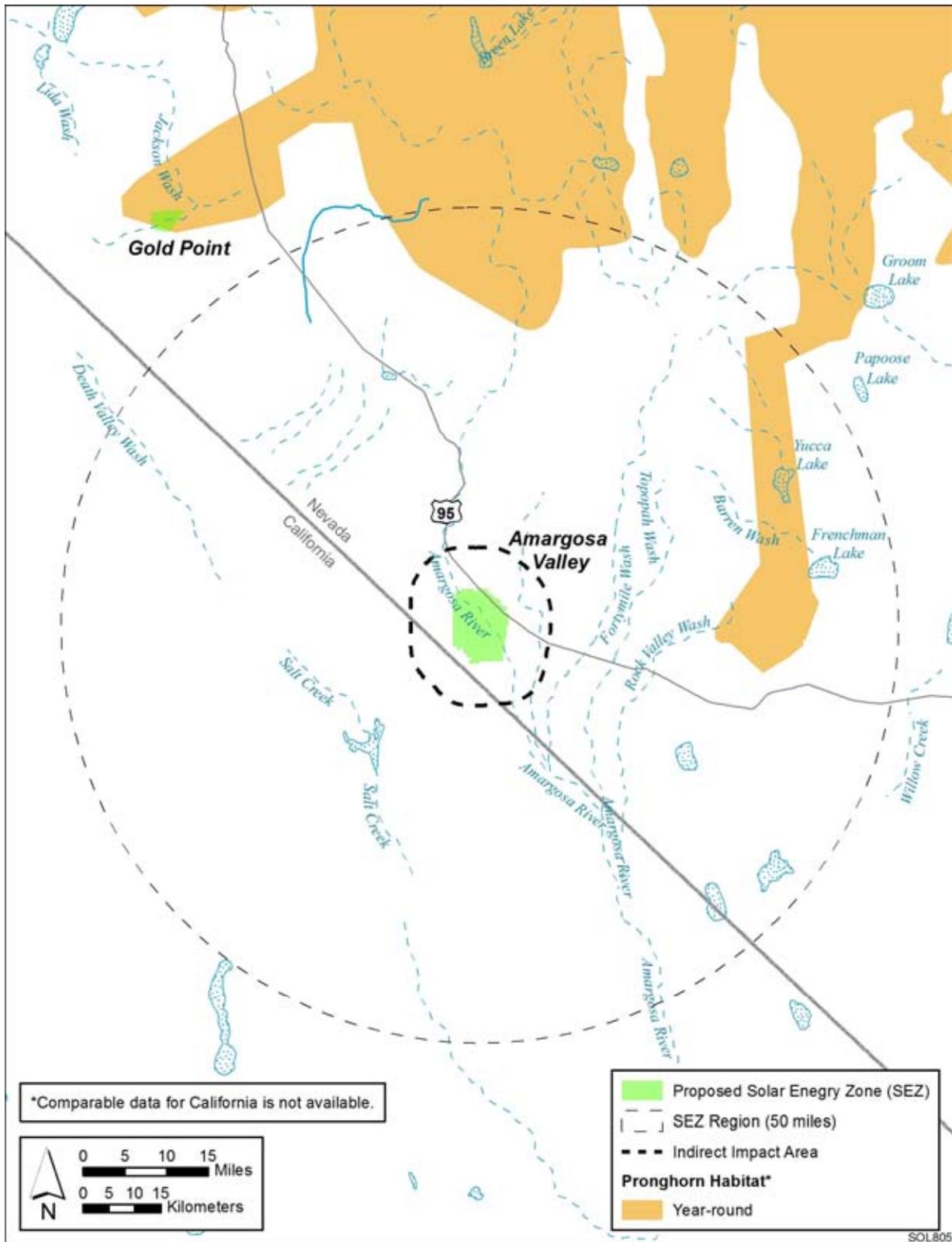
1
2
3



1

2 **FIGURE 11.1.11.3-2 Location of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ Relative to the Mapped**
 3 **Range of Mule Deer (Source: NDOW 2010)**

4



1

2 **FIGURE 11.1.11.3-3 Location of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ Relative to the Mapped**
 3 **Range of Pronghorn (Source: NDOW 2010)**

4

1 **Other Mammals**
2

3 A number of small game and furbearer species occur within the area of the proposed
4 Amargosa Valley SEZ. Species that could occur within the area of the SEZ would include
5 the American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), bobcat
6 (*Lynx rufus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*, common), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), gray
7 fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*), and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)
8 (USGS 2007).
9

10 The nongame (small) mammals include rodents, bats, and shrews. Representative species
11 for which potentially suitable habitat occurs within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ include
12 Botta’s pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), cactus mouse (*Peromyscus eremicus*), canyon mouse
13 (*P. crinitis*), deer mouse (*P. maniculatus*), desert kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys deserti*), desert shrew
14 (*Notiosorex crawfordi*), desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida*), little pocket mouse (*Perognathus*
15 *longimembris*), long-tailed pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus formosus*), Merriam’s pocket mouse
16 (*Dipodomys merriami*), northern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys leucogaster*), southern
17 grasshopper mouse (*O. torridus*), western harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*), and
18 white-tailed antelope squirrel (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*) (USGS 2007). Bat species that may
19 occur within the area of the SEZ include the big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), Brazilian free-
20 tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*), California myotis (*Myotis californicus*), hoary bat (*Lasiurus*
21 *cinereus*), little brown myotis (*M. lucifugus*), long-legged myotis (*M. volans*), silver-haired bat
22 (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), and western pipistrelle (*Parastrellus hesperus*) (USGS 2007).
23 However, roost sites for the bat species (e.g., caves, hollow trees, rock crevices, or buildings)
24 would be limited to absent within the SEZ. Several other special status bat species that could
25 occur within the SEZ area are addressed in Section 11.1.12.1.
26

27 Table 11.1.11.3-1 provides habitat information for representative mammal species that
28 could occur within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Special status mammal species are
29 discussed in Section 11.1.12.
30

31
32 **11.1.11.3.2 Impacts**
33

34 The types of impacts that mammals could incur from construction, operation, and
35 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
36 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
37 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the application of any additional
38 mitigation measures. Section 11.1.11.3.3, below, identifies design features of particular
39 relevance to mammals for the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ.
40

41 The assessment of impacts on mammal species is based on available information on the
42 presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.1.11.3.1 following the analysis
43 approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination with state
44 natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts more thoroughly.
45 These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions to avoid or
46 mitigate impacts on mammals (see Section 11.1.11.3.3).

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Mammal Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Big Game				
Cougar (<i>Puma concolor</i>)	Most common in rough, broken foothills and canyon country, often in association with montane forests, shrublands, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. About 4,360,800 acres ^g of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	140,008 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Mule deer (<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>)	Most habitats, including coniferous forests, desert shrub, chaparral, and grasslands with shrubs. Greatest densities in shrublands on rough, broken terrain that provides abundant browse and cover. About 3,463,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,124 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers</i>				
American badger (<i>Taxidea taxus</i>)	Open grasslands and deserts, meadows in subalpine and montane forests, alpine tundra. Digs burrows in friable soils. Most common in areas with abundant populations of ground squirrels, prairie dogs, and pocket gophers. About 3,449,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	125,678 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Black-tailed jackrabbit (<i>Lepus californicus</i>)	Open plains, fields, and deserts with scattered thickets or patches of shrubs. Also open, early stages of forests and chaparral habitats. Rests during the day in shallow depressions and uses shrubs for cover. About 4,312,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	140,126 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers</i>				
Bobcat (<i>Lynx rufus</i>)	Most habitats except subalpine coniferous forest and montane meadow grasslands. Most common in rocky country from deserts through ponderosa forests. About 3,411,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	125,886 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Coyote (<i>Canis latrans</i>)	All habitats at all elevations. Least common in dense coniferous forest. Where human control efforts occur, they are restricted to broken, rough country with abundant shrub cover and a good supply of rabbits or rodents. About 5,019,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	145,015 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers</i>				
Desert cottontail (<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>)	Abundant to common in grasslands, open forests, and desert shrub habitats. Can occur in areas with minimal vegetation as long as adequate cover (e.g., rock piles, fallen logs, fence rows) is present. Tickets and patches of shrubs, vines, and brush also used as cover. About 2,666,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	117,616 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Gray fox (<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>)	Deserts, open forests and brush. Prefer wooded areas, broken country, brushlands, and rocky areas. Tolerant of low levels of residential development. About 3,227,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	133,431 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers</i>				
Kit fox (<i>Vulpes macrotis</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas with relatively open vegetative cover and soft soils. Seek shelter in underground burrows. About 3,579,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,477 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Red fox (<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>)	Most common in open woodlands, pasturelands, riparian areas, and agricultural lands. About 2,523,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.0% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	118,146 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals</i>				
Big brown bat (<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>)	Most habitats from lowland deserts to timberline meadows. Roosts in hollow trees, rock crevices, mines, tunnels, and buildings. About 3,006,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,133 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Botta's pocket gopher (<i>Thomomys bottae</i>)	Variety of habitats, including shortgrass plains, oak savanna, agricultural lands, and deserts. Burrows are more common in disturbed areas such as roadways and stream floodplains. About 2,187,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	117,583 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Brazilian free-tailed bat (<i>Tadarida</i> <i>brasiliensis</i>)	Cliffs, deserts, grasslands, old fields, savannas, shrublands, woodlands, and suburban/urban areas. Roosts in buildings, caves, and hollow trees. May roost in rock crevices, bridges, signs, or cliff swallow nests during migration. Large maternity colonies inhabit caves, buildings, culverts, and bridges. About 3,283,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,606 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Cactus mouse (<i>Peromyscus</i> <i>eremicus</i>)	Variety of areas, including desert scrub, semidesert chaparral, desert wash, semidesert grassland, and cliff and canyon habitats. About 3,153,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,972 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Canyon mouse (<i>Peromyscus crinitus</i>)	Associated with rocky substrates in a variety of habitats, including desert scrub, sagebrush shrublands, woodlands, cliffs and canyons, and volcanic rock and cinder lands. Source of free water not required. About 2,993,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,355 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
California myotis (<i>Myotis californicus</i>)	Desertscrub, semidesert shrublands, lowland riparian, swamps, riparian suburban areas, plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, woodlands, and forests. Roosts in caves, mine tunnels, hollow trees, and loose rocks. About 3,026,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,377 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Deer mouse (<i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i>)	Tundra; alpine and subalpine grasslands; plains grasslands; open, sparsely vegetated deserts; warm temperate swamps and riparian forests; and Sonoran desert scrub habitats. About 4,215,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	139,516 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Desert kangaroo rat (<i>Dipodomys deserti</i>)	Most arid areas with deep sands such as stabilized sand dunes, sandy patches in salt desert scrub, and bottoms of desert washes. About 82,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	21 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	1,274 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Development within desert wash habitat (Amargosa River) should be avoided to the extent practicable.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Desert shrew (<i>Notiosorex crawfordi</i>)	Usually in arid areas with adequate cover such as semiarid grasslands, shortgrass plains, desert scrub, chaparral slopes, shortgrass plains, oak savannas and woodlands, and alluvial fans. About 3,789,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	142,024 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Desert woodrat (<i>Neotoma lepida</i>)	Sagebrush scrub; chaparral; deserts and rocky slopes with scattered cactus, yucca, pine-juniper, or other low vegetation; creosotebush desert; Joshua tree woodlands; scrub oak woodlands, pinyon-juniper woodlands; and riparian zones. Most abundant in rocky areas with Joshua trees. Dens built of debris on ground, among cacti or yucca, along cliffs, among rocks, or occasionally in trees. About 4,960,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	143,222 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Hoary bat (<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>)	Chaparral, shortgrass plains, scrub-grassland, desertscrub, forests and woodlands. Usually roosts in trees, also in caves, rock crevices, and houses. About 2,913,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,169 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Little pocket mouse (<i>Perognathus longimembris</i>)	Mostly sandy and gravelly soils, but also stony soils and rarely rocky sites. About 3,331,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,215 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Long-legged myotis (<i>Myotis volans</i>)	Prefers pine forest, desert, and riparian habitats. Old buildings, rock crevices, and hollow trees used for daytime roosting and winter hibernation. It forages in open areas, such as forest clearings. About 3,017,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,034 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Long-tailed pocket mouse (<i>Chaetodipus formosus</i>)	Common in sagebrush, desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats with rocky or stony groundcover. About 4,163,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	142,502 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Merriam's kangaroo rat (<i>Dipodomys</i> <i>merriami</i>)	Plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, desertscrub, shortgrass plains, oak and juniper savannahs, mesquite dunes, and creosote flats. About 3,607,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,621 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Northern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys</i> <i>leucogaster</i>)	Occurs in grasslands, sagebrush deserts, overgrazed pastures, weedy roadside ditches, sand dunes, and other habitats with sandy soil and sparse vegetation. About 3,319,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	125,925 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Silver-haired bat (<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>)	Urban areas, chaparral, alpine and subalpine grasslands, forests, scrub-grassland, oak savannah and desertscrub habitats. Roosts under bark, in hollow trees, caves, and mines. Forages over clearings and open water. About 3,257,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,096 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Southern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys torridus</i>)	Low, arid, shrub and semiscrub vegetation of deserts. About 2,951,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,185 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Western harvest mouse (<i>Reithrodontomys megalotis</i>)	Various habitats, including scrub-grasslands, temperate swamps and riparian forests, salt marshes, shortgrass plains, oak savannah, dry fields, agricultural areas, deserts, and desert scrub. Grasses are the preferred cover. About 2,181,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	117,980 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Western pipistrelle (<i>Parastrellus hesperus</i>)	Deserts and lowlands, desert mountain ranges, desert scrub flats, and rocky canyons. Roosts mostly in rock crevices, sometimes mines and caves, and rarely in buildings. Suitable roosts occur in rocky canyons and cliffs. Most abundant bat in desert regions. About 2,925,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,269 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
White-tailed antelope squirrel (<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>)	Low deserts, semidesert and montane shrublands, plateaus, and foothills in areas with sparse vegetation and hard gravelly surfaces. Spends its nights and other periods of inactivity in underground burrows. About 3,728,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	138,874 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Yuma myotis (<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>)	Riparian areas, grasslands, semidesert shrubland, mountain brush, woodlands, and deserts. It occurs where there is open water, regardless of the habitat. Roosts in caves, mines, cliffs, crevices, buildings, and swallow nests. About 3,199,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	133,315 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.1.11.3-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 25,300 acres of direct effects within the SEZ was assumed.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with the construction and maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 25,300 acres of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- ^e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: > 1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $> 10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^f Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^g To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 Table 11.1.11.3-1 summarizes the magnitude of potential impacts on representative
2 mammal species resulting from solar energy development (with the inclusion of programmatic
3 design features) in the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ.
4
5

6 **Cougar**

7

8 Up to 25,300 acres (102 km²) of potentially suitable cougar habitat could be lost by solar
9 energy development within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. This represents about 0.6% of
10 potentially suitable cougar habitat within the SEZ region. About 140,000 acres (567 km²) of
11 potentially suitable cougar habitat occurs within the area of indirect effects. Overall, impacts on
12 cougar from solar energy development in the SEZ would be small.
13

14 **Elk**

15

16 Based on land cover analyses, potentially suitable elk habitat does not occur within the
17 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Thus, solar energy development would not directly affect elk
18 habitat. About 140 acres (0.6 km²) of potentially suitable elk habitat occurs within the area of
19 indirect effects. This is only about 0.03% of potentially suitable elk habitat within the SEZ
20 region. Based on mapped ranges, the closest year-round elk habitat is about 36 mi (58 km)
21 from the SEZ, while the closest crucial summer habitat is about 37 mi (59.5 km) from the SEZ
22 (Figure 11.1.11.3-1). Overall, impacts on elk from solar energy development in the SEZ would
23 be small.
24

25 **Mule Deer**

26

27 Based on land cover analyses, up to 25,300 acres (102 km²) of potentially suitable mule
28 deer habitat could be lost by solar energy development within the proposed Amargosa Valley
29 SEZ. This represents about 0.7% of potentially suitable mule deer habitat within the SEZ region.
30 About 127,000 acres (514 km²) of potentially suitable mule deer habitat occurs within the area of
31 indirect effects. Based on mapped range, the closest year-round mule deer habitat is about 1.3 mi
32 (2.1 km) from the SEZ (Figure 11.1.11.3-2). About 8,685 acres (35.1 km²) of year-round mule
33 deer habitat occurs within the area of indirect effects. This is about 1.0% of the year-round mule
34 deer habitat within the SEZ region. Overall, impacts on mule deer from solar energy
35 development in the SEZ would be small.
36
37

38 **Pronghorn**

39

40 Based on land cover analyses, potentially suitable pronghorn habitat does not occur
41 within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Thus, solar energy development would not directly
42 affect pronghorn habitat. About 2,130 acres (8.6 km²) of potentially suitable pronghorn habitat
43 occurs within the area of indirect effects. This is only about 0.3% of potentially suitable
44 pronghorn habitat within the SEZ region. Based on mapped range, the closest year-round
45 pronghorn habitat within the SEZ region. Based on mapped range, the closest year-round
46

1 pronghorn habitat to the SEZ is almost 25 mi (40 km) away (Figure 11.1.11.3-3. Overall, impacts
2 on pronghorn from solar energy development in the SEZ would be small.
3
4

5 **Other Mammals**

6

7 Direct impacts on Botta's pocket gopher and western harvest mouse would be moderate,
8 as 1.2% of their potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ region would be lost. Direct impacts
9 on the other representative small game, furbearer, and nongame (small) mammal species would
10 be small, as 1.0% or less of potential habitats identified would be lost (Table 11.1.11.3-1). Larger
11 areas of potentially suitable habitat for these species occur within the area of potential indirect
12 effects (i.e., ranging from 1.5% for the desert kangaroo rat to 5.4% for Botta's pocket gopher and
13 western harvest mouse).
14

16 **Summary**

17

18 Overall, direct impacts on mammal species would be small to moderate; 1.2% or less of
19 potentially suitable habitats for the mammal species would be lost (Table 11.1.11.3-1). Larger
20 areas of potentially suitable habitat for mammal species occur within the area of potential
21 indirect effects (e.g., up to 5.4% of potentially suitable habitat for Botta's pocket gopher and
22 western harvest mouse). Other impacts on mammals could result from collision with vehicles
23 and infrastructure (e.g., fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive
24 dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills,
25 and harassment. Indirect impacts on areas outside the SEZ (e.g., impacts caused by dust
26 generation, erosion, and sedimentation) would be negligible with implementation of
27 programmatic design features.
28

29 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
30 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
31 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
32 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas.
33 Section 5.10.2.1.4 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on
34 wildlife. Of particular importance for mammal species would be the restoration of original
35 ground surface contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with semiarid
36 shrublands.
37
38

39 ***11.1.11.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

40

41 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
42 Section A.2.2, would reduce reduce the potential for effects on mammals. Indirect impacts could
43 be reduced to negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those engineering
44 controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While SEZ-specific
45 design features important for reducing impacts on mammals are best established when
46 considering specific project details, design features that can be identified at this time are:

- 1 • The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free
2 movement of mammals, particularly big game species.
- 3
- 4 • The Amargosa River should be avoided.
- 5

6 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to programmatic design
7 features, impacts on mammals could be reduced. However, potentially suitable habitats for a
8 number of the mammal species occur throughout much of the SEZ; therefore, species-specific
9 mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.

10 11 12 **11.1.11.4 Aquatic Biota**

13 14 15 ***11.1.11.4.1 Affected Environment***

16
17 This section addresses aquatic habitats and biota known to occur on the proposed
18 Amargosa Valley SEZ itself or within an area that could be affected, either directly or indirectly,
19 by activities associated with solar energy development within the SEZ. There are no surface
20 water bodies, wetlands, or perennial streams within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. As
21 described in Section 11.1.9.1.1, 9 mi (14 km) of the intermittent/ephemeral Amargosa River
22 crosses through the SEZ, entering at the northwest corner and exiting from the southwest corner.
23 The portion of the river located in Nevada is typically dry and flows only after precipitation
24 (USGS 1995). Ephemeral washes may also cross the SEZ, but these drainages only contain water
25 following rainfall and typically do not support wetland or aquatic habitat. Given the ephemeral
26 nature of surface water in the SEZ, aquatic communities are expected to be minimal although
27 opportunistic crustaceans and aquatic insect larvae adapted to desert conditions may be present
28 even under dry conditions. More detailed site survey data is needed to characterize the aquatic
29 biota, if present, in the Amargosa Valley SEZ.

30
31 There are no surface water bodies, wetlands, or perennial streams located within the area
32 of indirect effects. However, 12 mi (19 km) of the Amargosa River and 18 mi (29 km) of an
33 unnamed intermittent stream that drains into the Amargosa River are present in the area of
34 indirect effects. The intermittent/ephemeral nature of these streams suggests aquatic habitat and
35 biota are not likely to be present although more detailed site survey data would be needed to
36 characterize the aquatic biota, if present.

37
38 Outside of the potential indirect effects area but within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ there
39 are several dry lakes, the combined areas of which total 28,320 acres (115 km²). There are
40 529 mi (851 km) of intermittent stream located within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ and 14 mi
41 (22 km) of an unnamed perennial stream that is located approximately 35 mi (56 km) from the
42 SEZ. Within the SEZ and the area of potential indirect effects, intermittent streams are the only
43 surface water features present; they represent approximately 7% of the intermittent streams
44 available within the overall analysis area. In California, spring-fed, perennial reaches of the
45 Amargosa River exist around Shoshone, Tecopa, and Amargosa Canyon, which has been
46 designated an ACEC by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM 2006). Here the Amargosa

1 River serves as a locally unique water source in the Mojave Desert that supports riparian
2 wetlands and alkali mudflats, as well as the Amargosa pupfish (*Cyprinodon nevadensis*
3 *amargosae*) and the Amargosa dace (*Rhinichthys osculus* spp.), both of which occur only in
4 the Amargosa River and are listed by the BLM as sensitive species (BLM 2006). In addition
5 to the Amargosa River ACEC, the Ash Meadows NWR is located less than 25 mi (40 km) from
6 the SEZ. Ash Meadows NWR contains more than 22,000 acres (89 km²) of critical spring-fed
7 wetlands that support three species of endangered pupfish (*Cyprinodon* spp.) and the Ash
8 Meadows speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus nevadensis* [USFWS 2010b]).
9

10 **11.1.11.4.2 Impacts**

11
12
13 The types of impacts that could occur on aquatic habitats and biota from development
14 of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in detail in Section 5.10.3. Effects particularly
15 relevant to aquatic habitats and communities are water withdrawal and changes in water,
16 sediment, and contaminant inputs associated with runoff.
17

18 No permanent water bodies, wetlands, or streams are present within the boundaries of the
19 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ or the area of indirect effects, and the nearest permanent surface
20 water is approximately 20 mi (32 km) from the SEZ boundary. Therefore, no direct impacts on
21 permanent surface water features are expected. Ground disturbance for solar energy development
22 within the SEZ could result in air- and waterborne sediment deposition into the Amargosa River
23 and springs in the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge such as Devils Hole. The Amargosa
24 River is typically dry near the SEZ and aquatic habitat is not likely to be present, although more
25 detailed site surveys for biota would be necessary to determine whether solar energy
26 development activities would result in direct or indirect impacts to aquatic biota. The deposition
27 of airborne sediments into the springs and wetlands of the Ash Meadows NWR could reduce
28 light penetration and subsequently autochthonous primary production. For example, Wilson and
29 Blinn (2007) found that autochthonous primary production in Devils Hole contributed 40% of
30 the total available energy in the system and suggested that dust generated from natural or
31 anthropogenic activities could reduce the amount of basal resources available to fish and
32 invertebrates at higher trophic levels. One species potentially affected would be the Devils Hole
33 pupfish (*C. diabolis*), which relies on filamentous cyanobacteria in the summer (Wilson and
34 Blinn 2007). During periods of atypically heavy runoff, flow from the Nevada headwaters of the
35 Amargosa River may connect to portions of the river flowing through California. This suggests
36 that runoff from the SEZ that enters the Amargosa River may potentially reach California and
37 impact the Amargosa River ACEC (USGS 1995). However, the distance from the SEZ to the
38 Amargosa River ACEC (>25 mi [48 km]) and the infrequency of flooding of sufficient
39 magnitude reduces the chance for sediment to reach the ACEC. The implementation of
40 commonly used engineering practices to avoid or minimize sediment deposition into the
41 Amargosa River would further reduce the potential for impacts on aquatic organisms.
42

43 As identified in Section 5.10.3, water quality in aquatic habitats could be affected by
44 the introduction of contaminants such as fuels, lubricants, or pesticides/herbicides during site
45 characterization, construction, operation, or decommissioning for a solar energy facility. There
46 is a potential for contaminants within the SEZ to enter the Amargosa River, especially if

1 heavy machinery is used in or near the channel. In addition, these contaminants may to be
2 transported to perennial reaches of the Amargosa River during exceptionally high flow periods
3 (USGS 1995). However, the relatively large distance from solar development activities to these
4 areas (minimum of approximately 25 mi [40 km]) and the low hydrologic connectivity reduces
5 the potential for introducing biologically significant contaminant loads to perennial reaches of
6 the Amargosa River.

7
8 In arid environments, reductions in the quantity of water in aquatic habitats are of
9 particular concern. Withdrawal of ground water for power plant cooling water, mirror washing,
10 or other needs could affect water levels in surface water features outside of the SEZ and area of
11 indirect effects, and, as a consequence, potentially reduce habitat size, connectivity, and create
12 more adverse environmental conditions for aquatic organisms in those habitats. Water
13 withdrawals are particularly important given the proximity of the SEZ to the Amargosa River
14 ACEC and the Ash Meadows NWR, both of which contain spring-fed aquatic habitat of national
15 significance. The greatest need for water would occur if technologies employing wet cooling,
16 such as parabolic trough or power tower, were developed at the site; the associated impacts
17 would ultimately depend on the water source used (including groundwater from aquifers at
18 various depths). Obtaining cooling water from other perennial surface water features in the
19 region could affect water levels and, as a consequence, aquatic organisms in those water bodies.
20 Additional details regarding the volume of water required and the types of organisms present in
21 potentially affected water bodies would be required in order to further evaluate the potential for
22 impacts from water withdrawals.

23 24 25 ***11.1.11.4.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

26
27 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
28 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects on aquatic biota and
29 aquatic habitats from development and operation of solar energy facilities. While some SEZ-
30 specific design features are best established when specific project details are being considered,
31 design features that can be identified at this time include the following:

- 32
33 • Appropriate engineering controls should be implemented to minimize the
34 amount of sediment and contaminants entering the Amargosa River.
- 35
36 • If groundwater is used, the amount withdrawn should not affect aquatic
37 habitat in the Amargosa River ACEC and the Ash Meadows NWR.

38
39 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to programmatic design
40 features and if the utilization of water from groundwater or surface water sources is adequately
41 controlled to maintain sufficient water levels in aquatic habitats, the potential impacts on aquatic
42 biota and habitats from solar energy development at the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ would
43 be negligible.

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1 **11.1.12 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Rare Species)**
2

3 This section addresses special status species that are known to occur, or for which
4 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Amargosa
5 Valley SEZ. Special status species include the following types of species⁴:
6

- 7 • Species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act
8 (ESA);
9
- 10 • Species that are proposed for listing, under review, or are candidates for
11 listing under the ESA;
12
- 13 • Species that are listed by the BLM as sensitive;
- 14
- 15 • Species that are listed by the state or states in the affected area⁵; and
16
- 17 • Species that have been ranked by the states of California or Nevada as S1 or
18 S2, or species of concern by the states of California or Nevada or the USFWS;
19 hereafter referred to as “rare” species.
20

21 Special status species known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed Amargosa
22 Valley SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined from natural heritage records available
23 through NatureServe Explorer (NatureServe 2010), information provided by the Nevada Natural
24 Heritage Program (NNHP) (NDCNR 2004, 2009a,b; Miskow 2009), California Natural Diversity
25 Database (CNDDB) (CDFG 2010), the Southwest Regional Gap Analysis Project (SWReGAP)
26 (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007), the California Regional Gap Analysis Project (CAREGAP) (Davis et
27 al. 1998; USGS 2010d), and the USFWS Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS)
28 (USFWS 2010a). Information reviewed consisted of county-level occurrences as determined
29 from NatureServe, element occurrences provided by the NNHP and CNDDB, and modeled land
30 cover types and predicted suitable habitats for the species within the 50-mi (80-km) region as
31 determined from SWReGAP and CAREGAP. The 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region intersects Clark,
32 Esmeralda, Lincoln, and Nye Counties, Nevada, as well as Inyo County, California. However,
33 the SEZ intersects only Nye County, Nevada. The SEZ affected area intersects Nye County,
34 Nevada and Inyo County, California. See Appendix M for additional information on the
35 approach used to identify species that could be affected by development within the SEZ.
36
37
38

⁴ See Section 4.6.4 for definitions of these species categories. Note that some of the categories of species included here do not fit BLM’s definition of special status species as defined in BLM Manual 6840 (BLM 2008). These species are included here to ensure broad consideration of species that may be most vulnerable to impacts.

⁵ State listed species for the state of Nevada are those protected under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants); state listed species for the state of California are those protected under the California Endangered Species Act (*California Department of Fish & Game Code* §§2050).

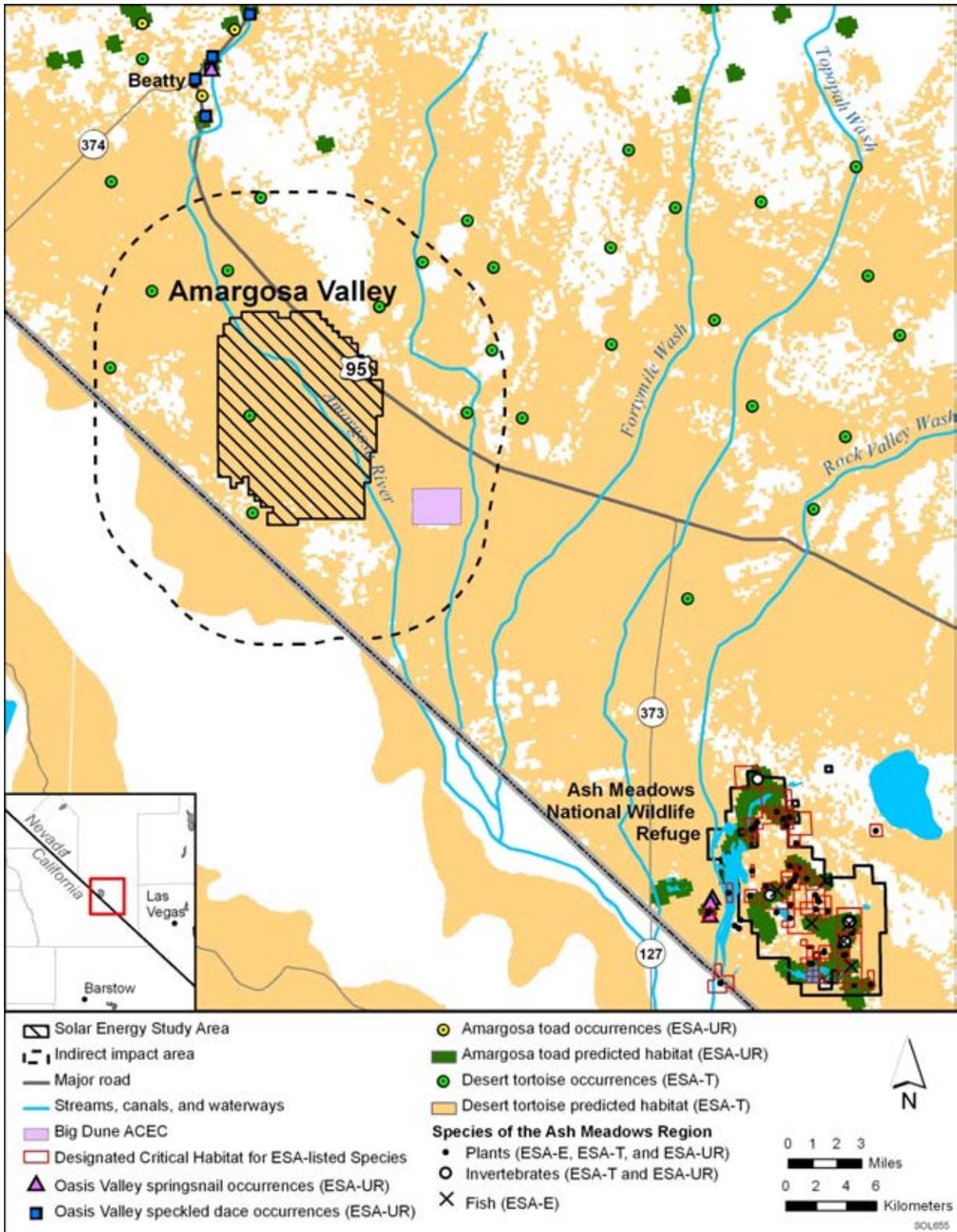
1 **11.1.12.1 Affected Environment**
2

3 The affected area considered in the assessment included the areas of direct and indirect
4 effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified
5 during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur). For the
6 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, the area of direct effects was limited to the SEZ itself. Due
7 to the proximity of existing infrastructure, the impacts of construction and operation of
8 transmission lines outside of the SEZ are not assessed, assuming that the existing transmission
9 infrastructure might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that
10 additional project-specific analysis would be conducted for new transmission construction or line
11 upgrades. Similarly, the impacts of construction or upgrades to access roads were not assessed
12 for this SEZ due to the proximity of an existing federal highway (see Section 11.1.1.2 for a
13 discussion of development assumptions for this SEZ). The area of indirect effects was defined as
14 the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary where ground-disturbing activities would not
15 occur but that could be indirectly affected by activities in the area of direct effects. Indirect
16 effects considered in the assessment included effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting,
17 and accidental spills from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential
18 magnitude of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ. This
19 area of indirect effects was identified on the basis of professional judgment and was considered
20 sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be subject to indirect effects. The
21 affected area includes both the direct and indirect effects areas.
22

23 The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is Sonora-Mojave
24 creosotebush–white bursage desert scrub (see Section 11.1.10). Potentially unique habitats in the
25 affected area in which special status species may reside include desert dunes, cliffs and rock
26 outcrops, washes, and playa habitats. Aquatic habitats that occur in the SEZ and the area of
27 indirect effects include the Amargosa River, which flows northwest to southeast within the SEZ
28 and the area of indirect effects. This feature is one of two intermittent streams known to occur
29 within the affected area. The other intermittent stream is an unnamed wash east of the SEZ in the
30 area of indirect effects (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).
31

32 In its scoping comments on the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (Stout 2009), the
33 USFWS expressed concern that groundwater withdrawals associated with solar energy
34 development on the SEZ may reduce the groundwater supply from the Amargosa Basin, which
35 supports wet meadows, seeps, and springs in the SEZ region, including the Ash Meadows region.
36 The Ash Meadows NWR, located about 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the proposed Amargosa
37 Valley SEZ contains a complex of spring-fed wetlands that supports a highly endemic plant and
38 animal community that includes a number of special status species. There are other spring-fed
39 habitats in the Oasis Valley north of the SEZ and along the Amargosa River that support aquatic,
40 wetland, and riparian habitat for a number of special status species. Although these areas are
41 outside the above-defined affected area, they are considered in the assessment here.
42

43 All special status species that are known to occur within the proposed Amargosa Valley
44 SEZ region (i.e., within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ) are listed, with their status,
45 nearest recorded occurrence, and habitats, in Appendix J. Of these species, there are 52 that
46 could be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ (including those dependent on



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FIGURE 11.12.1-1 Known or Potential Occurrences of Species Listed as Endangered or Threatened under the ESA or Species under Review for ESA Listing in the Affected Area of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (Sources: Miskow 2009; USFWS 2010a; USGS 2007)

1 groundwater discharge in the region), on the basis of recorded occurrences or the presence of
2 potentially suitable habitat in the area. These species, their status, and their habitats are presented
3 in Table 11.1.12.1-1. For many of the species listed in the table, their predicted potential
4 occurrence in the affected area is based only on a general correspondence between mapped
5 SWReGAP and CAREGAP land cover types and descriptions of species habitat preferences. This
6 overall approach to identifying species in the affected area probably overestimates the number of
7 species that actually occur in the affected area. For many of the species identified as having
8 potentially suitable habitat in the affected area, the nearest known occurrence is more than 20 mi
9 (32 km) away from the SEZ.

10
11 Based on NNHP records, there are seven special status species known to occur within the
12 affected area of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ: Ash Meadows buckwheat, Big Dune
13 miloderes weevil, an endemic ant (*Neivamyrex nyensis*), Giulianis's dune scarab, large aegilian
14 scarab, desert tortoise, and Nelson's bighorn sheep. Of these species, the desert tortoise is listed
15 as threatened under the ESA and the Giuliani's dune scarab and large aegilian scarab are under
16 review for listing under the ESA. The Big Dune miloderes weevil and Nelson's bighorn sheep
17 are BLM-designated sensitive species. The Ash Meadows buckwheat and the ant, *Neivamyrmex*
18 *nyensis*, are considered rare species. In addition to these species, there are 25 groundwater-
19 dependent species known to occur within the Ash Meadows NWR and other portions of the SEZ
20 region that utilize groundwater from the Amargosa Basin. These species include Amargosa
21 niterwort, Ash Meadows blazingstar, Ash Meadows gumplant, Ash Meadows ivesia, Ash
22 Meadows sunray, spring-loving centaury, Amargosa naucorid, Amargosa tryonia, Ash Meadows
23 naucorid, Ash Meadows pebblesnail, Crystal springsnail, distal gland springsnail, elongate gland
24 springsnail, Fairbanks springsnail, median gland springsnail, minute tryonia, Oasis Valley
25 springsnail, Point of Rocks tryonia, sporting goods tryonia, Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish,
26 Ash Meadows speckled dace, Devils Hole pupfish, Oasis Valley speckled dace, Warm Springs
27 Amargosa pupfish, and Amargosa toad.

30 ***11.1.12.1.1 Species Listed under the Endangered Species Act That Could*** 31 ***Occur in the Affected Area*** 32

33 In its scoping comments on the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, the USFWS expressed
34 concern about impacts of project development within the Amargosa Valley SEZ on the Mojave
35 population of the desert tortoise—a species listed as threatened under the ESA in the SEZ
36 region—and the Devils Hole pupfish—a fish species listed as endangered under the ESA
37 (Stout 2009). The USFWS also expressed concern that groundwater withdrawals from the
38 Amargosa Basin to serve development on the SEZ may reduce the groundwater supply that
39 supports wet meadows, seeps, and springs in the Ash Meadows region. For this reason, the
40 following ESA-listed species that may occur outside the area of indirect effects but that could
41 be affected by projects within the SEZ are considered: Amargosa niterwort (endangered), Ash
42 Meadows Amargosa pupfish (endangered), Ash Meadows blazingstar (threatened), Ash
43 Meadows gumplant (threatened), Ash Meadows ivesia (threatened), Ash Meadows naucorid
44 (threatened), Ash Meadows speckled dace (endangered), Ash Meadows sunray (threatened),
45 spring-loving centaury (threatened), and Warm Springs Amargosa pupfish (endangered). All of
46 these species are known to occur within the affected area. These species are discussed below and

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Special Status Species That Could Be Affected by Solar Energy Development on the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Plants						
Amargosa niterwort	<i>Nitrophila mohavensis</i>	ESA-E; CA-E; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to the Amargosa Valley in Inyo County, California, and Nye County, Nevada. It inhabits playas and alkaline wetlands near the Ash Meadows region. Nearest occurrences are from the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 25 mi ^h southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined, but 1,215 acres ⁱ of designated critical habitat occurs in the Ash Meadows region.	0 acres	1,215 acres of designated critical habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. The impact of cooling water withdrawal on the regional groundwater system that supports aquatic and mesic habitat in the Amargosa Valley would depend on the volume of water withdrawn to support construction and operations. Avoiding or limiting withdrawals from this regional groundwater system could reduce impacts on this species to negligible levels. Note that these potential impact magnitudes and mitigation measures apply to all groundwater-dependent special status species that may occur in the SEZ region.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Ash Meadows blazingstar	<i>Mentzelia leucophylla</i>	ESA-T; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows region in Nye County, Nevada, where it is narrowly confined to spring-fed desert wetlands. Nearest occurrences are from the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 20 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined, but 1,240 acres of designated critical habitat occurs in the Ash Meadows NWR.	0 acres	1,240 acres of designated critical habitat in the Ash Meadows NWR could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Ash Meadows buckwheat^j	<i>Eriogonum contiguum</i>	CA-S2; NV-S1	Known from the Mojave Desert of Inyo County, California, and Clark and Nye Counties, Nevada. Occurs on sandy to gravelly flats and slopes in association with creosote scrub and mesquite communities at elevations below 3,280 ft. ^k Occurs in the area of indirect effects. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Funeral Mountains, approximately 4 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 1,771,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	30,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	99,150 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the areas of direct effects, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects, or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Ash Meadows gumplant	<i>Grindelia fraxinoprattensis</i>	ESA-T; NV-P; NV-S2	Endemic to the Ash Meadows region in Nye County, Nevada, where it is confined to saltgrass meadows along spring-fed desert wetlands. Nearest occurrences are from the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 22 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined, but 2,098 acres of designated critical habitat occurs in the Ash Meadows region.	0 acres	2,098 acres of designated critical habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Ash Meadows ivesia	<i>Ivesia kingii eremica</i>	ESA-T; NV-P; NV-S2	Endemic to the Ash Meadows region in Nye County, Nevada, where it is confined to a single spring-fed wetland area with saline soils. Nearest occurrence is from the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 20 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined, but 880 acres of designated critical habitat occurs in the Ash Meadows NWR.	0 acres	880 acres of designated critical habitat in the Ash Meadows NWR could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Ash Meadows sunray	<i>Enceliopsis nudicaulis corrugata</i>	ESA-T; NV-P; NV-S2	Endemic to the Ash Meadows region in Nye County, Nevada, where it is confined to a single spring-fed wetland area with saline soils. Nearest occurrence is from the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 20 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined, but 880 acres of designated critical habitat occurs in the Ash Meadows NWR.	0 acres	880 acres of designated critical habitat in the Ash Meadows NWR could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Black milkvetch	<i>Astragalus funereus</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; CA-S2; NV-S2	Known only from the Death Valley region of California and southern Nevada. There are only five occurrences of this species currently known. It inhabits gravelly clay ridges and ledges on limestone or volcanic substrates at elevations between 4,200 and 6,900 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 8 mi north of the SEZ. About 831,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	15,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Bullfrog Hills sweetpea	<i>Lathyrus hitchcockianus</i>	CA-S1; NV-S2	Open, dry to slightly moist gravels of rocky drainage bottoms in canyons and on upper alluvial slopes, often at bases of boulders or canyon walls and climbing up through shrubs, in areas of volcanic tuff or carbonate rocks in the mixed-shrub, sagebrush, and pinyon-juniper zones. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 12 mi north of the SEZ. About 883,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	20 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	16,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitats on the SEZ could reduce impacts. See Ash Meadows buckwheat for a list of other potential mitigation measures.
Death Valley beardtongue	<i>Penstemon fruticiformis</i> ssp. <i>amargosae</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; CA-S2; NV-S2	Known only from the Death Valley region of California and southern Nevada. It inhabits Mojave desert scrub communities at elevations between 2,800 and 4,600 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 13 mi east of the SEZ. About 2,424,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	30,490 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	16,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. See Ash Meadows buckwheat for a list of other potential mitigation measures.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Holmgren lupine	<i>Lupinus holmgrenianus</i>	BLM-S; CA-S2; NV-S2	Known only from the Death Valley region of California and southern Nevada. It inhabits dry desert slopes, washes, and valleys on volcanic substrates, sometimes in association with pinyon-juniper woodlands. The species occurs at elevations between 4,600 and 8,200 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Death Valley NP, approximately 15 mi northwest of the SEZ. About 132,350 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	20 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	2,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitats on the SEZ could reduce impacts. See Ash Meadows buckwheat for a list of other potential mitigation measures.
Panamint Mountains bedstraw	<i>Galium hilendiae</i> ssp. <i>carneum</i>	CA-S2; NV-S1	Endemic to the Mojave Desert region of Inyo County, California, and Nye County, Nevada. Inhabits creosote scrub and pinyon-juniper woodland communities. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Death Valley NP, approximately 22 mi northwest of the SEZ. About 1,742,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	30,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	105,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. See Ash Meadows buckwheat for a list of other potential mitigation measures.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Rock purpusia	<i>Ivesia arizonica</i> var. <i>saxosa</i>	BLM-S; CA-S1; NV-S1	Endemic to the Upper Amargosa watershed of California and southern Nevada. It inhabits crevices of cliffs and boulders on volcanic substrates in pinyon-juniper communities at elevations between 4,900 and 6,900 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the DOE Nevada Test Site, approximately 21 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 1,086,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	15,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Spring-loving centaury	<i>Centaurium namophilum</i>	ESA-T; NV-P; NV-S2	Endemic to the Ash Meadows region in Nye County, Nevada, where it is restricted to moist clay soils along the banks of seeps and streams. Nearest occurrence is from the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 20 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined, but 1,840 acres of designated critical habitat occurs in the Ash Meadows NWR.	0 acres	1,840 acres of designated critical habitat in the Ash Meadows NWR could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Weasel phacelia	<i>Phacelia mustelina</i>	CA-S1; NV-S2	Mojave desert scrub, pinyon-juniper woodlands on volcanic or gravelly substrates at elevations between 5,000 and 5,500 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Death Valley NP, approximately 18 mi northwest of the SEZ. About 2,766,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	30,490 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	116,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. See Ash Meadows buckwheat for a list of other potential mitigation measures.
White bearpoppy	<i>Arctomecon merriamii</i>	BLM-S; CA-S2	Endemic to the Death Valley region of California and Nevada. It inhabits barren gravelly areas, rocky slopes, and limestone outcrops at elevations between 2,000 and 5,900 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 20 mi southeast of the SEZ. About 831,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	15,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
White-margined beardtongue	<i>Penstemon albomarginatus</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; CA-S1; NV-S2	Inhabits desert sand dune habitats and Mojavean desert scrub communities at elevations below 3,600 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 17 mi east of the SEZ. About 2,464,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	30,490 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	115,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. See Ash Meadows buckwheat for a list of other potential mitigations measures.
Invertebrates						
Amargosa naucorid	<i>Pelocoris shoshone amargosa</i>	ESA-UR; CA-S1; NV-S1	Endemic to the Amargosa Valley in Inyo County, California, and Nye County, Nevada. Inhabits spring-fed aquatic habitats where it prefers quiet waters among vegetation. Known to occur in the vicinity of the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 20 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the Amargosa Valley could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>						
Amargosa tryonia	<i>Tryonia variegata</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-S2	Endemic to the Amargosa Valley in Nye County, Nevada. Inhabits spring-fed aquatic habitats where there is an abundance of detritus or aquatic macrophytes. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Ash Meadows ACEC, approximately 22 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the Amargosa Valley could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Ash Meadows naucorid	<i>Ambrysus amargosus</i>	ESA-T; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is restricted to Point of Rocks and Kings Springs. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 25 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>						
Ash Meadows pebblesnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis erythropoma</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known from six spring systems. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 20 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Big Dune miloderes weevil	<i>Miloderes rulieni</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Endemic to the Big Dune area of Nye County, Nevada, where the species is known to be dependent upon deep sand habitats. Occurs in the area of indirect effects. Known from the Big Dune ACEC, approximately 3 mi east of the SEZ. About 1,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	1,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (62.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>						
Crystal springsnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis crystalis</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known only from Crystal Spring. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 20 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Distal gland springsnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis nanus</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known from only four spring systems. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 20 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>						
Elongate gland springsnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis isolata</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known only from the spring at Clay Pits. Nearest recorded occurrence approximately 22 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Endemic ant	<i>Neivamyrmex nyensis</i>	NV-S1	Known from only one location in very rocky terrain south of Beatty, Nevada. Occurs in the area of indirect effects. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 4 mi north of the SEZ. About 57,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	8,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat (14.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct affect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>						
Fairbanks springsnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis fairbanksensis</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known only from Fairbanks Spring. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 25 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Giuliani's dune scarab beetle	<i>Pseudocotalpa giulianii</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-S1	Endemic to the Big Dune and Lava Dune regions of Nye County, Nevada, where the species is known to be dependent upon deep sand habitats. Occurs in the area of indirect effects. Known from the Big Dune ACEC, approximately 3 mi east of the SEZ. About 1,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	1,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (62.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>						
Large aegialian scarab beetle	<i>Aegialia magnifica</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-S1	Endemic to the Big Dune and Lava Dune regions of Nye County, Nevada, where the species is known to be dependent upon deep sand habitats. Occurs in the area of indirect effects. Known from the Big Dune ACEC, approximately 3 mi east of the SEZ. About 1,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	1,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (62.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Median gland springsnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis pisteri</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known from only three spring-fed habitats. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 25 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>						
Minute tryonia	<i>Tryonia ericae</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known from less than four spring-fed habitats. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 25 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Oasis Valley springsnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis micrococcus</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-S2	Endemic to the Amargosa River drainage and the Death, Panamint, and Saline Valleys in Inyo County, California, and Nye County, Nevada. Inhabits small springs and stream outflows on stone, travertine, and detritus. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 10 mi north of the SEZ in the vicinity of Beatty, Nevada. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the Amargosa Valley could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>						
Point of Rocks tryonia	<i>Tryonia elata</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known only from Point of Rocks Springs. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 22 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Sporting goods tryonia	<i>Tryonia angulata</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known from only three spring systems. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 22 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Fish						
Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish	<i>Cyprinodon nevadensis mionectes</i>	ESA-E; NV-P; NV-S2	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known from the outflows of spring-fed systems. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 20 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined, but 5,123 acres of designated critical habitat occurs in the Ash Meadows region.	0 acres	5,123 acres of designated critical habitat in the Ash Meadows NWR could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Ash Meadows speckled dace	<i>Rhinichthys osculus nevadensis</i>	ESA-E; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known from the outflows of spring-fed systems. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 20 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined, but 1,971 acres of designated critical habitat occurs in the Ash Meadows region.	0 acres	1,971 acres of designated critical habitat in the Ash Meadows NWR could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Fish (Cont.)						
Devils Hole pupfish	<i>Cyprinodon diabolis</i>	ESA-E; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows region, where it is known only from Devils Hole. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 24 mi southeast of the SEZ. Approximately 40 acres of occupied habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	All 40 acres of Devils Hole could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Oasis Valley speckled dace	<i>Rhinichthys osculus</i> ssp.	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S1	Endemic to the Amargosa and Oasis Valleys in Nye County, Nevada, where it is restricted to spring-fed habitats. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 8 mi north of the SEZ in the vicinity of Beatty, Nevada. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the Amargosa Valley could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Fish (Cont.)						
Warm Springs Amargosa pupfish	<i>Cyprinodon nevadensis pectoralis</i>	ESA-E; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to the Ash Meadows NWR, where it is known from the outflows of spring-fed systems. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 22 mi southeast of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the Ash Meadows region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Amphibians						
Amargosa toad	<i>Bufo nelsoni</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S2	Endemic to the Amargosa Valley in Nye County, Nevada, where it is confined to isolated riparian and spring-fed habitats along the Amargosa River. Usually observed near water at the outflow of warm springs. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 8 mi north of the SEZ in the vicinity of Beatty, Nevada. About 24,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but about 24,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat elsewhere in the Amargosa Valley could be affected by groundwater withdrawals	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Amargosa niterwort for potential impacts and mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Reptiles Desert tortoise	<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	ESA-T; CA-T; NV-P; CA-S2; NV-S2	Mojave and Sonoran desert creosotebush communities on firm soils for digging burrows. Often found along riverbanks, washes, canyon bottoms, creosote flats, and desert oases. Known to occur on the SEZ. About 2,717,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	31,583 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	106,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats on the SEZ, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects, or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Birds						
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Winter resident in the SEZ region. Forages in grasslands, shrublands, agricultural lands, and the periphery of pinyon-juniper forests. Known to occur in Nye County, Nevada. About 1,239,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	43 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	24,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Northern goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; CA-SC; NV-S2	Winter resident in the SEZ region. Primarily known from mature mountain forests and riparian habitats. Forages in both heavily forested and relatively open shrubland habitats. About 202,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct affect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Birds (Cont.)						
Phainopepla	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Desert scrub, mesquite, and pinyon-juniper woodland communities. Also occurs in desert riparian areas and orchards. Nests in trees or shrubs in riparian habitats from 3 to 45 ft above the ground. About 1,369,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	43 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	23,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact on foraging and nesting habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the areas of direct effects (particularly within riparian areas along the Amargosa River); or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.
Prairie falcon	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	BLM-S	Year-round resident in the SEZ region, primarily in open habitats in mountainous areas, steppe, grasslands, or cultivated areas. Typically nests in well-sheltered ledges of rocky cliffs and outcrops. About 2,338,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	31,583 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	120,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Birds (Cont.)						
Swainson's hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; CA-S2; NV-S2	Savanna, open pine-oak woodlands, grasslands, and cultivated lands. Nests typically in solitary trees, bushes, or small groves; sometimes nests near urban areas. About 1,226,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	5,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Western burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia hypugaea</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; CA-SC; CA-S2	Open grasslands and prairies, as well as disturbed sites such as golf courses, cemeteries, and airports. Nests in burrows constructed by mammals (prairie dog, badger, etc.). About 4,559,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	31,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	112,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact on foraging and nesting habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied burrows in the area of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Mammals						
Fringed myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in the SEZ region in a wide range of habitats including lowland riparian, desert shrub, pinyon-juniper, and sagebrush habitats. Roosts in buildings and caves. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the DOE Nevada Test Site, approximately 13 mi east of the SEZ. About 3,348,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	31,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	124,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Nelson's bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis nelsoni</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Open, steep rocky terrain in mountainous habitats of the eastern Mojave Desert. Rarely uses desert lowlands, but may use them as corridors for travel between mountain ranges. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Funeral Mountains, approximately 2 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 2,343,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	33,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct affect. Impacts on the Nelson's bighorn sheep could be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to important movement corridors within the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Mammals (Cont.)						
Pallid bat	<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; CA-SC	Year-round resident in the SEZ region in low elevation desert communities, including grasslands, shrublands, and woodlands. Roosts in caves, crevices, and mines. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the DOE Nevada Test Site, approximately 13 mi east of the SEZ. About 3,500,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	31,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	129,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Spotted bat	<i>Euderma maculatum</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; CA-SC; CA-S2; NV-S2	Year-round resident in the SEZ region near forests and shrubland habitats throughout the SEZ region. Roosts and hibernates in caves and rock crevices. About 2,955,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	31,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	122,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^e	
Mammals (Cont.)						
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; CA-SC; CA-S2; NV-S2	Year-round resident in the SEZ region in all but subalpine and alpine habitats, and may be found at any season throughout its range. Roosts in caves, mines, tunnels, buildings, or other human-made structures. Nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 12 mi north of the SEZ. About 3,739,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	31,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	130,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Western small-footed myotis	<i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; CA-S2	Year-round resident in the SEZ region in a variety of woodlands and riparian habitats at elevations below 9,000 ft. Roosts in caves, buildings, mines, and crevices of cliff faces. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the DOE Nevada Test Site, approximately 13 mi east of the SEZ. About 4,194,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	31,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	108,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

Footnotes on next page.

TABLE 11.1.12.1-1 (Cont.)

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- ^a BLM-S = listed as a sensitive species by the BLM; CA-E = listed as endangered in the state of California; CA-S1 = ranked as S1 in the state of California; CA-S2 = ranked as S2 in the state of California; CA-SC = a state species of concern within the state of California; CA-T = listed as threatened in the state of California; ESA-E = listed as endangered under the ESA; ESA-T = listed as threatened under the ESA; ESA-UR = under review for listing under the ESA; FWS-SC = USFWS species of concern; NV-P = protected in the state of Nevada under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants); NV-S1 = ranked as S1 in the state of Nevada; NV-S2 = ranked as S2 in the state of Nevada.
- ^b For plant species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP and CReGAP land cover types. For terrestrial vertebrate species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP and CReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^c Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. Impacts of access road and transmission line construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this evaluation due to the proximity of existing infrastructure to the SEZ.
- ^d Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^e Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and the portions of the road and transmission corridors where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from project development. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ. Indirect effects on groundwater-dependent species were considered outside these defined areas.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: $> 1\%$ but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $> 10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.
- ⁱ To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.
- ^j Species in bold text have been recorded or have designated critical habitat within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary.
- ^k To convert ft to m, multiply by 0.3048.

1 information on their habitats is presented in Table 11.1.12.1-1; additional basic information on
2 life history, habitat needs, and threats to populations of these species is provided in Appendix J.

5 **Desert Tortoise**

7 The Mojave population of desert tortoise (north and west of the Colorado River) is listed
8 as threatened under the ESA and is widespread in Mojave desert scrub communities where firm
9 soils are present for digging burrows. This species has the potential to occur within the SEZ on
10 the basis of observed occurrences on and near the SEZ and the presence of potentially suitable
11 habitat in the SEZ (Figure 11.1.12.1-1; Table 11.1.12.1-1). Designated critical habitat for this
12 species does not occur in the SEZ region.

14 The desert tortoise is known to occur throughout the SEZ affected area. According to the
15 USFWS (Stout 2009), specific information on the density of tortoises in the vicinity of the
16 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is currently not available. However, tortoises have been
17 observed along U.S. 95, which intersects the northeast boundary of the SEZ; tortoises have also
18 been observed within the SEZ and throughout the area of indirect effects east and west of the
19 SEZ (Figure 11.1.12.1-1). In addition, the USGS desert tortoise model (Nussear et al. 2009)
20 identifies the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ as highly suitable potential desert tortoise habitat
21 (modeled suitability value ≥ 0.8 out of 1.0).

24 **Groundwater-Dependent Species**

26 There are 11 ESA-listed species that are dependent on the groundwater supply that
27 supports wet meadows, seeps, and springs in the Ash Meadows region (see Section 11.1.9 for a
28 discussion of the groundwater basin). Although none of these species occur within 5 mi (8 km)
29 of the SEZ their habitats could be affected by groundwater withdrawals to serve solar energy
30 development on the SEZ. These species are discussed in this section.

33 ***Amargosa Niterwort.*** The Amargosa niterwort is a perennial forb that is listed as
34 endangered under the ESA and is known only from the Amargosa Valley in Inyo County,
35 California, and Nye County, Nevada. The nearest known occurrences are approximately 25 mi
36 (40 km) southeast of the SEZ in the Ash Meadows NWR, where it occurs in playas and alkaline
37 wetlands. Designated critical habitat for this species occurs within an area of 1,215 acres (5 km²)
38 to the southwest of the Ash Meadows NWR in Inyo County, California, approximately 25 mi
39 (40 km) southeast of the SEZ.

42 ***Ash Meadows Blazingstar.*** The Ash Meadows blazingstar is an annual forb that is listed
43 as threatened under the ESA and is known only from the Ash Meadows region in Nye County,
44 Nevada. It is narrowly confined to spring-fed desert wetlands. The nearest known occurrences
45 are approximately 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the SEZ. Designated critical habitat for this

1 species occurs in various spring habitats within an area of 1,240 acres (5 km²) in the Ash
2 Meadows NWR, about 25 mi (40 km) southeast of the SEZ.

3
4
5 ***Ash Meadows Gumplant.*** The Ash Meadows gumplant is a perennial forb that is listed
6 as threatened under the ESA and is known only from the Ash Meadows region of Inyo County,
7 California, and Nye County, Nevada. It is restricted to saltgrass meadows along spring-fed
8 streams and pools, where it is dependent upon a constant water supply. The nearest known
9 occurrences are from the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 22 mi (35 km) southeast of the
10 SEZ. Designated critical habitat for this species occurs in various spring-fed habitats
11 encompassing a total area of 2,098 acres (8.5 km²) within the Ash Meadows NWR and in other
12 portions of the Ash Meadows region in Inyo County, California, and Nye County, Nevada, as
13 near as 23 mi southeast of the SEZ.

14
15
16 ***Ash Meadows Ivesia.*** The Ash Meadows ivesia is a perennial forb that is listed as
17 threatened under the ESA and is known only from the Ash Meadows region in Nye County,
18 Nevada. The species is narrowly endemic to a single spring-fed wetland area with extremely
19 saline soils where only nine extant occurrences are known. The nearest known occurrence is
20 from the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the SEZ. Designated
21 critical habitat for this species occurs in various habitats within a total area of 880 acres
22 (3.5 km²) in the Ash Meadows NWR, between 20 and 25 mi (32 and 40 km) southeast of
23 the SEZ.

24
25
26 ***Ash Meadows Sunray.*** The Ash Meadows sunray is a perennial forb that is listed as
27 threatened under the ESA and is narrowly endemic to saline soils near springs and dry washes
28 in the Ash Meadows region. The nearest known occurrence is from the Ash Meadows NWR,
29 approximately 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the SEZ. Designated critical habitat for this species
30 occurs in various habitats within a total area of 1,760 acres (7 km²) in the Ash Meadows NWR,
31 between 20 and 25 mi (32 and 40 km) southeast of the SEZ.

32
33
34 ***Spring-Loving Centaury.*** The spring-loving centaury is an annual forb that is listed as
35 threatened under the ESA and is restricted to moist clay soils along the banks of streams and
36 seeps in the Ash Meadows region. The nearest known occurrence of this species is from the Ash
37 Meadows NWR, approximately 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the SEZ. Designated critical habitat
38 for this species occurs in various habitats within a total area of 1,840 acres (7.5 km²) in the Ash
39 Meadows NWR, between 20 and 25 mi (32 and 40 km) southeast of the SEZ.

40
41
42 ***Ash Meadows Naucorid.*** The Ash Meadows naucorid is a small aquatic insect that is
43 listed as threatened under the ESA and is restricted to Point of Rocks and Kings Springs in the
44 Ash Meadows NWR, where it inhabits gravel bottoms of the swift-flowing hot springs. The
45 nearest known occurrences of this species are approximately 25 mi (40 km) southeast of the
46 SEZ. Designated critical habitat for this species occurs in various habitats within a total area of

1 650 acres (2.5 km²) in the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 25 mi (40 km) southeast of the
2 SEZ.

3
4
5 ***Ash Meadows Amargosa Pupfish.*** The Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish is a small fish
6 species that is listed as endangered under the ESA and is endemic to the outflow of warm springs
7 in the Ash Meadows region. The nearest known occurrences are from the Ash Meadows NWR,
8 approximately 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the SEZ. Designated critical habitat for this species
9 occurs in various spring habitats within an area of 5,123 acres (21 km²) in the Ash Meadows
10 NWR, approximately 25 mi (40 km) southeast of the SEZ.

11
12
13 ***Ash Meadows Speckled Dace.*** The Ash Meadows speckled dace is a small fish species
14 that is listed as endangered under the ESA and is endemic to the outflow of warm springs in
15 the Ash Meadows region. The nearest known occurrences are from the Ash Meadows NWR,
16 approximately 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the SEZ. Designated critical habitat for this species
17 occurs in various spring habitats within an area of 1,971 acres (8 km²) in the Ash Meadows
18 NWR, approximately 25 mi (40 km) southeast of the SEZ.

19
20
21 ***Devils Hole Pupfish.*** The Devils Hole pupfish is a small fish species that is listed as
22 endangered under the ESA and is endemic to Devils Hole, a cavernous aquifer-fed pool in the
23 Ash Meadows NWR. The single natural occurrence of this species is approximately 24 mi
24 (38 km) southeast of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Critical habitat has not been
25 designated for this species, but the only known occurrence in Devils Hole is protected and
26 access to the site is limited.

27
28
29 ***Warm Springs Amargosa Pupfish.*** The Warm Springs Amargosa pupfish is a small fish
30 species that is listed as endangered under the ESA and is endemic to the outflow of Lovell's
31 Spring and at five additional spring flows within 1 mi (1.6 km) of Lovell's Spring in the Ash
32 Meadows NWR. The nearest known occurrences are approximately 22 mi (35 km) southeast of
33 the SEZ. Critical habitat has not been designated for this species, but the only known
34 occurrences for this species are located in the Ash Meadows NWR.

35 36 37 ***11.1.12.1.2 Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA***

38
39 In its scoping comments on the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, the USFWS identified
40 10 invertebrate and 1 amphibian species (Amargosa toad) that may be directly or indirectly
41 affected by solar energy development within the SEZ (Stout 2009). The 10 invertebrates under
42 review include the following springsnails: Amargosa tryonia, Ash Meadows pebblesnail, crystal
43 springsnail, distal gland springsnail, elongate gland springsnail, Fairbanks springsnail, median
44 gland springsnail, minute tryonia, Point of Rocks springsnail, and sporting goods springsnail
45 (Center for Biological Diversity 2009). In addition to these species, several other invertebrate
46 species not mentioned in the USFWS scoping letter are considered here to address potential

1 effects. These species include the Amargosa naucorid, Giuliani’s dune scarab beetle, large
2 aegialian scarab beetle, Oasis Valley speckled dace, and Oasis Valley springsnail
3 (Figure 11.1.12.1-1; Table 11.1.12.1-1). Appendix J provides basic information on life history,
4 habitat needs, and threats to populations of these species. General information on each species
5 is provided below.

6 7 8 **Giuliani’s Dune Scarab Beetle** 9

10 The Giuliani’s dune scarab beetle is an insect that is endemic to the Big Dune and Lava
11 Dune in Nye County, Nevada. Within these habitats, the species primarily lives beneath the
12 sand surface; adults are active aboveground for short periods near sunset. Adults breed on
13 creosotebush and on sand surfaces; larvae develop beneath the sand surface, where they
14 apparently feed on plant roots. The species is known to occur in the Big Dune ACEC,
15 approximately 3 mi (5 km) east of the SEZ (Figure 11.1.12.1-1; Table 11.1.12.1-1). Suitable
16 habitat does not occur on the SEZ, but potentially suitable dune habitats occur in other portions
17 of the affected area.

18 19 20 **Large Aegialian Scarab Beetle** 21

22 The large aegialian scarab beetle is an insect that is endemic to the Big Dune and Lava
23 Dune in Nye County, Nevada. Little information is known on the ecology of this species. The
24 species is known to occur in the Big Dune ACEC, approximately 3 mi (5 km) east of the SEZ
25 (Figure 11.1.12.1-1; Table 11.1.12.1-1). Suitable dune habitat does not occur on the SEZ, but
26 potentially suitable dune habitats occur in other portions of the affected area.

27 28 29 **Groundwater-Dependent Species** 30

31 There are 14 species under review for listing under the ESA that are dependent on the
32 groundwater supply that supports wet meadows, seeps, and springs in the Ash Meadows region
33 (see Section 11.1.9 for a discussion of the groundwater basin). Although none of these species
34 occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ their habitats could be affected by groundwater withdrawals
35 to serve solar energy development on the SEZ. These species are discussed in this section.

36
37
38 ***Amargosa Naucorid.*** The Amargosa naucorid is an aquatic insect known from the
39 Amargosa Valley in Inyo County, California, and Nye County, Nevada. It inhabits spring-fed
40 aquatic habitats where it prefers quiet waters among vegetation. The species is not known to
41 occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but it does occur in areas dependent on
42 groundwater discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from which groundwater could be withdrawn
43 to serve construction and operations of solar energy facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).

1 ***Amargosa Tryonia.*** The Amargosa tryonia is a freshwater mollusk endemic to the
2 Amargosa Valley, where it is known from at least 21 sites. Within this range, it is considered
3 locally abundant in warm spring-fed aquatic habitats where there is an abundance of detritus or
4 aquatic macrophytes. The species is primarily known from the Ash Meadows region. The species
5 is not known to occur in the 5-mi (8-km) area surrounding the SEZ, but it does occur in areas
6 dependent on groundwater discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from which groundwater could
7 be withdrawn to serve construction and operations of solar energy facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).
8
9

10 ***Ash Meadows Pebblesnail.*** The Ash Meadows pebblesnail is a freshwater mollusk
11 endemic to the Ash Meadows region of Nye County, Nevada, where it occurs in six springs.
12 All six springs are within 0.3 mi (0.5 km) of each other. The species inhabits rocky substrates
13 in flowing thermal water. The species is not known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ
14 boundary, but it does occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge from the Amargosa
15 Basin, from which groundwater could be withdrawn to serve construction and operations of
16 solar energy facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).
17
18

19 ***Crystal Springsnail.*** The crystal springsnail is a freshwater mollusk endemic to the Ash
20 Meadows region of Nye County, Nevada, where it is known only from Crystal Spring. Within
21 this spring, this species is found clinging to the walls of deep orifices. The species is not known
22 to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but it does occur in areas dependent on
23 groundwater discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from which groundwater could be withdrawn
24 to serve construction and operations of solar energy facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).
25
26

27 ***Distal Gland Springsnail.*** The distal gland springsnail is a freshwater mollusk endemic
28 to the Ash Meadows region of Nye County, Nevada. It is found at four small spring-fed habitats
29 within 6 mi (10 km) of each other. Within these habitats, the species occurs on soft substrates in
30 warmer waters. The species is not known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but
31 it does occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from
32 which groundwater could be withdrawn to serve construction and operations of solar energy
33 facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).
34
35

36 ***Elongate Gland Springsnail.*** The elongate gland springsnail is a freshwater mollusk
37 endemic to the Ash Meadows region of Nye County, Nevada. It is found only in the spring at
38 Clay Pits. Within this habitat, the species occurs on soft substrates in thermal waters near the
39 spring outflow. The species is not known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but it
40 does occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from which
41 groundwater could be withdrawn to serve construction and operations of solar energy facilities
42 (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).
43
44

45 ***Fairbanks Springsnail.*** The Fairbanks springsnail is a freshwater mollusk endemic to the
46 Ash Meadows region of Nye County, Nevada. It is found only in Fairbanks Spring. Within this

1 habitat, the species occurs on soft substrates in thermal waters. The species is not known to occur
2 within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but it does occur in areas dependent on groundwater
3 discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from which groundwater could be withdrawn to serve
4 construction and operations of solar energy facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).

5
6
7 ***Median Gland Springsnail.*** The median gland springsnail is a freshwater mollusk
8 endemic to the Ash Meadows region of Nye County, Nevada. It is found in only three spring-fed
9 habitats, all within 1 mi (1.6 km) of each other. Within these habitats, the species is found in the
10 outflows of the springs on travertine, aquatic macrophytes, or soft substrates. The species is not
11 known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but it does occur in areas dependent on
12 groundwater discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from which groundwater could be withdrawn
13 to serve construction and operations of solar energy facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).

14
15
16 ***Minute Tryonia.*** The minute tryonia is a freshwater mollusk endemic to the Ash
17 Meadows region of Nye County, Nevada. It is known from fewer than four spring-fed
18 habitats globally. Within these habitats, the species is found on macrophytes in thermal
19 outflow waters. The species is not known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary,
20 but it does occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from
21 which groundwater could be withdrawn to serve construction and operations of solar energy
22 facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).

23
24
25 ***Oasis Valley Springsnail.*** The Oasis Valley springsnail is a freshwater mollusk endemic
26 to the Amargosa River drainage and the Death, Panamint, and Saline Valleys in Inyo County,
27 California, and Nye County, Nevada. The species occurs in small springs and stream outflows,
28 where it is typically found on stone, travertine, and detritus. The species is not known to occur
29 within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but it does occur in areas dependent on groundwater
30 discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from which groundwater could be withdrawn to serve
31 construction and operations of solar energy facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1). The nearest known
32 occurrence is in the Ash Meadows region, approximately 21 mi (34 km) southeast of the SEZ.

33
34
35 ***Point of Rocks Tryonia.*** The Point of Rocks tryonia is a freshwater mollusk endemic to
36 the Ash Meadows region of Nye County, Nevada. It is found at only two localities at Point of
37 Rocks Springs. Within these habitats, the species is found on travertine mounds near spring
38 outflows. The species is not known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but it does
39 occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from which
40 groundwater could be withdrawn to serve construction and operations of solar energy facilities
41 (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).

42
43
44 ***Sporting Goods Tryonia.*** The sporting goods tryonia is a freshwater mollusk endemic to
45 the Ash Meadows region of Nye County, Nevada, where it is known from only three springs.
46 Within these habitats, the species is found on soft substrates in thermal waters. The species is not

1 known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but it does occur in areas dependent on
2 groundwater discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from which groundwater could be withdrawn
3 to serve construction and operations of solar energy facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).
4
5

6 ***Oasis Valley Speckled Dace.*** The Oasis Valley speckled dace is a small fish species that
7 is restricted to spring-fed habitats in the Oasis Valley, Nye County, Nevada. This species does
8 not occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but it does occur in areas dependent on
9 groundwater discharge from the Amargosa Basin, from which groundwater could be withdrawn
10 to serve construction and operations of solar energy facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1). The nearest
11 known occurrences are from isolated springs near Beatty, Nevada, approximately 8 mi (13 km)
12 north of the SEZ (Figure 11.1.12.1-1).
13
14

15 ***Amargosa Toad.*** The Amargosa toad is a small toad that is endemic to a very small range
16 (<40 mi² [100 km²]) in the Amargosa Valley in Nye County, Nevada. The species is confined to
17 isolated riparian and spring-fed habitats along the Amargosa River. It is usually observed near
18 water at the outflow of warm springs. The species is not known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of
19 the SEZ boundary, but it does occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge from the
20 Amargosa Basin, from which groundwater could be withdrawn to serve construction and
21 operations of solar energy facilities (Figure 11.1.12.1-1). The nearest known occurrences are
22 from the vicinity of Beatty, Nevada, approximately 8 mi (13 km) north of the SEZ (Figure
23 11.1.12.1-1).
24
25

26 ***11.1.12.1.3 BLM-Designated Sensitive Species*** 27

28 There are 25 BLM-designated sensitive species that may occur in the affected area of
29 the Amargosa Valley SEZ or that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ
30 (Table 11.1.12.1-1). These BLM-designated sensitive species include the following (1) plants:
31 black milkvetch, Death Valley beardtongue, Holmgren lupine, rock purpusia, white bearpoppy,
32 and white-margined beardtongue; (2) invertebrates: Amargosa naucorid, Amargosa tryonia,
33 Big Dune miloderes weevil, Giuliani's dune scarab beetle, large aegialian scarab beetle, and
34 Oasis Valley springsnail; (3) amphibian: Amargosa toad; (4) birds: ferruginous hawk, northern
35 goshawk, phainopepla, prairie falcon, Swainson's hawk, and western burrowing owl; and
36 (5) mammals: fringed myotis, Nelson's bighorn sheep, pallid bat, spotted bat, Townsend's big-
37 eared bat, and western small-footed bat. The Amargosa naucorid, Amargosa tryonia, Giuliani's
38 dune scarab beetle, large aegialian scarab beetle, Oasis Valley springsnail, and Amargosa toad
39 were discussed in Section 11.1.12.1.2 because they are undergoing status review for listing
40 under the ESA. Of the BLM-designated sensitive species with potentially suitable habitat in the
41 affected area, only the Big Dune miloderes weevil, Giuliani's dune scarab beetle, large aegialian
42 scarab beetle, and Nelson's bighorn sheep have been recorded within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ
43 boundary. Habitats in which BLM-designated sensitive species are found, the amount of
44 potentially suitable habitat in the affected area, and known locations of the species relative to
45 the SEZ are presented in Table 11.1.12.1-1.
46

1 All of the BLM-designated sensitive species that could occur in the affected area have the
2 potential to occur in the area of direct effects. These species as related to the SEZ are described
3 in the remainder of this section. Additional life history information for these species is provided
4 in Appendix J.
5
6

7 **Black Milkvetch**

8
9 The black milkvetch is a perennial forb that is known only from the Death Valley region
10 of California and southern Nevada. There are only five occurrences of this species currently
11 known. It inhabits gravelly-clay ridges and ledges on limestone or volcanic substrates at
12 elevations between 4,200 and 6,900 ft (1,280 and 2,100 m). The species is known to occur about
13 8 mi (13 km) north of the SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur on the
14 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, but potentially suitable habitat may occur in the area of indirect
15 effects outside of the SEZ (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
16
17

18 **Death Valley Beardtongue**

19
20 The Death Valley beardtongue is a perennial shrub that is known only from the Death
21 Valley region of California and southern Nevada. It inhabits Mojave desert scrub communities at
22 elevations between 2,800 and 4,600 ft (850 and 1,400 m). The nearest known occurrences are
23 13 mi (21 km) east of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat for the
24 species occurs on the SEZ and other portions of the affected area (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
25
26

27 **Holmgren Lupine**

28
29 The Holmgren lupine is a perennial forb that is known only from the Death Valley region
30 of California and southern Nevada. It inhabits dry desert slopes, washes, and valleys on volcanic
31 substrates, sometimes in association with pinyon-juniper woodlands. The species occurs at
32 elevations between 4,600 and 8,200 ft (1,400 and 2,500 m). The nearest known occurrences are
33 from Death Valley NP, approximately 15 mi (24 km) northwest of the proposed Amargosa
34 Valley SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat for the species occurs on the SEZ and other portions of
35 the affected area (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
36
37

38 **Rock Purpusia**

39
40 The rock purpusia is a perennial forb that is endemic to the Upper Amargosa River
41 watershed of southern Nevada. It inhabits crevices of cliffs and boulders on volcanic substrates
42 in pinyon-juniper communities at elevations between 4,900 and 6,900 ft (1,500 and 2,100 m).
43 The nearest known occurrences are from the DOE Nevada Test Site, approximately 21 mi
44 (34 km) northeast of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat for the
45 species does not occur on the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, but potentially suitable habitat
46 may occur in the area of indirect effects outside of the SEZ (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
47

1 **White Bearpoppy**

2
3 The white bearpoppy is a perennial forb that is endemic to the Death Valley region of
4 California and Nevada. It inhabits barren gravelly areas, rocky slopes, and limestone outcrops at
5 elevations between 2,000 and 5,900 ft (600 and 1,800 m). The nearest known occurrences are
6 from the Ash Meadows NWR, approximately 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the proposed
7 Amargosa Valley SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur on the proposed
8 Amargosa Valley SEZ, but potentially suitable habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects
9 outside of the SEZ (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

10
11
12 **White-Margined Beardtongue**

13
14 The white-margined beardtongue is a perennial forb that occurs in the deserts of Arizona,
15 California, and Nevada. It inhabits desert dunes and desert scrub communities of the Mojave
16 Desert at elevations between 2,000 and 3,600 ft (600 and 1,100 m). The nearest known
17 occurrences are approximately 17 mi (27 km) east of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ.
18 Potentially suitable habitat for the species occurs on the SEZ and other portions of the affected
19 area (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

20
21
22 **Big Dune Miloderes Weevil**

23
24 The Big Dune miloderes weevil is an insect that is endemic to the Big Dune area in Nye
25 County, Nevada. Little information is available on the ecology of this species, but it is known to
26 be dependent upon deep sand habitats. Suitable dune habitat does not occur on the SEZ, but
27 potentially suitable dune habitats occur in other portions of the affected area. The species is
28 known to occur in the Big Dune ACEC, approximately 3 mi (5 km) east of the SEZ
29 (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

30
31
32 **Ferruginous Hawk**

33
34 The ferruginous hawk is a winter resident in the Amargosa Valley SEZ region. The
35 species inhabits open grasslands, sagebrush flats, desert scrub, and the edges of pinyon-juniper
36 woodlands. This species occurs in Nye County, Nevada, and potentially suitable foraging habitat
37 occurs on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

38
39
40 **Northern Goshawk**

41
42 The northern goshawk is a winter resident in the Amargosa Valley SEZ region. The
43 species is known to forage in montane forests and valley shrubland habitats. This species is
44 known to occur in Nye County, Nevada. Suitable foraging habitat is not expected to occur on the SEZ,
45 but potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur in other portions of the affected area
46 (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

1 **Phainopepla**

2
3 The phainopepla occurs in the southwestern United States and Mexico, where it breeds in
4 suitable habitats throughout much of the Amargosa Valley SEZ region. The species occurs in
5 desert scrub, mesquite, and pinyon-juniper woodland communities, as well as desert riparian
6 areas and orchards. Nests are typically constructed in trees and shrubs from 3 to 45 ft (1 to 15 m)
7 above the ground. This species occurs in Nye County, Nevada, and potentially suitable foraging
8 habitat occurs on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.1.12.1-1). The
9 availability of suitable nesting habitat on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects has not been
10 determined.

11
12
13 **Prairie Falcon**

14
15 The prairie falcon occurs throughout the western United States. It is a year-round resident
16 within the Amargosa Valley SEZ region. The species occurs in open habitats in mountainous
17 areas, sagebrush-steppe, grasslands, or cultivated areas. Nests are typically constructed in well-
18 sheltered ledges of rocky cliffs and outcrops. This species occurs in Nye County, Nevada, and
19 potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area
20 (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP and CAREGAP land cover
21 types, potentially suitable nesting habitat (cliffs and rock outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or
22 within the area of indirect effects.

23
24
25 **Swainson's Hawk**

26
27 The Swainson's hawk occurs throughout the southwestern United States. The breeding
28 range for this species occurs throughout the Amargosa Valley SEZ region. It inhabits desert,
29 savanna, open pine-oak woodland, grassland, and cultivated habitats. Nests are typically
30 constructed in solitary trees, bushes, or small groves; sometimes nests near urban areas. This
31 species occurs in Nye County, Nevada, and potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs on the
32 SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation
33 of SWReGAP and CAREGAP land cover types, potentially suitable nesting habitat (woodlands)
34 does not occur on the SEZ; however, approximately 70 acres (0.3 km²) of woodland habitat that
35 may be potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.

36
37
38 **Western Burrowing Owl**

39
40 The western burrowing owl is a summer (breeding) resident of open, dry grasslands and
41 desert habitats in the Amargosa Valley SEZ region. The species occurs locally in open areas with
42 sparse vegetation, where it forages in grasslands, shrublands, and open disturbed areas. This
43 species typically nests in burrows constructed by mammals. The species occurs in Nye County,
44 Nevada, and potentially suitable summer breeding habitat is expected to occur in the SEZ and in
45 other portions of the affected area (Table 11.1.12.1-1). The availability of nest sites (burrows)

1 within the affected area has not been determined, but shrubland habitat that may be suitable for
2 either foraging or nesting occurs throughout the affected area.
3
4

5 **Fringed Myotis**

6
7 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident in the Amargosa Valley SEZ region, where
8 it occurs in a variety of habitats including riparian, shrubland, sagebrush, and pinyon-juniper
9 woodlands. The species roosts in buildings and caves. The nearest recorded occurrence is
10 from the DOE Nevada Test Site, approximately 13 mi (21 km) east of the SEZ. Potentially
11 suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area
12 (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP and CAREGAP land cover
13 types, there apparently is no suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) within the
14 SEZ or within the area of indirect effects.
15
16

17 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

18
19 The Nelson's bighorn sheep (also called the desert bighorn sheep) is a subspecies of
20 bighorn sheep known to occur in the Amargosa Valley SEZ region. This species occurs in desert
21 mountain ranges in Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah. The Nelson's bighorn sheep
22 uses primarily montane shrubland, forest, and grassland habitats, and may utilize desert valleys
23 as corridors for travel between range habitats. The species is known to occur in the affected area
24 of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Nearest recorded occurrences are from Inyo County,
25 California, within the Funeral Mountains, approximately 2 mi (3 km) southwest of the SEZ.
26 Suitable habitat does not occur on the SEZ, but portions of the affected area may provide
27 important range and migratory habitat for the Nelson's bighorn sheep (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
28
29

30 **Pallid Bat**

31
32 The pallid bat is a large pale bat with large ears that is locally common in desert grasslands
33 and shrublands in the southwestern United States. It roosts in caves, crevices, and mines. The
34 species is a year-round resident throughout southern Nevada. The nearest recorded occurrence
35 is from the DOE Nevada Test Site, approximately 13 mi (21 km) east of the SEZ. Potentially
36 suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area
37 (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP and CAREGAP land cover
38 types, there apparently is no suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) within the SEZ
39 or within the area of indirect effects.
40
41

42 **Spotted Bat**

43
44 The spotted bat is considered to be a year-round resident in the Amargosa Valley SEZ
45 region, where it occurs in a variety of forested and shrubland habitats. It roosts in caves and rock
46 crevices. The species occurs in Nye County, Nevada, and potentially suitable foraging habitat

1 may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis
2 of an evaluation of SWReGAP and CAREGAP land cover types, there apparently is no suitable
3 roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) within the SEZ or within the area of indirect effects.
4

6 **Townsend's Big-Eared Bat**

7
8 The Townsend's big-eared bat is widely distributed throughout the western United States.
9 In southern Nevada, the species forages year-round in a wide variety of desert and nondesert
10 habitats. The species roosts in caves, mines, tunnels, buildings, and other manmade structures.
11 The nearest recorded occurrences are approximately 12 mi (19 km) north of the proposed
12 Amargosa Valley SEZ. Potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other
13 portions of the affected area (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP
14 and CAREGAP land cover types, there apparently is no suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and
15 outcrops) within the SEZ or within the area of indirect effects.
16

18 **Western Small-Footed Bat**

19
20 The western small-footed bat is widely distributed throughout the western United States.
21 The species is considered a year-round resident in southern Nevada, where it occupies a wide
22 variety of desert and non-desert habitats including cliffs and rock outcrops, grasslands,
23 shrubland, and mixed woodlands. The species roosts in caves, mines, tunnels, buildings, and
24 other manmade structures, and beneath boulders or loose bark. The nearest recorded occurrence
25 is from the DOE Nevada Test Site, approximately 13 mi (21 km) east of the SEZ. Potentially
26 suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area
27 (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP and CAREGAP land cover
28 types, there apparently is no suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) within the SEZ
29 or within the area of indirect effects.
30

32 ***11.1.12.1.4 State-Listed Species***

33
34 There are 19 species listed by the states of California or Nevada that may occur in the
35 Amargosa Valley SEZ affected area or that may be affected by solar energy development on the
36 SEZ (Table 11.1.12.1-1). These state-listed species include the following (1) plants: Amargosa
37 niterwort, Ash Meadows blazingstar, Ash Meadows gumplant, Ash Meadows ivesia, Ash
38 Meadows sunray, and spring-loving centaury; (2) fish: Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish, Ash
39 Meadows speckled dace, Devils Hole pupfish, Oasis Valley speckled dace, and Warm Springs
40 Amargosa pupfish; (3) amphibian: Amargosa toad; (4) reptile: desert tortoise; (5) birds: northern
41 goshawk and Swainson's hawk; and (6) mammals: fringed myotis, pallid bat, spotted bat, and
42 Townsend's big-eared bat. All of these species are protected in the state of Nevada under
43 NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants). Each of these species has been previously
44 discussed because of its known or review status under the ESA (Sections 11.1.12.1.1 or
45 11.1.12.1.2) or the BLM (Section 11.1.12.1.3). Additional life history information for these
46 species is provided in Appendix J.
47

1 **11.1.12.1.5 Rare Species**
2

3 There are 49 rare species (i.e., state rank of S1 or S2 in California or Nevada or a species
4 of concern by the states of California or Nevada or USFWS) that may be affected by solar
5 energy development on the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (Table 11.1.12.1-1). Of these
6 species, there are five that have not been discussed as ESA-listed species (Section 11.1.12.1.1),
7 under review for ESA listing (Section 11.1.12.1.2), or BLM-designated sensitive
8 (Section 11.1.12.1.3). These include the following: Ash Meadows buckwheat, Bullfrog Hills
9 sweetpea, Panamint Mountains bedstraw, weasel phacelia, and the endemic ant *Neivamyrmex*
10 *nyensis*. The following rare species are known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the proposed
11 Amargosa Valley SEZ: Ash Meadows buckwheat, Big Dune miloderes weevil, the ant
12 *Neivamyrmex nyensis*, and Nelson’s bighorn sheep (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
13
14

15 **11.1.12.2 Impacts**
16

17 The potential for impacts on special status species from utility-scale solar energy
18 development within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is presented in this section. The types of
19 impacts that special status species could incur from construction and operation of utility-scale
20 solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.4.
21

22 The assessment of impacts on special status species is based on available information on
23 the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.1.12.1 following the
24 analysis approach described in Appendix M. It is assumed that, prior to development, surveys
25 would be conducted to determine the presence of special status species and their habitats in and
26 near areas where ground-disturbing activities would occur. Additional NEPA assessments, ESA
27 consultations, and coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address
28 project-specific impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in
29 additional required actions to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts on special status species
30 (see Section 11.1.12.3).
31

32 Solar energy development within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ could affect a
33 variety of habitats (see Sections 11.1.9 and 11.1.10). These impacts on habitats could in turn
34 affect special status species that are dependent on those habitats. Based on NNHP and CNDDB
35 records, there are seven special status species known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the
36 Amargosa Valley SEZ boundary: Ash Meadows buckwheat, Big Dune miloderes weevil, the
37 endemic ant *Neivamyrmex nyensis*, Giuliani’s dune scarab beetle, large aegialian scarab beetle,
38 desert tortoise, and Nelson’s bighorn sheep. These species are listed in bold in Table 11.1.12.1-1.
39 In addition, there are 25 groundwater-dependent special status species that occur more than 5 mi
40 (8 km) from the SEZ boundary, but that could be affected by the withdrawal of groundwater to
41 serve solar energy development on the SEZ. Other special status species may occur on the SEZ
42 or within the affected area on the basis of the presence of potentially suitable habitat. As
43 discussed in Section 11.1.12.1, this approach to identifying the species that could occur in the
44 affected area probably overestimates the number of species that actually occur in the affected
45 area, and may therefore overestimate impacts on some special status species.
46

1 Impacts on special status species could occur during all phases of development
2 (construction, operation, and decommissioning and reclamation) of a utility-scale solar energy
3 project within the SEZ. Construction and operation activities could result in short- or long-term
4 impacts on individuals and their habitats, especially if these activities are sited in areas where
5 special status species are known to or could occur. As presented in Section 11.1.1.2, impacts of
6 access road and transmission line construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this
7 evaluation due to the proximity of existing infrastructure to the SEZ.
8

9 Direct impacts would result from habitat destruction or modification. It is assumed that
10 direct impacts would occur only within the SEZ where ground-disturbing activities are expected
11 to occur. Indirect impacts could result from depletions of groundwater resources, surface water
12 and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental
13 spills, harassment, and lighting. No ground-disturbing activities associated with project
14 development are anticipated to occur within the area of indirect effects. Decommissioning of
15 facilities and reclamation of disturbed areas after operations cease could result in short-term
16 negative impacts on individuals and habitats adjacent to project areas, but long-term benefits
17 would accrue if original land contours and native plant communities were restored in previously
18 disturbed areas.
19

20 The successful implementation of programmatic design features (discussed in
21 Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would reduce direct impacts on some special status species,
22 especially those that depend on habitat types that can be easily avoided (e.g., rock outcrops and
23 desert riparian habitats). Indirect impacts on special status species could be reduced to negligible
24 levels by implementing programmatic design features, especially those engineering controls that
25 would reduce groundwater consumption, runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust.
26
27

28 ***11.1.12.2.1 Impacts on Species Listed under the ESA*** 29

30 Impacts on the 12 ESA-listed species that may occur in the proposed Amargosa Valley
31 SEZ affected area, or that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ, are
32 discussed below. These assessments are based on the best information available, but discussions
33 of potential impacts and mitigation options should be held in consultation with the USFWS.
34 Formal consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the ESA is required for any federal
35 action that may adversely affect an ESA-listed species.
36
37

38 **Desert Tortoise** 39

40 The desert tortoise is listed as a threatened species under the ESA throughout the entire
41 Amargosa Valley SEZ region. It is widespread in Mojave desert scrub communities where firm
42 soils are present for digging burrows. The desert tortoise has the potential to occur within the
43 SEZ on the basis of observed occurrences on and near the SEZ and the presence of apparently
44 suitable habitat in the SEZ (Figure 11.1.12.1-1; Table 11.1.12.1-1). According to habitat
45 suitability models, approximately 31,583 acres (128 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the
46 SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations of solar energy development on

1 the SEZ (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents about 1.2% of available suitable
2 habitat of the desert tortoise in the region. Much of this habitat within the SEZ is considered to
3 be highly suitable (modeled suitability value ≥ 0.8 out of 1.0) according to the USGS desert
4 tortoise habitat suitability model (Nussear et al. 2009). About 106,400 acres (430 km²) of
5 suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area represents about 3.9%
6 of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

7
8 The overall impact on the desert tortoise from construction, operation, and
9 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
10 SEZ is considered moderate because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species
11 in the area of direct effects represents greater than 1% but less than 10% of potentially suitable
12 habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design features alone is unlikely to
13 reduce these impacts to negligible levels. Avoidance of potentially suitable habitats for this
14 species is not a feasible means of mitigating impacts because these habitats (desert scrub) are
15 widespread throughout the area of direct effects. Preconstruction surveys to determine the
16 abundance of desert tortoises on the SEZ and the implementation of a desert tortoise
17 translocation plan and compensation plan could further reduce direct impacts.

18
19 Development of actions to reduce impacts (e.g., reasonable and prudent alternatives,
20 reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions) for the desert tortoise, including
21 development of a survey protocol, avoidance measures, minimization measures, and, potentially,
22 translocation actions, and compensatory mitigation, would require formal consultation with the
23 USFWS under Section 7 of the ESA. These consultations may be used to authorize incidental
24 take statements per Section 10 of the ESA (if necessary). Consultation with the NDOW should
25 also occur to determine any state mitigation requirements.

26
27 There are inherent dangers to tortoises associated with their capture, handling, and
28 translocation from the SEZ. These actions, if done improperly, can result in injury or death.
29 To minimize these risks, and as stated above, the desert tortoise translocation plan should be
30 developed in consultation with the USFWS, and follow the *Guidelines for Handling Desert*
31 *Tortoises During Construction Projects* (Desert Tortoise Council 1994) and other current
32 translocation guidance provided by the USFWS. Consultation will identify potentially suitable
33 recipient locations, density thresholds for tortoise populations in recipient locations, and
34 procedures for pre-disturbance clearance surveys and tortoise handling, as well as disease testing
35 and post-translocation monitoring and reporting requirements. Despite some risk of mortality or
36 decreased fitness, translocation is widely accepted as a useful strategy for the conservation of the
37 desert tortoise (Field et al. 2007).

38
39 To offset impacts of solar development on the SEZ, compensatory mitigation may be
40 needed to balance the acreage of habitat lost with acquisition of lands that would be improved
41 and protected for desert tortoise populations (USFWS 1994). Compensation can be accomplished
42 by improving the carrying capacity for the desert tortoise on the acquired lands. Other mitigation
43 actions may include funding for the habitat enhancement of the desert tortoise on existing
44 federal lands. Consultation with the USFWS and NDOW would be necessary to determine the
45 appropriate mitigation ratio to acquire, enhance, and preserve desert tortoise compensation lands.

1 **Groundwater-Dependent Species**
2

3 There are 11 species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA that do not occur
4 within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary but that do occur in areas dependent on groundwater
5 discharge from the regional Amargosa Desert groundwater system. These species include the
6 following (1) plants: Ash Meadows blazingstar (threatened), Ash Meadows gumplant
7 (threatened), Ash Meadows ivesia (threatened), Amargosa niterwort (endangered), Ash
8 Meadows sunray (threatened), and spring-loving centaury (threatened); (2) invertebrates: Ash
9 Meadows naucorid (threatened); and (3) fish: Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish (endangered),
10 Ash Meadows speckled dace (endangered), Devils Hole pupfish (threatened), and Warm Springs
11 Amargosa pupfish (endangered). Groundwater withdrawn from the Amargosa Desert
12 groundwater basin to serve construction and operations of solar energy facilities on the SEZ
13 could affect aquatic and riparian habitats for the ESA-listed species that are dependent on
14 groundwater. Such impacts would result from the lowering of the water table and alteration of
15 hydrologic processes.
16

17 Impacts of groundwater depletion from solar energy development in the Amargosa
18 Valley SEZ cannot be quantified without identification of the cumulative amount of groundwater
19 withdrawals needed to support development on the SEZ. Consequently, the overall impact on
20 these species could range from small to large, and would depend in part on the solar energy
21 technology deployed, the scale of development within the SEZ, the type of cooling system used,
22 and the degree of influence water withdrawals in the SEZ would have on drawdown and surface
23 water discharges in habitats supporting these species (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
24

25 The implementation of programmatic design features and complete avoidance or
26 limitations of groundwater withdrawals from the regional groundwater system would reduce
27 impacts on the groundwater-dependent species to small or negligible levels. Impacts can be
28 better quantified for specific projects once water needs are identified and through application
29 of a regional groundwater model.
30

31
32 ***11.1.12.2 Impacts on Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA***
33

34 Impacts on the 16 species currently under review for ESA listing that may occur in the
35 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ affected area, or that may be affected by solar energy
36 development on the SEZ, are discussed below. For all of these species, potential impacts and
37 mitigation options should be discussed with the USFWS prior to project development.
38

39
40 **Giuliani’s Dune Scarab Beetle**
41

42 The Giuliani’s dune scarab beetle is endemic to the Big Dune and Lava Dune, and is
43 known to occur in the affected area of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, approximately 3 mi
44 (5 km) east of the SEZ. Suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ. However,
45 approximately 1,000 acres (4 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential

1 indirect effects; this area represents about 62.2% of the available suitable habitat in the SEZ
2 region (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

3
4 The overall impact on the Giuliani's dune scarab beetle from construction, operation, and
5 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
6 SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area
7 of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic
8 design features is expected to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels in the
9 area of indirect impacts. However, given the location of this species and its habitat immediately
10 adjacent to the SEZ boundary, a review of mitigation effectiveness to avoid indirect effects
11 (e.g., site runoff and erosion) on this species should be conducted during the project design
12 phase.

13 14 15 **Large Aegialian Scarab Beetle**

16
17 The large aegialian scarab beetle is endemic to the Big Dune and Lava Dune, and is
18 known to occur in the affected area of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, approximately 3 mi
19 (5 km) east of the SEZ. Suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ. However,
20 approximately 1,000 acres (4 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential
21 indirect effects; this area represents about 62.2% of the available suitable habitat in the SEZ
22 region (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

23
24 The overall impact on the large aegialian scarab beetle from construction, operation, and
25 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
26 SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area
27 of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic
28 design features is expected to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels in the
29 area of indirect impacts. However, given the location of this species and its habitat immediately
30 adjacent to the SEZ boundary, a review of mitigation effectiveness to avoid indirect effects
31 (e.g., site runoff and erosion) on this species should be conducted during the project design
32 phase.

33 34 35 **Groundwater-Dependent Species**

36
37 There are 14 species currently under review for listing under the ESA that do not occur
38 within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary but that do occur in areas dependent on groundwater
39 discharge from the regional Amargosa Desert groundwater system. These species include the
40 following: (1) invertebrates: Amargosa naucorid, Amargosa tryonia, Ash Meadows pebblesnail,
41 crystal springsnail, distal gland springsnail, elongate gland springsnail, Fairbanks springsnail,
42 median gland springsnail, minute tryonia, Oasis Valley springsnail, Point of Rocks tryonia, and
43 sporting goods tryonia; (2) fish: Oasis Valley speckled dace; and (3) amphibians: Amargosa
44 toad. Groundwater withdrawn from the Amargosa Desert groundwater basin to serve
45 construction and operations of solar energy facilities on the SEZ could affect aquatic and riparian

1 habitats for these species. Such impacts would result from the lowering of the water table and
2 alteration of hydrologic processes.

3
4 Impacts of groundwater depletion from solar energy development in the Amargosa
5 Valley SEZ cannot be quantified without identification of the cumulative amount of groundwater
6 withdrawals needed to support development on the SEZ. Consequently, the overall impact on
7 these species could range from small to large, and would depend in part on the solar energy
8 technology deployed, the scale of development within the SEZ, the type of cooling system used,
9 and the degree of influence water withdrawals in the SEZ would have on drawdown and surface
10 water discharges in habitats supporting these species (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

11
12 The implementation of programmatic design features and complete avoidance or
13 limitations of groundwater withdrawals from the regional groundwater system would reduce
14 impacts on the groundwater-dependent species to small or negligible levels. Impacts can be
15 better quantified for specific projects once water needs are identified and through application
16 of a regional groundwater model.

17 18 19 ***11.1.12.2.3 Impacts on BLM-Designated Sensitive Species***

20
21 BLM-designated sensitive species that may be affected by solar energy development on
22 the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ and are not previously discussed as ESA-listed or under
23 review for ESA listing in Sections 11.1.12.2.1 and 11.1.12.2.2, respectively, are discussed below.

24 25 26 **Black Milkvetch**

27
28 The black milkvetch is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed
29 Amargosa Valley SEZ and suitable habitat for the species does not occur on the site. However,
30 approximately 15,800 acres (64 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect
31 effects; this area represents about 1.9% of the available suitable habitat in the SEZ region
32 (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

33
34 The overall impact on the black milkvetch from construction, operation, and
35 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
36 SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area
37 of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic
38 design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

39 40 41 **Death Valley Beardtongue**

42
43 The Death Valley beardtongue is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed
44 Amargosa Valley SEZ; however, approximately 30,490 acres (123 km²) of potentially suitable
45 habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
46 This direct impact area represents about 1.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region.

1 About 114,100 acres (462 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect
2 effects; this area represents about 4.7% of the available suitable habitat in the SEZ region
3 (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
4

5 The overall impact on the Death Valley beardtongue from construction, operation, and
6 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
7 SEZ is considered moderate because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in
8 the area of direct effects represents greater than 1% but less than 10% of potentially suitable
9 habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be
10 sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
11

12 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible means to mitigate impacts
13 on the Death Valley beardtongue because potentially suitable desert scrub habitat is widespread
14 throughout the area of direct effects. Impacts could be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance
15 surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats on the SEZ. If avoidance or
16 minimization is not a feasible option, plants could be translocated from areas of direct effects to
17 protected areas that would not be affected directly or indirectly by future development.
18 Alternatively, or in combination with translocation, a compensatory mitigation plan could be
19 developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could
20 involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate
21 for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or more of
22 these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development.
23
24

25 **Holmgren Lupine**

26

27 The Holmgren lupine is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed
28 Amargosa Valley SEZ; however, approximately 20 acres (0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat
29 on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This
30 direct impact area represents less than 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region.
31 About 2,500 acres (10 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects;
32 this area represents about 1.9% of the available suitable habitat in the SEZ region
33 (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
34

35 The overall impact on the Holmgren lupine from construction, operation, and
36 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
37 SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the
38 area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region.
39 The implementation of programmatic design features and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to
40 desert wash habitats may be sufficient to reduce indirect and direct impacts to negligible levels.
41 If avoidance or minimization is not possible, impacts could be reduced by implementing the
42 mitigation options described previously for the Death Valley beardtongue. The need for
43 mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-
44 construction surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
45
46

1 **Rock Purpusia**

2
3 The rock purpusia is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed Amargosa
4 Valley SEZ, and potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur on the site. However,
5 approximately 15,800 acres (64 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect
6 effects; this area represents about 1.5% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region
7 (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

8
9 The overall impact on the rock purpusia from construction, operation, and
10 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
11 SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area
12 of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic
13 design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

14
15
16 **White Bearpoppy**

17
18 The white bearpoppy is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed
19 Amargosa Valley SEZ, and potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur on the site.
20 However, approximately 15,800 acres (64 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area
21 of indirect effects; this area represents about 1.9% of the available potentially suitable habitat in
22 the SEZ region (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

23
24 The overall impact on the white bearpoppy from construction, operation, and
25 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
26 SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area
27 of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic
28 design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

29
30
31 **White-Margined Beardtongue**

32
33 The white-margined beardtongue is not known to occur in the affected area of the
34 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ; however, approximately 30,490 acres (123 km²) of potentially
35 suitable habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations
36 (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents about 1.2% of potentially suitable habitat
37 in the SEZ region. About 115,200 acres (466 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the
38 area of indirect effects; this area represents about 4.7% of the potentially suitable habitat in the
39 SEZ region (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

40
41 The overall impact on the white-margined beardtongue from construction, operation, and
42 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
43 SEZ is considered moderate because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in
44 the area of direct effects represents greater than 1% but less than 10% of potentially suitable
45 habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be
46 sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

1 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts on
2 the white-margined beardtongue because potentially suitable desert scrub habitat is widespread
3 throughout the area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced to negligible levels
4 with the implementation of programmatic design features and the mitigation options described
5 previously for the Death Valley beardtongue. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic
6 design features, should be determined by conducting pre-construction surveys for the species and
7 its habitat on the SEZ.
8
9

10 **Big Dune Miloderes Weevil**

11
12 The Big Dune miloderes weevil is endemic to the Big Dune area and is known to occur in
13 the affected area of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, approximately 3 mi (5 km) east of the
14 SEZ. Suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ. However, approximately
15 1,000 acres (4 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area
16 represents about 62.2% of the available suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
17

18 The overall impact on the Big Dune miloderes weevil from construction, operation, and
19 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
20 SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area
21 of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic
22 design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels. No
23 mitigation of direct effects is warranted, other than programmatic design features, because
24 suitable habitat does not occur anywhere in the area of direct effects. The implementation of
25 programmatic design features is expected to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible
26 levels in the area of indirect impacts. However, given the location of this species and its habitat
27 immediately adjacent to the SEZ boundary, a review of mitigation effectiveness to avoid indirect
28 effects (e.g., site runoff and erosion) on this species should be conducted during the project
29 design phase.
30
31

32 **Ferruginous Hawk**

33
34 The ferruginous hawk is a winter resident within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ
35 region and potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in the affected area.
36 Approximately 43 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ could be
37 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This direct impact area
38 represents less than 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 24,000 acres
39 (97 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area
40 represents about 1.9% of the available suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region
41 (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
42

43 The overall impact on the ferruginous hawk from construction, operation, and
44 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
45 SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this
46 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging

1 habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to
2 be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of direct
3 impacts on all potentially suitable foraging habitat is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts on
4 the ferruginous hawk because potentially suitable shrubland is widespread throughout the area of
5 direct effects and readily available in other portions of the affected area.
6
7

8 **Northern Goshawk**

9

10 The northern goshawk is considered a winter resident within the proposed Amargosa
11 Valley SEZ region and potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in the affected
12 area. Suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ. However, about 300 acres
13 (1 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area
14 represents about 0.2% of the potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region
15 (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
16

17 The overall impact on the northern goshawk from construction, operation, and
18 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
19 SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area
20 of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic
21 design features may be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.
22
23

24 **Phainopepla**

25

26 The phainopepla breeds in suitable riparian habitats throughout much of the proposed
27 Amargosa Valley SEZ region, and potentially suitable habitat is expected to occur in the affected
28 area. The availability of suitable nesting habitat (riparian habitats) on the SEZ and in the area of
29 indirect effects has not been determined, although potentially suitable riparian habitats may
30 occur within the SEZ along the Amargosa River.
31

32 Approximately 43 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could be
33 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This direct impact area
34 represents less than 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 23,000 acres
35 (93 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
36 about 1.7% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.1.12.1-1). The overall
37 impact on the phainopepla from construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale
38 solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is considered small because the
39 amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of direct effects represents less
40 than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic
41 design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible
42 levels.
43

44 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to mitigate direct effects is not feasible
45 because potentially suitable habitat (desert scrub) is widespread in the area of direct effects and
46 readily available in other portions of the SEZ region. However, avoiding or minimizing

1 disturbance to riparian areas could be a feasible method to mitigate impacts on nesting habitats.
2 In conjunction with the implementation of programmatic design features, pre-disturbance
3 surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied nesting habitats in the area of direct
4 effects could reduce impacts. If avoidance or minimization is not a feasible option, a
5 compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on
6 occupied nest sites. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing
7 occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive
8 mitigation strategy that uses one or both of these options could be designed to completely offset
9 the impacts of development.

12 **Prairie Falcon**

14 The prairie falcon is a year-round resident within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ
15 region and potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in the affected area.
16 Approximately 31,583 acres (128 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could be
17 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This direct impact area
18 represents 1.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 120,400 acres (487 km²)
19 of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about
20 5.1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.1.12.1-1). Most of this area
21 could serve as foraging habitat (open shrublands). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP
22 and CAREGAP land cover types, potentially suitable nesting habitat (cliffs and rock outcrops)
23 does not occur on the SEZ or within the area of indirect effects.

24
25 The overall impact on the prairie falcon from construction, operation, and
26 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
27 SEZ is considered moderate because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this
28 species in the area of direct effects represents greater than 1% but less than 10% of potentially
29 suitable foraging habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design features is
30 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.
31 Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitats to mitigate impacts on the prairie falcon is
32 not feasible because potentially suitable foraging habitats are widespread throughout the area of
33 direct effects and readily available in other portions of the affected area.

36 **Swainson's Hawk**

38 The Swainson's hawk breeds in suitable habitats throughout much of the proposed
39 Amargosa Valley SEZ region, and potentially suitable habitat is expected to occur in the affected
40 area. About 5,900 acres (24 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat (open shrublands)
41 occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 0.5% of the available suitable
42 foraging habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of
43 SWReGAP and CAREGAP land cover types, potentially suitable nesting habitat (woodlands)
44 does not occur on the SEZ; however, approximately 70 acres (0.3 km²) of woodland habitat that
45 may be potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.

1 The overall impact on the Swainson's hawk from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
3 SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area
4 of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic
5 design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
6
7

8 **Western Burrowing Owl**

9

10 The western burrowing owl breeds in suitable habitats throughout much of the proposed
11 Amargosa Valley SEZ region, and potentially suitable habitat is expected to occur in the affected
12 area. Approximately 31,600 acres (128 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could be
13 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This direct impact area
14 represents 0.7% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 112,600 acres (456 km²)
15 of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about
16 2.5% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.1.12.1-1). Most of this area
17 could serve as foraging and nesting habitat (shrublands). The abundance of burrows suitable for
18 nesting on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects has not been determined.
19

20 The overall impact on the western burrowing owl from construction, operation, and
21 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
22 SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the
23 area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region.
24 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
25 indirect impacts to negligible levels.
26

27 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts on
28 the western burrowing owl because potentially suitable desert scrub habitats are widespread
29 throughout the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
30 Impacts on the western burrowing owl could be reduced to negligible levels through the
31 implementation of programmatic design features and by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and
32 avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied burrows on the SEZ. If avoidance or
33 minimization is not a feasible option, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and
34 implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the
35 protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats
36 lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or both of these options
37 could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development. The need for mitigation,
38 other than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-construction
39 surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
40

41 **Fringed Myotis**

42

43
44 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ
45 region. Suitable roosting habitats (caves and buildings) are not expected to occur on the SEZ, but
46 the availability of suitable roosting sites in the area of indirect effects has not been determined.

1 Approximately 31,500 acres (127 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ could
2 be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This direct impact area
3 represents about 0.9% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region. About 124,700 acres
4 (505 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area
5 represents about 3.7% of the available suitable foraging habitat in the region (Table 11.1.12.1-1).
6 On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP and CArEgAP land cover types, no suitable
7 roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) exists within the SEZ or within the area of indirect
8 effects.

9
10 The overall impact on the fringed myotis from construction, operation, and
11 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
12 SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the
13 area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
14 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
15 impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitat
16 is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts because potentially suitable foraging habitat is
17 widespread throughout the area of direct effects and is readily available in other portions of the
18 SEZ region.

21 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

22
23 The Nelson's bighorn sheep is known to occur in the affected area from the Funeral
24 Mountains in Inyo County, California, about 2 mi (3 km) southwest of the proposed Amargosa
25 Valley SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, suitable habitat for this
26 species does not exist on the SEZ. However, approximately 33,400 acres (135 km²) of
27 potentially suitable habitat occurs within the area of indirect effects; this area represents about
28 1.4% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.1.12.1-1).

29
30 The overall impact on the Nelson's bighorn sheep from construction, operation, and
31 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
32 SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species has been
33 identified in the area of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation
34 of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this
35 species to negligible levels. Impacts on the Nelson's bighorn sheep could be further reduced by
36 conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to important
37 movement corridors within the area of direct effects.

40 **Pallid Bat**

41
42 The pallid bat is a year-round resident within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ region.
43 Suitable roosting habitats (caves and buildings) are not expected to occur on the SEZ, but the
44 availability of suitable roosting sites in the area of indirect effects has not been determined.
45 Approximately 31,500 acres (127 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ
46 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This direct

1 impact area represents about 0.9% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region. About
2 129,100 acres (522 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect
3 effects; this area represents about 3.7% of the potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region
4 (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP and CArEgAP land cover
5 types, no suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) exists within the SEZ or within the
6 area of indirect effects.
7

8 The overall impact on the pallid bat from construction, operation, and decommissioning
9 of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is considered
10 small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
11 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
12 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
13 impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitat
14 is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts because potentially suitable foraging habitat is
15 widespread throughout the area of direct effects and is readily available in other portions of the
16 SEZ region.
17

18 **Spotted Bat**

19
20
21 The spotted bat is a year-round resident within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ
22 region. Suitable roosting habitats (caves and rock outcrops) are not expected to occur on the
23 SEZ, but the availability of suitable roosting sites in the area of indirect effects has not been
24 determined. Approximately 31,500 acres (127 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on
25 the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This
26 direct impact area represents about 1.1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region.
27 About 122,500 acres (496 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of
28 indirect effects; this area represents about 4.1% of the potentially suitable foraging habitat in the
29 region (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP and CArEgAP land
30 cover types, no suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) exists within the SEZ or
31 within the area of indirect effects.
32

33 The overall impact on the spotted bat from construction, operation, and decommissioning
34 of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is considered
35 moderate because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area
36 of direct effects represents greater than 1% but less than 10% of potentially suitable habitat in the
37 region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
38 reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
39 foraging habitat is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts because potentially suitable foraging
40 habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effects and is readily available in other
41 portions of the SEZ region.
42
43
44

1 **Townsend’s Big-Eared Bat**

2
3 The Townsend’s big-eared bat is a year-round resident within the proposed Amargosa
4 Valley SEZ region. Suitable roosting habitats (caves and buildings) are not expected to occur on
5 the SEZ, but the availability of suitable roosting sites in the area of indirect effects has not been
6 determined. Approximately 31,500 acres (127 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on
7 the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This
8 direct impact area represents about 0.8% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region.
9 About 130,500 acres (528 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of
10 indirect effects; this area represents about 3.5% of the potentially suitable foraging habitat in the
11 region (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP and CArEgAP land
12 cover types, no suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) exists within the SEZ or
13 within the area of indirect effects.

14
15 The overall impact on the Townsend’s big-eared bat from construction, operation, and
16 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
17 SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the
18 area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
19 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
20 impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitat
21 is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts because potentially suitable foraging habitat is
22 widespread throughout the area of direct effects and is readily available in other portions of the
23 SEZ region.

24
25
26 **Western Small-Footed Bat**

27
28 The western small-footed bat is a year-round resident within the proposed Amargosa
29 Valley SEZ region. Suitable roosting habitats (caves, rock outcrops, and buildings) are not
30 expected to occur on the SEZ, but the availability of suitable roosting sites in the area of indirect
31 effects has not been determined. Approximately 31,500 acres (127 km²) of potentially suitable
32 foraging habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations
33 (Table 11.1.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents about 0.8% of potentially suitable
34 foraging habitat in the region. About 108,000 acres (437 km²) of potentially suitable foraging
35 habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.6% of the potentially
36 suitable foraging habitat in the region (Table 11.1.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of
37 SWReGAP and CArEgAP land cover types, no suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and
38 outcrops) exists within the SEZ or within the area of indirect effects.

39
40 The overall impact on the western small-footed bat from construction, operation, and
41 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley
42 SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the
43 area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
44 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
45 impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitat
46 is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts because potentially suitable foraging habitat is

1 widespread throughout the area of direct effects and is readily available in other portions of the
2 SEZ region.

3 4 5 **11.1.12.2.4 Impacts on State-Listed Species**

6
7 There are 19 species listed by the states of California or Nevada that may occur in
8 the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ affected area or that may be affected by solar
9 energy development on the SEZ (Table 11.1.12.1-1). Impacts on each of these species
10 have been previously discussed because of their known or pending status under the ESA
11 (Sections 11.1.12.2.1 or 11.1.12.2.2) or their designation by the BLM as sensitive species
12 (Section 11.1.12.2.3).

13 14 15 **11.1.12.2.5 Impacts on Rare Species**

16
17 There are 49 rare species (state rank of S1 or S2 in California or Nevada or a species of
18 concern by the states of California or Nevada or USFWS) that may be affected by solar energy
19 development on the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Impacts have been previously discussed
20 for 44 of these species that are also listed under the ESA (Section 11.1.12.2.1), under review for
21 ESA listing (Section 11.1.12.2.2), BLM-designated sensitive (Section 11.1.12.2.3), or state-listed
22 (Section 11.1.12.2.4). Of the rare species that could occur in the affected area, only the Ash
23 Meadows buckwheat, Bullfrog Hills sweetpea, Panamint Mountains bedstraw, weasel phacelia,
24 and the ant *Neivamyrmex nyensis* were not discussed elsewhere. Impacts on these species are
25 presented in Table 11.1.12.1-1. Rare species that are known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the
26 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ include Ash Meadows buckwheat, Big Dune miloderes weevil,
27 the ant *Neivamyrmex nyensis*, and Nelson's bighorn sheep.

28 29 30 **11.1.12.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

31
32 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
33 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects of utility-scale solar
34 energy development on special status species. While some SEZ-specific design features are best
35 established when specific project details are being considered, some design features can be
36 identified at this time, including the following:

- 37
38
- 39 • Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the SEZ to determine the
40 presence and abundance of special status species, including those identified in
41 Table 11.1.12.1-1; disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be
42 avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing
43 impacts to occupied habitats is not possible, translocation of individuals from
44 areas of direct effects, or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on
45 occupied habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy
for special status species that used one or more of these options to offset the

1 impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the
2 appropriate federal and state agencies.

- 3
- 4 • Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash or riparian habitats on the
5 SEZ could reduce impacts on the Bullfrog Hills sweetpea, Holmgren lupine,
6 and phainopepla.
- 7
- 8 • Avoiding or limiting groundwater withdrawals from the Amargosa Desert
9 Basin to serve solar energy development on the SEZ would reduce or prevent
10 impacts on the following 25 groundwater-dependent special status species that
11 may occur more the 5 mi (8 km) from the SEZ boundary: Amargosa niterwort,
12 Ash Meadows blazingstar, Ash Meadows gumplant, Ash Meadows ivesia,
13 Ash Meadows sunray, spring-loving centaury, Amargosa tryonia, Ash
14 Meadows pebblesnail, crystal springsnail, distal gland springsnail, elongate
15 gland springsnail, Fairbanks springsnail, median gland springsnail, minute
16 tryonia, Oasis Valley springsnail, Point of Rocks tryonia, sporting goods
17 tryonia, Amargosa naucorid, Ash Meadows naucorid, Ash Meadows
18 Amargosa pupfish, Ash Meadows speckled dace, Devils Hole pupfish, Oasis
19 Valley speckled dace, Warm Springs Amargosa pupfish, and Amargosa toad.
20
- 21 • Consultation with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted to address the
22 potential for impacts on the following 12 species listed as threatened or
23 endangered under the ESA that may be affected by solar energy development
24 on the SEZ: Amargosa niterwort, Ash Meadows blazingstar, Ash Meadows
25 gumplant, Ash Meadows ivesia, Ash Meadows sunray, spring-loving
26 centaury, Ash Meadows naucorid, Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish, Ash
27 Meadows speckled dace, Devils Hole pupfish, Warm Springs Amargosa
28 pupfish, and desert tortoise. Consultation would identify an appropriate survey
29 protocol, avoidance and minimization measures, and, if appropriate,
30 reasonable and prudent alternatives, reasonable and prudent measures, and
31 terms and conditions for incidental take statements.
32
- 33 • Coordination with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted for the
34 following 16 species under review for listing under the ESA that may be
35 affected by solar energy development on the SEZ: Amargosa tryonia, Ash
36 Meadows pebblesnail, crystal springsnail, distal gland springsnail, elongate
37 gland springsnail, Fairbanks springsnail, median gland springsnail, minute
38 tryonia, Oasis Valley springsnail, Point of Rocks tryonia, sporting goods
39 tryonia, Amargosa naucorid, Oasis Valley speckled dace, and Amargosa toad.
40 Coordination would identify an appropriate survey protocol, and mitigation
41 requirements, which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or
42 compensation.
43
- 44 • Coordination with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted to address
45 potential indirect impacts (e.g. site runoff and erosion) and the effectiveness
46 of design features for the following special status species that are endemic to

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the Big Dune system: Big Dune meloderes weevil, Giuliani’s dune scarab beetle, and large aegialian scarab beetle.

- Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the affected area should be mitigated. This can be accomplished by identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.

If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to required programmatic design features, impacts on the special status and rare species could be reduced.

1 **11.1.13 Air Quality and Climate**

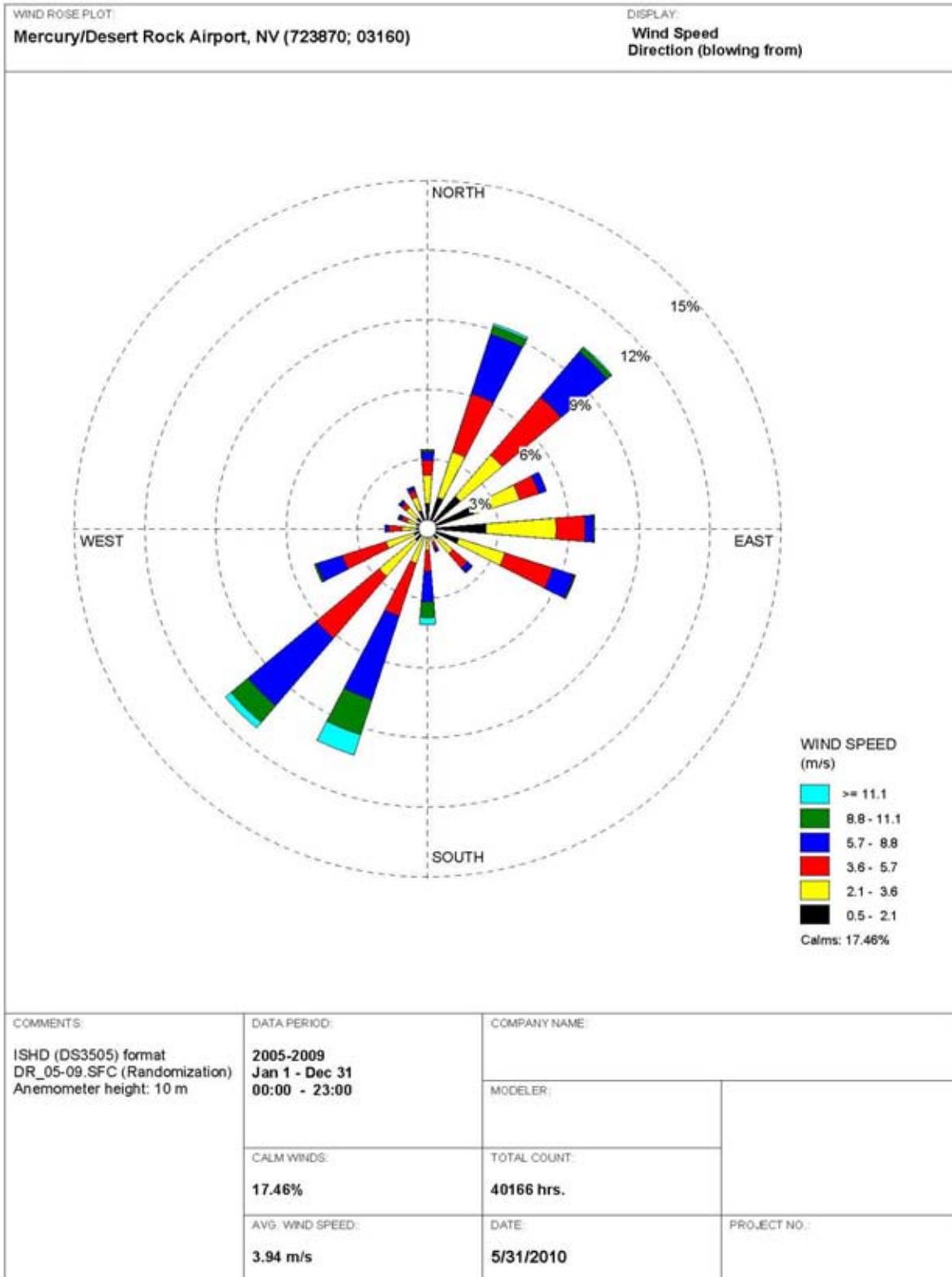
2
3
4 **11.1.13.1 Affected Environment**

5
6
7 **11.1.13.1.1 Climate**

8
9 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located in south–central Nevada, in the southern
10 portion of Nye County. Nevada lies on the eastern lee side of the Sierra Nevada Range, which
11 markedly influences the climate of the state under the prevailing westerlies (NCDC 2010a). In
12 addition, the mountains east and north of Nevada act as a barrier to the cold arctic air masses,
13 and thus long periods of extremely cold weather are uncommon. The SEZ with an average
14 elevation of about 2,660 ft (810 m) lies in the northern portion of the Mojave Desert, which has
15 an extremely arid climate marked by mild winters and hot summers, large daily temperature
16 swings due to dry air, scant precipitation, high evaporation rates, low relative humidity, and
17 abundant sunshine. Meteorological data collected at the Mercury/Desert Rock Airport, about
18 33 mi (53 km) east of the Amargosa Valley SEZ boundary, and Amargosa Farms Garey, about
19 10 mi (16 km) southeast, are summarized below.

20
21 A wind rose from the Mercury/Desert Rock Airport, Nevada, for the 5-year period 2005
22 to 2009, taken at a level of 33 ft (10 m), is presented in Figure 11.1.13.1-1 (NCDC 2010b).
23 During this period, the annual average wind speed at the airport was about 8.8 mph (3.9 m/s),
24 with a prevailing wind direction from the southwest (about 11.2% of the time) and secondarily
25 from the northeast and south–southwest (about 10.2% of the time each). Higher southwesterly
26 components (about 21.4% in wind directions from the southwest and south–southwest) are
27 comparable to northeast wind components (about 19.5% in wind directions from the northeast
28 and north–northeast). Wind directions alternated between southwest and northeast throughout the
29 year. Wind speeds categorized as calm (less than 1.1 mph [0.5 m/s]) occurred frequently (about
30 17.5% of the time) because of the stable conditions caused by strong radiative cooling from late
31 night to sunrise. Average wind speeds by season were relatively uniform: the highest in summer
32 and winter at 9.0 mph (4.0 m/s); lower in fall at 8.8 mph (3.9 m/s); and lowest in spring at
33 8.6 mph (3.8 m/s).

34
35 For the 1965 to 2009 period, the annual average temperature at Amargosa Farms Garey
36 was 64.9°F (18.3°C) (WRCC 2010e). December was the coldest month, with an average
37 minimum temperature of 30.2°F (–1.0°C), and July was the warmest month with an average
38 maximum of 103.9°F (39.9°C). In summer, daytime maximum temperatures were frequently in
39 the 100s, and minimums were in the 60s. The minimum temperatures recorded were below
40 freezing ($\leq 32^\circ\text{F}$ [0°C]) during the colder months (mostly from November through February), but
41 subzero temperatures were never recorded. During the same period, the highest temperature,
42 117°F (47.2°C), was reached in July 2002, and the lowest, 6°F (–14.4°C), in December 1990. In
43 a typical year, about 138 days had a maximum temperature of greater than or equal to 90°F
44 (32.2°C), while about 59 days had minimum temperatures at or below freezing.



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3

FIGURE 11.1.13.1-1 Wind Rose at 33 ft (10 m) at Mercury/Desert Rock Airport, Nevada, 2005 to 2009 (Source: NCDC 2010b)

1 Along with prevailing westerlies, Pacific air masses lose most of their moisture on the
2 windward side of the Sierra Nevada Range parallel to Nevada's western boundary with
3 California. Thus, leeward areas like the Amargosa Valley SEZ area experience a lack of
4 precipitation. For the 1965 to 2009 period, annual precipitation at Amargosa Farms Garey
5 averaged about 4.43 in. (11.3 cm) (WRCC 2010e). On average, there are 23 days annually with
6 measurable precipitation (0.01 in. [0.025 cm] or higher). About 43% of the annual precipitation
7 occurs during winter months, and the remaining precipitation is relatively evenly distributed over
8 the other seasons. Snowfall is uncommon and mostly limited to winter months from December to
9 April. The annual average snowfall is about 0.2 in. (0.5 cm); the highest monthly snowfall
10 recorded was 3.5 in. (8.9 cm) in April 1967.

11
12 Because the area surrounding the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is far from major
13 water bodies (more than 210 mi [338 km]) and because surrounding mountain ranges block air
14 masses from penetrating into the area, severe weather events, such as thunderstorms and
15 tornadoes, are rare.

16
17 In Nevada, flooding could occur from melting of heavy snowpack. On occasion, heavy
18 summer thunderstorms also cause flooding of local streams, usually in sparsely populated
19 mountainous areas, but they are seldom destructive (NCDC 2010a). Since 1995, 15 floods
20 (14 flash floods and 1 urban stream flood) were reported in Nye County, most of which occurred
21 in the Pahrump area and some of which caused property damage. In March 1995, the flash flood
22 accompanying a 3-in. (7.6-cm) rain swept down the Fortymile Wash, which runs to the southeast
23 of the SEZ, and temporarily closed U.S. 95 between Beatty and Lathrop Wells.

24
25 In Nye County, four hail storms have been reported since 1988, one of which caused
26 minor property damage (NCDC 2010c). Hail measuring 1.5 in (3.8 cm) in diameter was reported
27 in 1993. In Nye County, 104 high-wind events have been reported since 1994, which caused one
28 injury and some property and crop damage. Such events, with up to a maximum wind speed of
29 127 mph (57 m/s), have occurred any time of the year with a peak during spring months. In
30 addition, 23 thunderstorm wind events have been reported since 1959. Thunderstorm winds,
31 with a maximum wind speed of 87 mph (39 m/s). occurred mostly during summer months on
32 occasion, two of which cause minor property damage.

33
34 In Nye County, only one dust storm event was reported in 2002 (NCDC 2010c). The
35 ground surface of the SEZ is covered primarily with bare gravel and widely spaced
36 creosotebushes and some smaller shrubs; thus dust storm potential is relatively low compared
37 with other typical arid regions. On occasion, high winds and dry soil conditions result in blowing
38 dust in Nye County. Dust storms can deteriorate air quality and visibility and have adverse
39 effects on health.

40
41 Hurricanes and tropical storms formed off the coast of Central America and Mexico
42 weaken over the cold waters off the California coast. Accordingly, hurricanes never hit Nevada.
43 Historically, one tropical depression has passed within 100 mi (160 km) of the proposed
44 Amargosa Valley SEZ (CSC 2010). Tornadoes in Nye County, which encompasses the proposed
45 Amargosa Valley SEZ, occur infrequently. In the period 1950 to July 2010, a total of three
46 tornadoes (0.1 per year) were reported in Nye County (NCDC 2010c). However, all tornadoes

1 occurring in Nye County were relatively weak (i.e., F0 on the Fujita tornado scale). None of
 2 these tornadoes caused property damage, injuries, or deaths. Two tornadoes in Nye County were
 3 reported far from the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, but one tornado occurred near U.S. 95,
 4 about 7 mi (11 km) east–southeast of the SEZ.

5
6
7 **11.1.13.1.2 Existing Air Emissions**
8

9 Nye County, which encompasses proposed Amargosa
 10 Valley SEZ, is the third-largest county in terms of area in the 48
 11 conterminous states. Nye County has many industrial emission
 12 sources scattered all over the county. Several source emissions
 13 related to minerals and mining are located around the proposed
 14 Amargosa Valley SEZ, but their emissions are relatively small.
 15 Because of the sparse population, only a handful of major roads,
 16 such as U.S. 6 and 95 and several state routes, exist in Nye
 17 County. Thus, onroad mobile source emissions are not
 18 substantial. Data on annual emissions of criteria pollutants
 19 and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in Nye County are
 20 presented in Table 11.1.13.1-1 for 2002 (WRAP 2009).
 21 Emission data are classified into six source categories: point,
 22 area, onroad mobile, nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire
 23 (wildfires, prescribed fires, agricultural fires, structural fires).
 24 In 2002, point sources were major contributors to total sulfur
 25 dioxide (SO₂) emissions (about 54%). Biogenic sources
 26 (i.e., vegetation—including trees, plants, and crops—and soils)
 27 that release naturally occurring emissions primarily contributed
 28 to NO_x and CO emissions (about 56% and 70%, respectively)
 29 and accounted for most of VOC emissions (about 99%). Area
 30 sources accounted for about 84% of PM₁₀ and 63% of PM_{2.5}
 31 and were secondary contributors to total SO₂ emissions (about
 32 40%). Onroad sources were secondary contributors to NO_x and
 33 CO emissions (about 30% and 23%, respectively), while fire
 34 sources were secondary contributors to PM_{2.5} emissions. In
 35 Nye County, nonroad sources were minor contributors to
 36 criteria pollutants and VOCs.

37
38 In 2005, Nevada produced about 56.3 MMT of *gross*⁶ carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e)⁷
 39 emissions, which is about 0.8% of total U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in that year

TABLE 11.1.13.1-1 Annual Emissions of Criteria Pollutants and VOCs in Nye County, Nevada, Encompassing the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, 2002^a

Pollutant	Emissions (tons/yr)
SO ₂	247
NO _x	2,932
CO	47,494
VOCs	219,514
PM ₁₀	1,765
PM _{2.5}	626

^a Includes point, area, onroad and nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire emissions.

^b Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 μm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 μm; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; and VOCs = volatile organic compounds.

Source: WRAP (2009).

⁶ Excluding GHG emissions removed as a result of forestry and other land uses and excluding GHG emissions associated with exported electricity.

⁷ A measure used to compare the emissions from various GHGs on the basis of their global warming potential, defined as the cumulative radiative forcing effects of a gas over a specified time horizon resulting from the emission of a unit mass of gas relative to a reference gas, CO₂. The CO₂e for a gas is derived by multiplying the mass of the gas by the associated global warming potential.

1 (NDEP 2008). Gross GHG emissions in Nevada increased by about 65% from 1990 to 2005
2 because of Nevada’s rapid population growth, compared to 16.3% growth in U.S. GHG
3 emissions during the same period. In 2005, electrical generation (48%) and transportation
4 (30%) were the primary contributors to gross GHG emission sources in Nevada. Fuel use in
5 the residential, commercial, and industrial (RCI) sectors combined accounted for about
6 12% of total state emissions. Nevada’s *net* emissions were about 51.3 MMt CO₂e, considering
7 carbon sinks from forestry activities and agricultural soils throughout the state. The EPA (2009a)
8 also estimated 2005 emissions in Nevada. Its estimate of CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel
9 combustion was 49.6 MMt, which was comparable to the state’s estimate. Electric power
10 generation and transportation accounted for about 52.7% and 33.6% of the CO₂ emissions
11 total, respectively, while the RCI sectors accounted for the remainder (about 13.7%).
12
13

14 **11.1.13.1.3 Air Quality**

15
16 The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) set National Ambient Air Quality
17 Standards (NAAQS) for six criteria pollutants (EPA 2010a): sulfur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen
18 dioxide (NO₂), carbon monoxide (CO), ozone (O₃), particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and
19 lead (Pb). Nevada has its own State Ambient Air Quality Standards (SAAQS), which are similar
20 to the NAAQS with some differences (NAC 445B.22097). In addition, Nevada has set standards
21 for 1-hour hydrogen sulfide (H₂S), which are not addressed by the NAAQS. The NAAQS and
22 Nevada SAAQS for criteria pollutants are presented in Table 11.1.13.1-2.
23

24 Nye County is located administratively within the Nevada Intrastate Air Quality Control
25 Region (AQCR), along with 10 other remaining counties in Nevada, except Las Vegas Intrastate
26 AQCR, including Clark County only, which encompasses Las Vegas, and Northwest Nevada
27 Intrastate AQCR, including five northwest counties, which encompasses Reno. Currently, the
28 area surrounding the proposed SEZ is designated as being in unclassifiable/attainment of
29 NAAQS for all criteria pollutants (Title 40, Part 81, Section 329 of the *Code of Federal*
30 *Regulations* [40 CFR 81.329]).
31

32 Because of Nye County’s low population density, it has no significant emission sources
33 of its own and only minor mobile emissions along major highways. Accordingly, ambient air
34 quality in Nye County is relatively good. There are no ambient air-monitoring stations in Nye
35 County, except four PM₁₀-monitoring stations in Pahrump. Although Pahrump has PM₁₀
36 monitors nearest to the SEZ (about 45 mi [72 km]), PM₁₀ concentrations at these monitors,
37 which result primarily from major housing development due to recent population growth, are not
38 representative of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. To characterize ambient air quality around
39 the SEZ, one monitoring station in Clark County was chosen: Jean, about 94 mi (151 km) to the
40 southeast of the SEZ. The Jean Station, which is located upwind of the Las Vegas area, can be
41 considered representative of the proposed SEZ, although its air quality is, to some extent,
42 influenced by the transport of air pollutants from the South Coast Air Basin, which includes
43 Los Angeles, along with prevailing westerlies. Ambient concentrations of NO₂, O₃, PM₁₀,
44 and PM_{2.5} are recorded at Jean. The East Sahara Avenue Station, which is on the outskirts of
45 Las Vegas, has only one SO₂ monitor in the area. CO concentrations at the East Tonopah
46 Avenue Station in Las Vegas, which is the farthest downwind of Las Vegas among the

TABLE 11.13.1-2 NAAQS, SAAQS, and Background Concentration Levels Representative of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ in Nye County, Nevada, 2004 to 2008

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	NAAQS	SAAQS	Background Concentration Level	
				Concentration ^{b,c}	Measurement Location, Year
SO ₂	1-hour	75 ppb ^d	– ^e	–	–
	3-hour	0.5 ppm	0.5 ppm	0.009 ppm (1.8%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
	24-hour	0.14 ppm	0.14 ppm	0.008 ppm (5.7%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
	Annual	0.030 ppm	0.030 ppm	0.006 ppm (20%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
NO ₂	1-hour	100 ppb ^f	–	–	–
	Annual	0.053 ppm	0.053 ppm	0.004 ppm (7.5%)	Jean Station, Clark County, 2007
CO	1-hour	35 ppm	35 ppm	5.7 ppm (16%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2004
	8-hour	9 ppm	9 ppm ^g	3.9 ppm (43%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
O ₃	1-hour	0.12 ppm ^h	0.12 ppm ⁱ	0.098 ppm (82%)	Jean Station, Clark County, 2005
	8-hour	0.075 ppm	–	0.083 ppm (111%)	Jean Station, Clark County, 2007
PM ₁₀	24-hour	150 µg/m ³	150 µg/m ³	66 µg/m ³ (44%)	Jean Station, Clark County, 2008
	Annual	–	50 µg/m ³	17 µg/m ³ (34%)	Jean Station, Clark County, 2005
PM _{2.5}	24-hour	35 µg/m ³	–	12.9 µg/m ³ (37%)	Jean Station, Clark County, 2008
	Annual	15.0 µg/m ³	–	4.93 µg/m ³ (33%)	Jean Station, Clark County, 2008
Pb	30-day	–	1.5 µg/m ³	–	–
	Calendar quarter	1.5 µg/m ³	–	–	–
	Rolling 3-month	0.15 µg/m ³ ^j	–	–	–

^a Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO₂ = nitrogen dioxide; O₃ = ozone; Pb = lead; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 µm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 µm; and SO₂ = sulfur dioxide.

^b Monitored concentrations are the second-highest for all averaging times less than or equal to 24-hour averages, except fourth-highest daily maximum for 8-hour O₃ and the 98th percentile for 24-hour PM_{2.5}; and arithmetic mean for annual SO₂, NO₂, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}.

^c Values in parentheses are background concentration levels as a percentage of NAAQS or SAAQS. Calculation of 1-hour SO₂ and NO₂ to NAAQS was not made, because no measurement data based on new NAAQS are available.

^d Effective August 23, 2010.

^e A hyphen denotes not applicable or not available.

^f Effective April 12, 2010.

^g CO standard for the area less than 5,000 ft (1,524 m) above mean sea level. CO standard for the area at or greater than 5,000 ft (1,524 m) above mean sea level is 6 ppm.

^h The EPA revoked the 1-hour O₃ standard in all areas, although some areas have continuing obligations under that standard (“anti-backsliding”).

ⁱ O₃ standard for the Lake Tahoe Basin, #90, is 0.10 ppm.

^j Effective January 12, 2009.

Sources: EPA (2010a,b); NAC 445B.22097.

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2
3

1 CO monitoring stations, were presented. No Pb measurements have been made in the state of
2 Nevada because of low Pb concentration levels after the phase-out of leaded gasoline. The
3 background concentrations of criteria pollutants at these stations for the period 2004 to 2008 are
4 presented in Table 11.1.13.1-2 (EPA 2010b). Monitored concentration levels at either station
5 were lower than their respective standards (up to 44%), except O₃, which approaches the 1-hour
6 NAAQS/SAAQS and exceeds the 8-hour NAAQS. However, ambient concentrations around the
7 SEZ are anticipated to be lower than those presented in the table, except PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, which
8 can be either higher or lower.

9
10 The Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) regulations (see 40 CFR 52.21),
11 which are designed to limit the growth of air pollution in clean areas, apply to a major new
12 source or modification of an existing major source within an attainment or unclassified area
13 (see Section 4.11.2.3). As a matter of policy, EPA recommends that the permitting authority
14 notify the Federal Land Managers when a proposed PSD source would locate within 62 mi
15 (100 km) of a sensitive Class I area. There are several Class I areas around the Amargosa Valley
16 SEZ, none of which is situated within 62-mi (100-km) distance in Nevada and California. The
17 nearest Class I area is the John Muir WA in California (40 CFR 81.405), about 78 mi (126 km)
18 west of the Amargosa Valley SEZ. This Class I area is not located downwind of prevailing winds
19 at the Amargosa Valley SEZ (Figure 11.1.13.1-1). The next nearest Class I areas are Sequoia NP,
20 Kings Canyon NP, and Dome Land WA, which are about 84 mi (135 km) west, 88 mi (141 km)
21 west, and 90 mi (145 km) west-southwest of the Amargosa Valley SEZ, respectively.

22 23 24 **11.1.13.2 Impacts**

25
26 Potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with a solar project would be of
27 most concern during the construction phase. Impacts on ambient air quality from fugitive dust
28 emissions resulting from soil disturbances are anticipated, but they would be of short duration.
29 During the operations phase, only a few sources with generally low-level emissions would exist
30 for any of the four types of solar technologies evaluated. A solar facility would either not burn
31 fossil fuels or burn only small amounts during operation. (For facilities using heat transfer fluids
32 [HTFs], fuel could be used to maintain the temperature of the HTFs for more efficient daily start-
33 up.) Conversely, solar facilities would displace air emissions that would otherwise be released
34 from fossil fuel power plants.

35
36 Air quality impacts shared by all solar technologies are discussed in detail in
37 Section 5.11.1, and technology-specific impacts are discussed in Section 5.11.2. Impacts specific
38 to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ are presented in the following sections. Any such impacts
39 would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design features
40 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the application of any additional mitigation
41 measures Section 11.1.13.3 below identifies SEZ-specific design features of particular relevance
42 to the Amargosa Valley SEZ.

1 **11.1.13.2.1 Construction**

2
3 The Amargosa Valley SEZ has a relatively flat terrain; thus only a minimum number of
4 site preparation activities, perhaps with no large-scale earthmoving operations, would be
5 required. However, fugitive dust emissions from soil disturbances during the entire construction
6 phase would be a major concern because of the large areas that would be disturbed in a region
7 that experiences windblown dust problems. Fugitive dusts, which are released near ground level,
8 typically have more localized impacts than similar emissions from an elevated stack with
9 additional plume rise induced by buoyancy and momentum effects.

10
11
12 **Methods and Assumptions**

13
14 Air quality modeling for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions associated with construction
15 activities was performed using the EPA-recommended AERMOD model (EPA 2009b). Details
16 for emissions estimation, the description of AERMOD, input data processing procedures, and
17 modeling assumption are described in Section M.13 of Appendix M. Estimated air
18 concentrations were compared with the applicable NAAQS/SAAQS levels at the site boundaries
19 and nearby communities and with Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) increment
20 levels at nearby Class I areas.⁸ However, no receptors were modeled for PSD analysis at the
21 nearest Class I area, John Muir WA in California, because it is about 78 mi (126 km) from the
22 SEZ, which is over the maximum modeling distance of 31 mi (50 km) for the AERMOD. Rather,
23 several regularly spaced receptors in the direction of the John Muir WA were selected as
24 surrogates for the PSD analysis. For the Amargosa Valley SEZ, the modeling was conducted
25 based on the following assumptions and input:

- 26
27 • Uniformly distributed emissions of 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) each and
28 9,000 acres (36.4 km²) in total, in the southern portion of the SEZ, close to
29 the nearest residence and the town of Amargosa Valley,
30
31 • Surface hourly meteorological data⁹ and upper air sounding data from the
32 Mercury/Desert Rock Airport for the 2005 to 2009 period, and
33
34 • A regularly spaced receptor grid over a modeling domain of 62 mi × 62 mi
35 (100 km × 100 km) centered on the proposed SEZ, and additional discrete
36 receptors at the SEZ boundaries.

37

⁸ To provide a quantitative assessment, the modeled air impacts of construction were compared to the NAAQS/SAAQS levels and the PSD Class I increment levels. Although the Clean Air Act exempts construction activities from PSD requirements, a comparison with the Class I increment levels was used to quantify potential impacts. Only monitored data can be used to determine the attainment status. Modeled data are used to assess potential problems and as a consideration in the permitting process.

⁹ The number of missing hours at the Mercury/Desert Rock Airport amounts to about 19.2% of the total hours, which may not be acceptable for regulatory applications because that percentage exceeds the 10% limit defined by the EPA. However, because the wind patterns at Mercury/Desert Rock Airport are more representative of wind at the Amargosa Valley SEZ than the wind patterns at other airports (which have more complete data but are located in different topographic features), the former values were used for the screening analysis.

1 **Results**

2

3 The modeling results for both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentration increments and total

4 concentrations (modeled plus background concentrations) that would result from construction-

5 related fugitive emissions are summarized in Table 11.1.13.2-1. Maximum 24-hour PM₁₀

6 concentration increments modeled to occur at the site boundaries would be an estimated

7 524 µg/m³, which far exceeds the relevant standard level of 150 µg/m³. Total 24-hour PM₁₀

8 concentrations of 590 µg/m³ would also exceed the standard level at the SEZ boundary.

9 However, high PM₁₀ concentrations would be limited to the immediate areas surrounding the

10 SEZ boundary and would decrease quickly with distance. Predicted maximum 24-hour PM₁₀

11 concentration increments would be about 60 to 100 µg/m³ at the Big Dune (about 1.7 mi

12 [2.7 km] to the east from the southeast corner of the SEZ); less than 60 µg/m³ at the nearest

13 residence (about 4.5 mi [7.2 km] south of the SEZ boundary); about 10 µg/m³ at the truck stop

14 on the crossroad of U.S. 95 and State Route 373; about 5 to 20 µg/m³ at the Ash Meadows

15 NWR; and about 2.5 µg/m³ at Beatty. Annual average modeled PM₁₀ concentration increments

16 and total concentration (increment plus background) at the SEZ boundary would be about

17 90.6 µg/m³ and 108 µg/m³, respectively, which are much higher than the SAAQS level of

18 50 µg/m³. Annual PM₁₀ increments would be much lower, about 1 to 2 µg/m³ at Big Dune,

19 about 1.2 µg/m³ at the nearest residence, and lower than 0.5 µg/m³ for the aforementioned other

20 receptors. Total 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentrations would be 49 µg/m³ at the SEZ boundary, which is

21 higher than the NAAQS level of 35 µg/m³; modeled increments contribute about three times

22 more than background concentration to this total. The total annual average PM_{2.5} concentration

23

24

TABLE 11.1.13.2-1 Maximum Air Quality Impacts from Emissions Associated with Construction Activities for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	Rank ^b	Concentration (µg/m ³)				Percentage of NAAQS/SAAQS	
			Maximum Increment ^b	Background ^c	Total	NAAQS/SAAQS	Increment	Total
PM ₁₀	24 hours	H6H	524	66	590	150	349	393
	Annual	- ^d	90.6	17	108	50	181	215
PM _{2.5}	24 hours	H8H	36.3	12.9	49.2	35	104	140
	Annual	-	9.1	4.9	14.0	15.0	60	93

^a PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 µm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 µm.

^b Concentrations for attainment demonstration are presented. H6H = highest of the sixth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. H8H = highest of the multiyear average of the eighth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. For the annual average, multiyear averages of annual means over the 5-year period are presented. Maximum concentrations are predicted to occur at the site boundaries.

^c See Table 11.1.13.1-2.

^d A dash indicates not applicable.

1 would be 14.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which is below the NAAQS level of 15.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. At the nearest residence,
2 predicted maximum 24-hour and annual $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ concentration increments would be about 2
3 and 0.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, respectively.
4

5 Predicted 24-hour and annual PM_{10} concentration increments at the surrogate receptors
6 for the nearest Class I Area—John Muir WA in California—would be about 25.1 and
7 0.43 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, or 314% and 11% of the PSD increments for Class I area, respectively. These
8 surrogate receptors are more than 50 mi (80 km) from the John Muir WA, and thus predicted
9 concentrations in John Muir WA would be lower than the above values (about 110% of the PSD
10 increments for 24-hour PM_{10}), considering the same decay ratio with distance.
11

12 In conclusion, predicted 24-hour and annual PM_{10} and 24-hour $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ concentration
13 levels could exceed the standard levels at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding
14 areas during the construction of solar facilities. To reduce potential impacts on ambient air
15 quality and in compliance with programmatic design features, aggressive dust control measures
16 would be used. Potential air quality impacts on nearby communities would be much lower.
17 Predicted total concentrations for annual $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ would be below the respective standard level.
18 Modeling indicates that emissions from construction activities are anticipated to be slightly
19 higher than Class I PSD PM_{10} increments at the nearest federal Class I area. Construction
20 activities are not subject to the PSD program, and the comparison provides only a screen for
21 gauging the size of the impact. Accordingly, it is anticipated that impacts of construction
22 activities on ambient air quality would be moderate and temporary.
23

24 Construction emissions from the engine exhaust from heavy equipment and vehicles
25 could cause impacts on air-quality-related values (AQRVs) (e.g., visibility and acid deposition)
26 at the nearby federal Class I areas. SO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be very low,
27 because programmatic design features would require ultra-low-sulfur fuel with a sulfur content
28 of 15 ppm. NO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be primary contributors to potential
29 impacts on AQRVs. Construction-related emissions are temporary in nature and thus would
30 cause some unavoidable but short-term impacts.
31

32 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
33 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 138-kV transmission line
34 might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-
35 specific analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However,
36 some construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ. Potential impacts on
37 ambient air quality would be a minor component of construction impacts in comparison with
38 solar facility construction and would be temporary in nature.
39
40

41 ***11.1.13.2.2 Operations***

42

43 Emission sources associated with the operation of a solar facility would include auxiliary
44 boilers; vehicle (commuter, visitor, support, and delivery) traffic; maintenance (e.g., mirror
45 cleaning and repair and replacement of damaged mirrors); and drift from cooling towers for the

1 parabolic trough or power tower technology if wet cooling was implemented (drift comprises
 2 low-level PM emissions).

3
 4 The type of emission sources caused by and offset by operation of a solar facility are
 5 discussed in Appendix M.13.4.

6
 7 Potential air emissions displaced by the solar project development at the Amargosa
 8 Valley SEZ are presented in Table 11.1.13.2-2. Total power generation capacity ranging from
 9 2,811 to 5,060 MW is estimated for the Amargosa Valley SEZ for various solar technologies
 10 (see Section 11.1.2). The estimated amount of emissions avoided for the solar technologies
 11 evaluated depends only on the megawatts of conventional fossil fuel-generated power displaced,
 12 because a composite emission factor per megawatt-hour of power by conventional technologies
 13 is assumed (EPA 2009c). If the Amargosa Valley SEZ were fully developed, it is expected that
 14 emissions avoided would be substantial. Development of solar power in the SEZ would result in
 15
 16

TABLE 11.1.13.2-2 Annual Emissions from Combustion-Related Power Generation Avoided by Full Solar Development of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Area Size (acres)	Capacity (MW) ^a	Power Generation (GWh/yr) ^b	Emissions Displaced (tons/yr; 10 ³ tons/yr for CO ₂) ^c			
			SO ₂	NO _x	Hg	CO ₂
31,625	2,811–5,060	4,925–8,865	6,949–12,508	5,960–10,728	0.040–0.071	3,825–6,885
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in Nevada ^d			13–23%	13–23%	13–23%	13–23%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in Nevada ^e			11–19%	4.0–7.1%	– ^f	7.0–13%
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in the six-state study area ^d			2.8–5.0%	1.6–2.9%	1.4–2.4%	1.5–2.6%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in the six-state study area ^e			1.5–2.7%	0.22–0.40%	–	0.46–0.83%

^a It is assumed that the SEZ would eventually have development on 80% of the lands and that a range of 5 acres (0.020 km²) per MW (for parabolic trough technology) to 9 acres (0.036 km²) per MW (power tower, dish engine, and photovoltaic technologies) would be required.

^b Assumed a capacity factor of 20%.

^c Composite combustion-related emission factors for SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ of 2.82, 2.42, 1.6 × 10⁻⁵, and 1,553 lb/MWh, respectively, were used for the state of Nevada.

^d Emission data for all air pollutants are for 2005.

^e Emission data for SO₂ and NO_x are for 2002, while those for CO₂ are for 2005.

^f A dash indicates not estimated.

Sources: EPA (2009a,c); WRAP (2009).

1 avoided air emissions ranging from 13 to 23% of total emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂
2 from electric power systems in the state of Nevada (EPA 2009c). Avoided emissions would be
3 up to 5.0% of total emissions from electric power systems in the six-state study area. When
4 compared with all source categories, power production from the same solar facilities would
5 displace up to 19% of SO₂, 7.1% of NO_x, and 13% of CO₂ emissions in the state of Nevada
6 (EPA 2009a; WRAP 2009). These emissions would be up to 2.7% of total emissions from all
7 source categories in the six-state study area. Power generation from fossil fuel–fired power
8 plants accounts for about 93% of the total electric power generated in Nevada for which
9 contribution of natural gas and coal combustion is comparable. Thus, solar facilities to be built
10 in the Amargosa Valley SEZ could be more important than those built in other states in terms
11 of reducing fuel combustion–related emissions.

12
13 As discussed in Section 5.11.1.5, the operation of associated transmission lines would
14 generate some air pollutants from activities such as periodic site inspections and maintenance.
15 However, these activities would occur infrequently, and the amount of emissions would be
16 small. In addition, transmission lines could produce minute amounts of O₃ and its precursor
17 NO_x associated with corona discharge (i.e., the breakdown of air near high-voltage conductors),
18 which is most noticeable for high-voltage lines during rain or very humid conditions. Since
19 the Amargosa Valley SEZ is located in an arid desert environment, these emissions would be
20 small, and potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with transmission lines would be
21 negligible, considering the infrequent occurrences and small amount of emissions from corona
22 discharges.

23 24 25 ***11.1.13.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation***

26
27 As discussed in Section 5.11.1.4, decommissioning/reclamation activities are similar to
28 construction activities but are on a more limited scale and of shorter duration. Potential impacts
29 on ambient air quality would be correspondingly less than those from construction activities.
30 Decommissioning activities would last for a short period, and their potential impacts would be
31 moderate and temporary. The same mitigation measures adopted during the construction phase
32 would also be implemented during the decommissioning phase (Section 5.11.3).

33 34 35 **11.1.13.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

36
37 No SEZ-specific design features are required. Limiting dust generation during
38 construction and operations at the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (such as increased watering
39 frequency or road paving or treatment) is a required design feature under BLM’s Solar Energy
40 Program. These extensive fugitive dust control measures would keep off-site PM levels as low as
41 possible during construction.

1 **11.1.14 Visual Resources**

2
3
4 **11.1.14.1 Affected Environment**

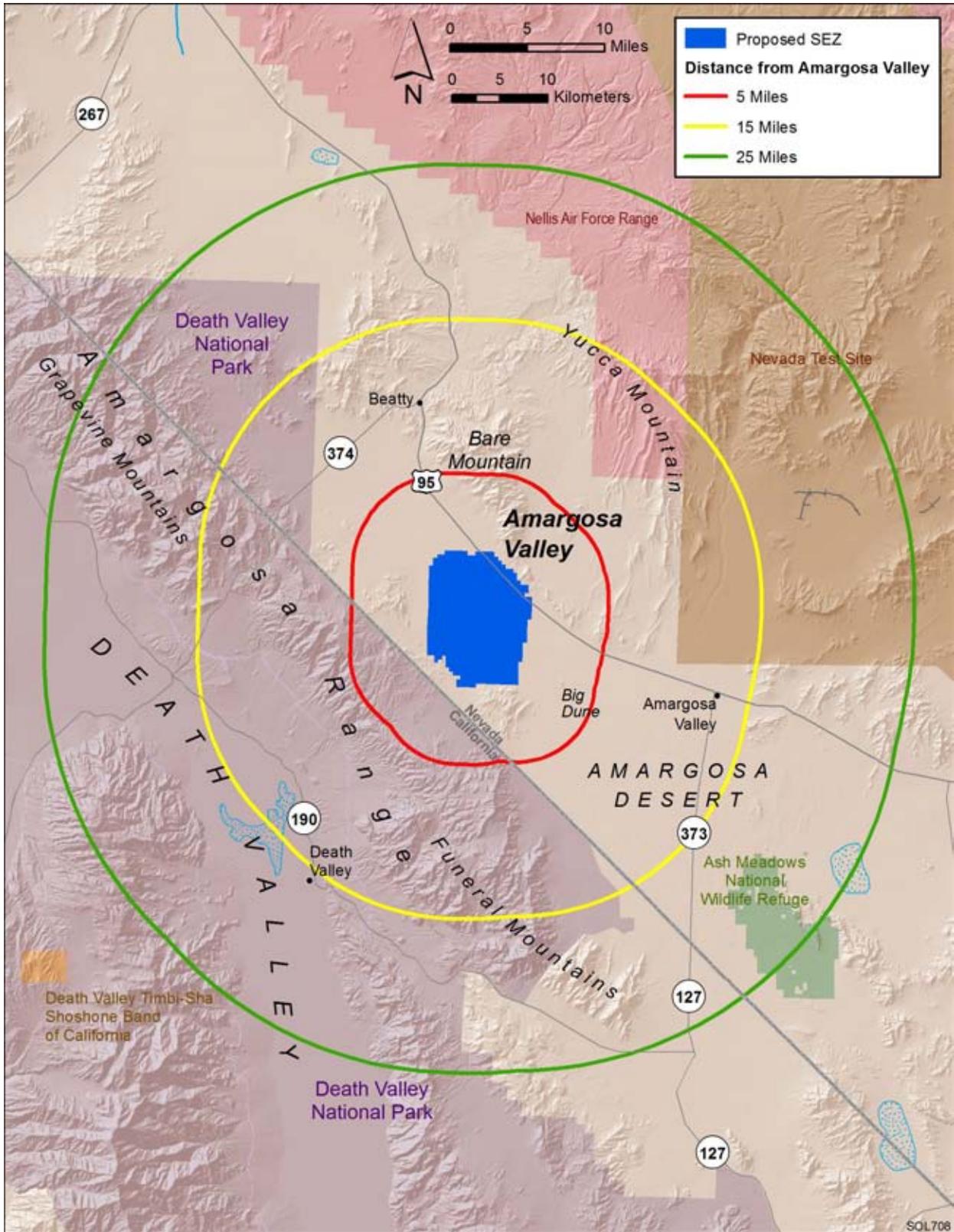
5
6 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located in Nye County in southwestern Nevada.
7 The southwestern border of the SEZ is 0.9 mi (1.5 km) northeast of the California border and
8 Death Valley NP. The SEZ occupies 31,625 acres (128 km²) and extends approximately 7 mi
9 (11.3 km) east to west and nearly 9 mi (14.5 km) north to south. The SEZ is within the Mojave
10 basin and range physiographic province, typified by small, north–south trending rocky mountain
11 ranges, alternating with talus slopes and desert floor. Flat basins form broad, flat expanses of
12 barren plains, generally with low scrub vegetation and expansive views. Amargosa Valley SEZ
13 is located within the EPA’s Amargosa Desert Level IV ecoregion. The SEZ ranges in elevation
14 from 2,800 ft (853 m) in the northern portion to 2,580 ft (786 m) in the southern portion.
15

16 The SEZ lies within the Amargosa Desert, closely bounded by mountain ranges to the
17 north and southwest, with open views to the east, northwest, and southeast. The Funeral
18 Mountains and the Amargosa Range rise just southwest of the SEZ, in California, with Death
19 Valley on the other side of the range. Bare Mountain begins to rise about 1.5 mi (2.4 km) north
20 of the northeastern portion of the SEZ. These mountains include peaks generally between 3,000
21 and 4,000 ft (914 and 1,219 m) in elevation, but with some peaks higher than 5,000 ft (1,524 m).
22 From the northwest to the southeast, the broad Amargosa Desert extends more than 45 mi
23 (72 km) and is about 10 mi (16 km) wide. Crater Flat, with an elevation of about 2,800 ft
24 (854 m), is located east northeast of the SEZ.
25

26 The SEZ is located within the flat, treeless plain of the Amargosa Desert floor, with the
27 strong horizon line and surrounding mountain ranges being the dominant visual features. The
28 intermittent Amargosa River runs through the SEZ in a northwest to southeast direction. The
29 surrounding mountains are generally brown in color, but with some mountains nearly white. In
30 contrast, gray gravels dominate the desert floor, which is sparsely dotted with the olive-green of
31 creosotebush, and light greens, grays, and tans of burrobush and shadscale in some areas. The
32 location of the SEZ and surrounding mountain ranges are shown in Figure 11.1.14.1-1.
33

34 Vegetation is generally sparse in much of the SEZ, with widely spaced shrubs growing
35 on more or less barren gravel flats. Vegetation within the SEZ is predominantly scrubland, with
36 creosotebush, white bursage, and other low shrubs dominating the Amargosa Desert floor within
37 the SEZ. During an August 2009 site visit, the vegetation presented a limited range of greens
38 (mostly olive green of creosotebushes) with some grays and tans (from lower shrubs), with
39 medium to coarse textures, and generally low visual interest.
40

41 No permanent surface water is present within the SEZ; however, the intermittent
42 Amargosa River bisects the SEZ, extending from northwest to southeast. There are large
43 drainage areas within the SEZ that have some slight topographic relief. They contain light-
44 colored tan soils mixed with gray gravel, rocks, and boulders.
45
46



1

2 **FIGURE 11.1.14.1-1 Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ and Surrounding Lands**

1 Cultural disturbances visible within the SEZ include U.S. 95, a two-lane highway that
2 passes through the northeast portion of the SEZ. While traffic volume on U.S. 95 is light, any
3 traffic on the highway would be visible from much of the SEZ. Existing transmission lines and
4 roads are visible in parts of the SEZ. Some areas have severe visible tracking from OHVs.
5 These cultural modifications generally detract from the scenic quality of the SEZ; however,
6 the SEZ is large enough that from many locations within the SEZ, these features are either not
7 visible or are so distant as to have minimal effect on views. From most locations within the
8 SEZ, the landscape is generally natural in appearance, with little disturbance visible. The lack of
9 cultural disturbances, the general remoteness of the area, lack of humidity, and the exceptional
10 air quality contribute to unusually dark night skies in the Amargosa Valley and nearby Death
11 Valley National Park, which has some of the darkest night skies in the country (NPS 2010a).
12 The dark night skies are considered an important resource locally (Amargosa Valley Area Plan
13 Committee 2009) and to the national park visitor experience.
14

15 The general lack of topographic relief, water, and physical variety results in low scenic
16 value within the SEZ itself; however, because of the flatness of the landscape, the lack of trees,
17 and the breadth of the Amargosa Desert, the SEZ presents a vast panoramic landscape with
18 sweeping views of the surrounding mountains that add significantly to the scenic values within
19 the SEZ viewshed. In general, the mountains appear to be devoid of vegetation, and their varied
20 and irregular forms, and brown to white colors, provide visual contrasts to the strong horizontal
21 line, green vegetation, and gray gravels of the valley floor, particularly when viewed from
22 nearby locations within the SEZ. Panoramic views of the SEZ are shown in Figures 11.1.14.1-2,
23 11.1.14.1-3, and 11.1.14.1-4.
24

25 The mountain slopes and peaks surrounding the SEZ generally are visually pristine. The
26 Big Dune SRMA and Big Dune ACEC, within view about 0.5 mi (0.8 km) east of the southern
27 boundary of the SEZ, respectively, receive thousands of visitors on some weekends, primarily
28 for OHV recreation. The boundary of the Death Valley NP and WA is 0.7 mi (1.1 km) southwest
29 of the SEZ, and mountains within the NP and WA are visible from the SEZ. More distant views
30 from the SEZ include the Funeral Mountains WA, located about 18 mi (29 km) south of the SEZ,
31 and Ash Meadows NWR about 16.4 mi (26.4 km) southeast of the SEZ. The California Desert
32 Conservation Area, encompassing all California lands within the 25-mi (41-km) viewshed of the
33 SEZ, is 0.9 mi (1.5 km) southwest of the SEZ.
34

35 The BLM conducted a visual resource inventory (VRI) for the SEZ and surrounding
36 lands in 2007 (BLM 2009f). The VRI evaluates BLM-administered lands based on scenic
37 quality; sensitivity level, in terms of public concern for preservation of scenic values in the
38 evaluated lands; and distance from travel routes or key observation points (KOPs). Based on
39 these three factors, BLM-administered lands are placed into one of four Visual Resource
40 Inventory Classes, which represent the relative value of the visual resources. Class I and II are
41 the most valued; Class III represents a moderate value; and Class IV represents the least value.
42 Class I is reserved for specially designated areas, such as national wildernesses and other
43 congressionally and administratively designated areas where decisions have been made to
44 preserve a natural landscape. Class II is the highest rating for lands without special designation.
45 More information about VRI methodology is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource*
46 *Inventory*, BLM Manual Handbook 8410-1 (BLM 1986a).

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1



2 **FIGURE 11.1.14.1-2 Approximately 120° Panoramic View of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ from Western SEZ Boundary Facing**
3 **Northeast**

4

5

11.1-224

6



7 **FIGURE 11.1.14.1-3 Approximately 180° Panoramic View of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ from U.S. 95 Facing Southwest,**
8 **Including Amargosa Range in Center Background**

9

10

December 2010

11

12

13



FIGURE 11.1.14.1-4 Approximately 120° Panoramic View of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ from Central Portion of SEZ Facing
Southwest, Including Amargosa Range in Center

1 The VRI values for the SEZ and immediate surroundings are VRI Class IV, indicating
2 low visual values. The inventory indicates low scenic quality for the SEZ and its immediate
3 surroundings. Positive scenic quality attributes included adjacent scenery. The inventory
4 indicates low sensitivity for the SEZ and its immediate surroundings. The inventory indicates a
5 moderate level of use and a moderate level of public interest, due to the proximity to Death
6 Valley NP and Big Dune ACEC.
7

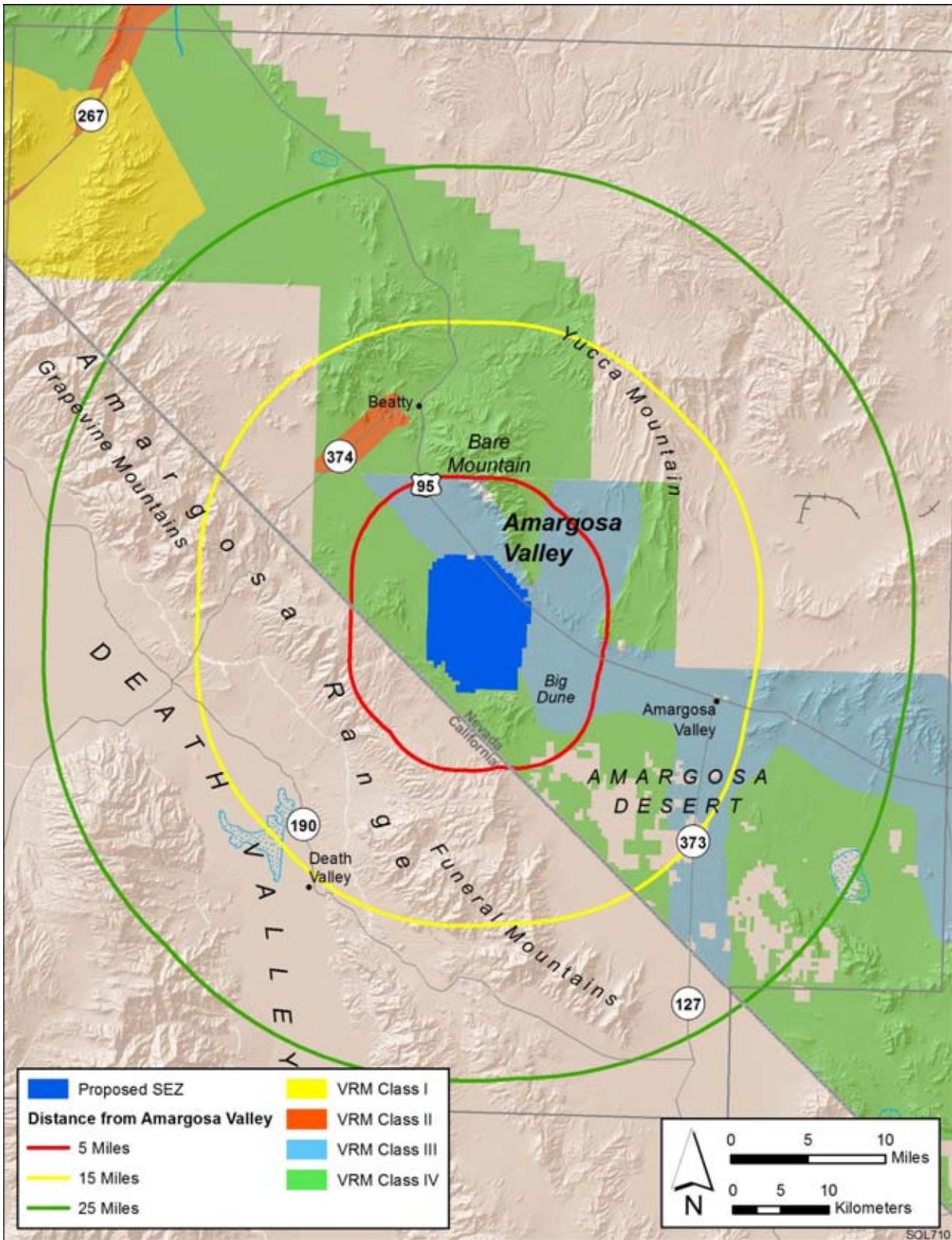
8 The *Proposed Las Vegas Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact*
9 *Statement* (BLM 1998) indicates that the SEZ is managed as visual resource management
10 (VRM) Classes III and IV. VRM Class III objectives include partial retention of landscape
11 character and permit moderate modification of the existing character of the landscape. VRM
12 Class IV permits major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The VRM map
13 for the SEZ and surrounding lands is shown in Figure 11.1.14.1-5. More information about the
14 BLM VRM program is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Management*, BLM
15 Manual Handbook 8400 (BLM 1984).
16
17

18 **11.1.14.2 Impacts** 19

20 The potential for impacts from utility-scale solar energy development on visual resources
21 within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ and surrounding lands, as well as the impacts of
22 related projects (e.g., access roads and transmission lines) outside of the SEZ, is presented in
23 this section.
24

25 Site-specific impact assessment is needed to systematically and thoroughly assess visual
26 impact levels for a particular project. Without precise information about the location of a project,
27 a relatively complete and accurate description of its major components, and their layout, it is not
28 possible to assess precisely the visual impacts associated with the facility. However, if the
29 general nature and location of a facility are known, a more generalized assessment of potential
30 visual impacts can be made by describing the range of expected visual changes and discussing
31 contrasts typically associated with these changes. In addition, a general analysis can identify
32 sensitive resources that may be at risk if a future project is sited in a particular area. Detailed
33 information about the methodology employed for the visual impact assessment used in this PEIS,
34 including assumptions and limitations, is presented in Appendix M.
35
36

37 *Potential Glint and Glare Impacts.* Similarly, the nature and magnitude of potential glint-
38 and glare-related visual impacts for a given solar facility is highly dependent on viewer position,
39 sun angle, the nature of the reflective surface and its orientation relative to the sun and the
40 viewer, atmospheric conditions and other variables. The determination of potential impacts from
41 glint and glare from solar facilities within a given proposed SEZ would require precise
42 knowledge of these variables and is not possible given the scope of this PEIS. Therefore, the
43 following analysis does not describe or suggest potential contrast levels arising from glint and
44 glare for facilities that might be developed within the SEZ; however, it should be assumed that
45 glint and glare are possible visual impacts from *any* utility-scale solar facility, regardless of size,
46 landscape setting, or technology type. The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could
47



1

2 **FIGURE 11.1.14.1-5 Visual Resource Management Classes for the Proposed Amargosa Valley**
 3 **SEZ and Surrounding Lands**

1 potentially cause large though temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities.
2 The visual contrast levels projected for sensitive visual resource areas discussed in the following
3 analysis do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these effects would be
4 incorporated into a future site- and project-specific assessment that would be conducted for
5 specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more information about potential
6 glint and glare impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy facilities, see Section 5.12 of
7 this PEIS.
8
9

10 ***11.1.14.2.1 Impacts on the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ***

11

12 Some or all of the SEZ could be developed for one or more utility-scale solar energy
13 projects, utilizing one or more of the solar energy technologies described in Appendix F.
14 Because of the industrial nature and large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities, large visual
15 impacts on the SEZ would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and decommissioning
16 of solar energy projects. In addition, large impacts could occur at solar facilities utilizing highly
17 reflective surfaces or major light-emitting components (solar dish, parabolic trough, and power
18 tower technologies), with lesser impacts associated with reflective surfaces expected from PV
19 facilities. These impacts would be expected to involve major modification of the existing
20 character of the landscape and would likely dominate the views nearby. Additional, and
21 potentially large impacts would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and
22 decommissioning of related facilities, such as access roads and electric transmission lines. While
23 the primary visual impacts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ would
24 occur during daylight hours, lighting required for utility-scale solar energy facilities would be a
25 potential source of visual impacts at night, both within the SEZ and on surrounding lands.
26 Common and technology-specific visual impacts from utility-scale solar energy development, as
27 well as impacts associated with electric transmission lines, are discussed in Section 5.12 of this
28 PEIS. Impacts would last throughout construction, operation, and decommissioning, and some
29 impacts could continue after project decommissioning.
30

31 The changes described above would be expected to be consistent with BLM VRM
32 objectives for VRM Class IV as seen from nearby KOPs. More information about impact
33 determination using the BLM VRM program is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual*
34 *Resource Contrast Rating*, BLM Manual Handbook 8431-1 (BLM 1986b).
35

36 Implementation of the programmatic design features (described in Appendix A,
37 Section A.2.2) would be expected to reduce visual impacts associated with utility-scale solar
38 energy development within the SEZ; however, the degree of effectiveness of these design
39 features could be assessed only at the site- and project-specific level. Given the large scale,
40 reflective surfaces, and strong regular geometry of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the
41 lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities away
42 from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive viewing areas would be the primary
43 means of mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other visual impact mitigation measures
44 would generally be limited, but would be important to reduce visual contrasts to the greatest
45 extent possible.
46
47

1 **11.1.14.2.2 Impacts on Lands Surrounding the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ**
2

3 Because of the large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat,
4 open nature of the proposed SEZ, lands outside the SEZ would be subjected to visual impacts
5 related to construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities.
6 The affected areas and extent of impacts would depend on a number of visibility factors and
7 viewer distance (for a detailed discussion of visibility and related factors, see Section 5.12).
8 A key component in determining impact levels is the intervisibility between the project and
9 potentially affected lands; if topography, vegetation, or structures screen the project from
10 viewer locations, there is no impact.
11

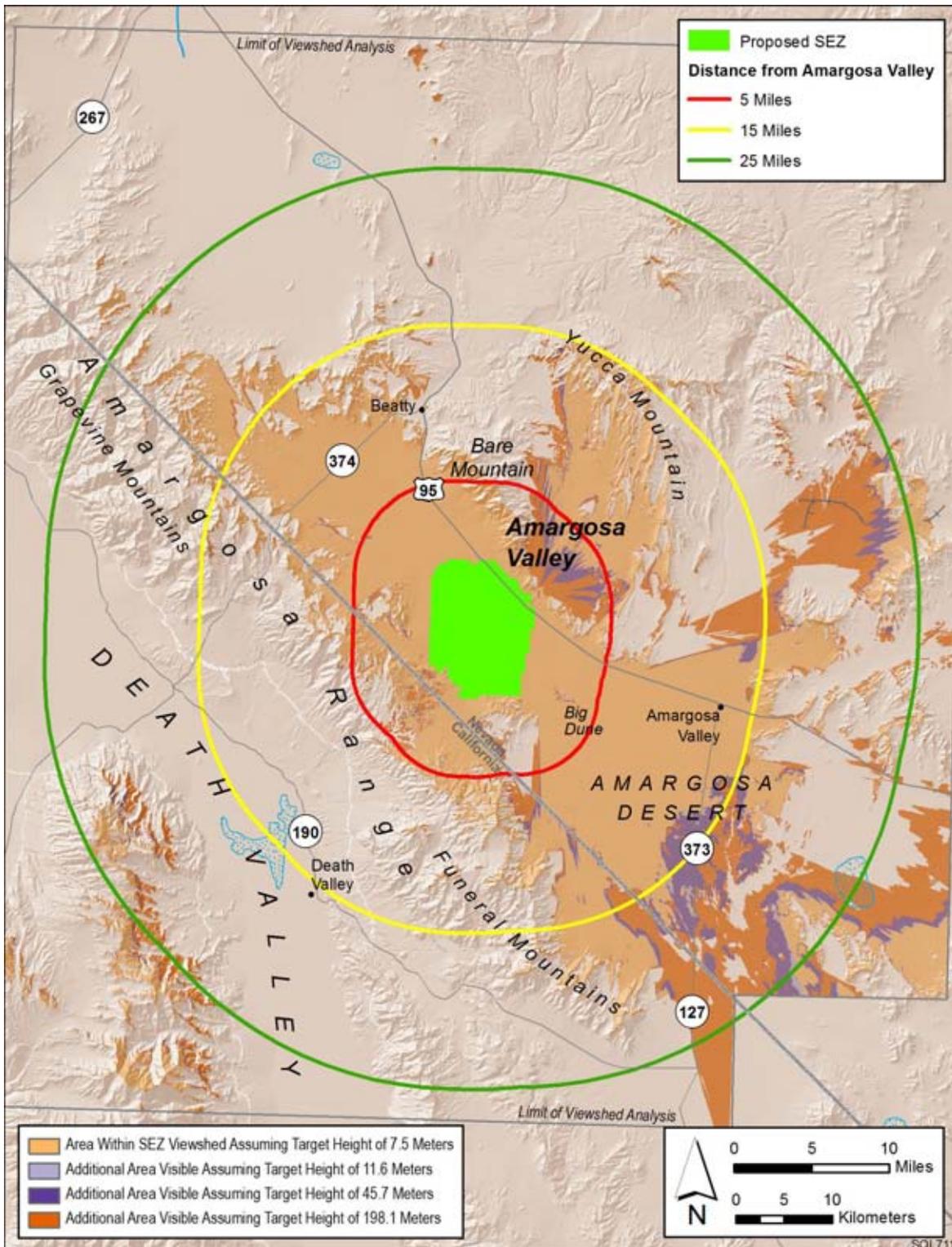
12 Preliminary viewshed analyses were conducted to identify which lands surrounding the
13 proposed SEZ are visible from the SEZ (see Appendix M for information on the assumptions
14 and limitations of the methods used). Four viewshed analyses were conducted, assuming four
15 different heights representative of project elements associated with potential solar energy
16 technologies: PV and parabolic trough arrays (24.6 ft [7.5 m]), solar dishes and power blocks for
17 CSP technologies (38 ft [11.6 m]), transmission towers and short solar power towers (150 ft
18 [45.7 m]), and tall solar power towers (650 ft [198.1 m]). Viewshed maps for the SEZ for all
19 four solar technology heights are presented in Appendix N.
20

21 Figure 11.1.14.2-1 shows the combined results of the viewshed analyses for all four solar
22 technologies. The colored segments indicate areas with clear lines of sight to one or more areas
23 within the SEZ and from which solar facilities within these areas of the SEZ would be expected
24 to be visible, assuming the absence of screening vegetation or structures and adequate lighting
25 and other atmospheric conditions. The light brown areas are locations from which PV and
26 parabolic trough arrays located in the SEZ could be visible. Solar dishes and power blocks for
27 CSP technologies would be visible from the areas shaded in light brown and the additional areas
28 shaded in light purple. Transmission towers and short solar power towers would be visible from
29 the areas shaded light brown, light purple, and the additional areas shaded in dark purple. Power
30 tower facilities located in the SEZ could be visible from areas shaded light brown, light purple,
31 dark purple, and at least the upper portions of power tower receivers from the additional areas
32 shaded in medium brown.
33

34 For the following visual impact discussion, the tall solar power tower (650 ft [198.1 m])
35 and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds are shown in figures and
36 discussed in the text. These heights represent the maximum and minimum landscape visibility
37 for solar energy technologies analyzed in the PEIS. Viewsheds for solar dish and CSP
38 technology power blocks (38 ft [11.6 m]), and transmission towers and short solar power towers
39 (150 ft [45.7 m]) are presented in Appendix N. The visibility of these facilities would fall
40 between that for tall power towers and PV and parabolic trough arrays.
41
42

43 **Impacts on Selected Federal-, State-, and BLM-Designated Sensitive Visual**
44 **Resource Areas**
45

46 Figure 11.1.14.2-2 shows the results of a GIS analysis that overlays selected federal,
47 state, and BLM-designated sensitive visual resource areas onto the combined tall solar power



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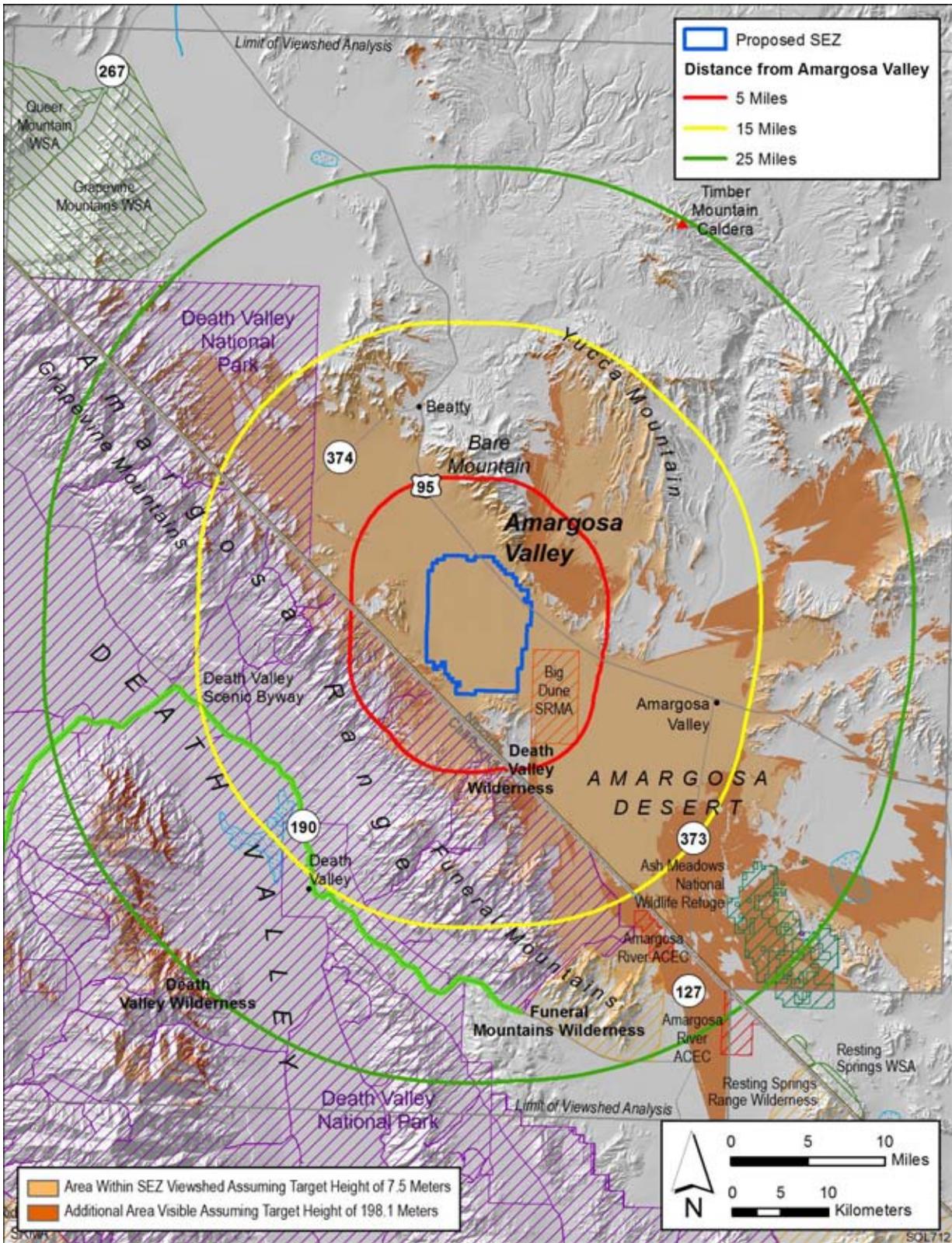
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FIGURE 11.1.14.2-1 Viewshed Analyses for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ and Surrounding Lands, Assuming Solar Technology Heights of 24.6 ft (7.5 m), 38 ft (11.6 m), 150 ft (45.7 m), and 650 ft (198.1 m) (shaded areas indicate lands from which solar development within the SEZ could be visible)



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.1.14.2-2 Overlay of Selected Sensitive Visual Resource Areas onto Combined 650-ft**
 3 **(198.1-m) and 24.6-ft (7.5-m) Viewsheds for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ**

1 tower (650 ft [198.1 m]) and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds in order
2 to illustrate which of these sensitive visual resource areas would have views of solar facilities
3 within the SEZ and therefore potentially would be subject to visual impacts from those facilities.
4 Distance zones that correspond with BLM's VRM system-specified foreground-middleground
5 distance (5 mi [8 km]), background distance (15 mi [24 km]), and a 25-mi (40-km) distance
6 zone are shown as well, in order to indicate the effect of distance from the SEZ on impact levels,
7 which are highly dependent on distance.

8
9 The scenic resources included in the analyses were as follows:

- 10 • National Parks, National Monuments, National Recreation Areas, National
11 Preserves, National Wildlife Refuges, National Reserves, National
12 Conservation Areas, National Historic Sites;
- 13 • Congressionally authorized Wilderness Areas;
- 14 • Wilderness Study Areas;
- 15 • National Wild and Scenic Rivers;
- 16 • Congressionally authorized Wild and Scenic Study Rivers;
- 17 • National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails;
- 18 • National Historic Landmarks and National Natural Landmarks;
- 19 • All-American Roads, National Scenic Byways, State Scenic Highways; and
20 BLM- and USFS-designated scenic highways/byways;
- 21 • BLM-designated Special Recreation Management Areas; and
- 22 • ACECs designated because of outstanding scenic qualities.

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34 Potential impacts on specific sensitive resource areas visible from and within 25 mi
35 (40 km) of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ are discussed below. The results of this analysis
36 are also summarized in Table 11.1.14.2-1. Further discussion of impacts on these areas
37 is presented in Sections 11.1.3 (Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness
38 Characteristics) and 11.1.17 (Cultural Resources) of the PEIS.

39
40 The following visual impact analysis describes *visual contrast levels* rather than *visual*
41 *impact levels*. *Visual contrasts* are changes in the seen landscape, including changes in the forms,
42 lines, colors, and textures of objects seen in the landscape. A measure of *visual impact* includes
43 potential human reactions to the visual contrasts arising from a development activity, based on
44 viewer characteristics, including attitudes and values, expectations, and other characteristics that
45 that are viewer- and situation-specific. Accurate assessment of visual impacts requires
46 knowledge of the potential types and numbers of viewers for a given development and their

TABLE 11.1.14.2-1 Selected Potentially Affected Sensitive Visual Resources within the 25-mi (40-km) Viewshed of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, Assuming a Target Height of 650 ft (198.1 m)^a

Feature Type	Feature Name and Total Acreage	Visible within 5 mi	Feature Area or Linear Distance ^b	
			Visible between 5 and 15 mi	Visible between 15 and 25 mi
National Parks	Death Valley (3,397,062 acres)	19,406 acres (0.6%)	53,176 acres (2%)	32,937 acres (1%)
WAs	Death Valley (3,074,256 acres)	18,638 acres (0.6%)	30,371 acres (1%)	18,935 acres (0.6%)
	Funeral Mountains (27,567 acres)	0	0	3,876 (14%)
Wildlife Refuge	Ash Meadows (24,193 acres)	0	0	11,731 acres (49%)
SRMA	Big Dune (11,572 acres)	11,181 acres (97%)	0	0
ACECs designated for outstanding scenic values	Amargosa River (27,797 acres)	0	0	2,919 acres (11%)
National Conservation Areas	California Desert (25,919,319 acres)	19,699 acres (0.08%)	34,626 acres (0.1%)	40,160 acres (0.2%)

^a Assuming solar power technology with a height of 650 ft (198.1 m).

^b To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047. To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

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characteristics and expectations; specific locations where the project might be viewed from; and other variables that were not available or not feasible to incorporate in the PEIS analysis. These variables would be incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more discussion of visual contrasts and impacts, see Section 5.12 of the PEIS.

10 ***National Parks***

- *Death Valley*—Death Valley NP is located in California, about 0.7 mi (1.1 km) southwest to west of the SEZ at the point of closest approach, and encompasses about 3,397,062 acres (13,747.42 km²). The vast Death Valley NP is a popular winter hiking area. The Death Valley NP contains paved roads popular for scenic driving and biking, several miles of hiking trails, and four-wheel drive roads. There are campgrounds, and backcountry camping is

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GOOGLE EARTH™ VISUALIZATIONS

The visual impact analysis discussion in this section utilizes three-dimensional Google Earth™ perspective visualizations of hypothetical solar facilities placed within the SEZ. The visualizations include simplified wireframe models of a hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed at various locations within the SEZ as visual aids for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of utility-scale solar facilities. The visualizations are intended to show the apparent size, distance, and configuration of the SEZ, as well as the apparent size of a typical utility-scale solar power tower project and its relationship to the surrounding landscape, as viewed from potentially sensitive visual resource areas within the viewshed of the SEZ.

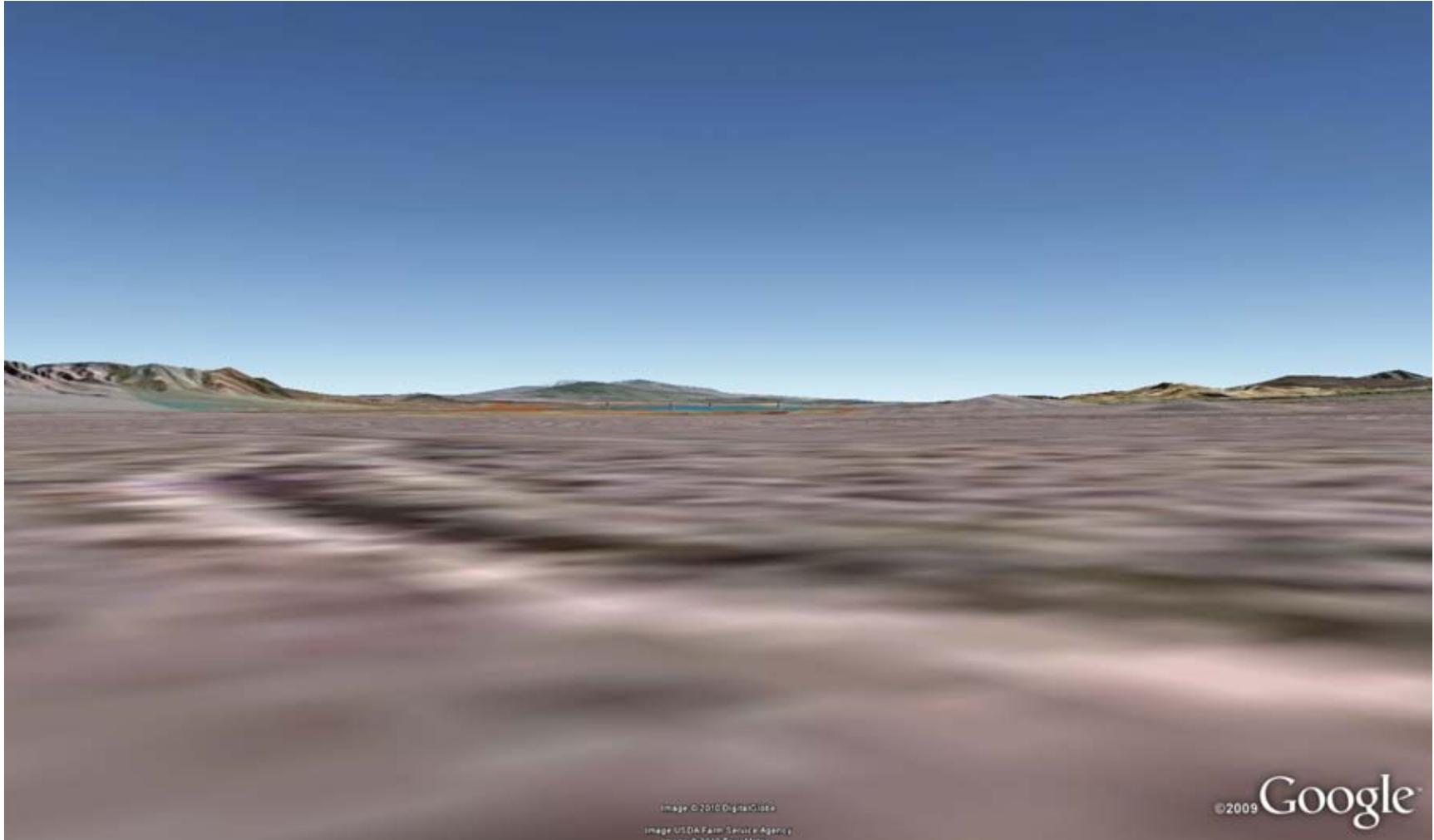
The visualizations are not intended to be realistic simulations of the actual appearance of the landscape or of proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. The placement of models within the SEZ did not reflect any actual planned or proposed projects within the SEZ, and did not take into account engineering or other constraints that would affect the siting or choice of facilities for this particular SEZ. The number of facility models placed in the SEZ does not reflect the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, but it should be noted that the discussion of expected visual contrast levels does account for the 80% development scenario. A solar power tower was chosen for the models because the unique height characteristics of power tower facilities make their visual impact potential extend beyond other solar technology types.

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3 allowed. Stargazing is popular year round, as are bird watching and viewing
4 spring wildflowers. Most of the park's services and facilities, as well as most
5 recreational use, are in the central and northeastern portion of the park.
6

7 As shown in Figure 11.1.14.2-2, within the Death Valley NP, visibility of
8 solar facilities within the SEZ would be limited to two general areas: the
9 peaks and eastern slopes of the Amargosa Range on both sides of the
10 California–Nevada border, and, farther west in the Death Valley NP, some
11 peaks and eastern slopes of the Tucki Mountains and the Panamint Range
12 above 2,400 ft (730 m) in elevation. These areas include about 105,519 acres
13 (427.020 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or 3% of the total NP
14 acreage, and 61,851 acres (250.30 km²) in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or
15 0.2% of the total Death Valley NP acreage. The area of Death Valley NP with
16 potential visibility of solar facilities in the SEZ extends beyond 25 mi (40 km)
17 from the southwestern boundary of the SEZ.
18

19 Figure 11.1.14.2-3 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from
20 State Route 374 at the entrance to Death Valley NP in Nevada, about 9.3 mi
21 (15 km) from the northwest corner of the SEZ. The visualization includes
22 simplified wireframe models of a hypothetical solar power tower facility.
23

24 The receiver towers depicted in the visualization are properly scaled models
25 of a 459-ft (140-m) power tower with an 867-acre (3.5-km²) field of 12-ft
26 (3.7-m) heliostats, each representing about 100 MW of electric generating
27 capacity. One group of four models was placed in the SEZ for this and other
28 visualizations shown in this section of the PEIS. In the visualization, the SEZ
29 area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
30



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FIGURE 11.1.14.2-3 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint on State Route 374, at Entrance to Death Valley NP

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1 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 800 ft (244 m) higher in elevation
2 than the SEZ. From this location, the collector/reflector arrays of solar
3 facilities within the SEZ would be seen nearly edge-on, which would reduce
4 their apparent size, make their strong regular geometry less apparent, and
5 make them appear to repeat the strong line of the horizon, which would tend
6 to reduce visual contrast. However, the SEZ is close enough that it would
7 occupy a moderate amount of the horizontal field of view.
8

9 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, and
10 cooling towers; and plumes (if present) could be visible projecting above the
11 collector/reflector arrays. Their more vertical and irregular geometries and
12 forms could create form and line contrasts with the strongly horizontal,
13 regular, and repeating forms and lines of the collector/reflector arrays.
14

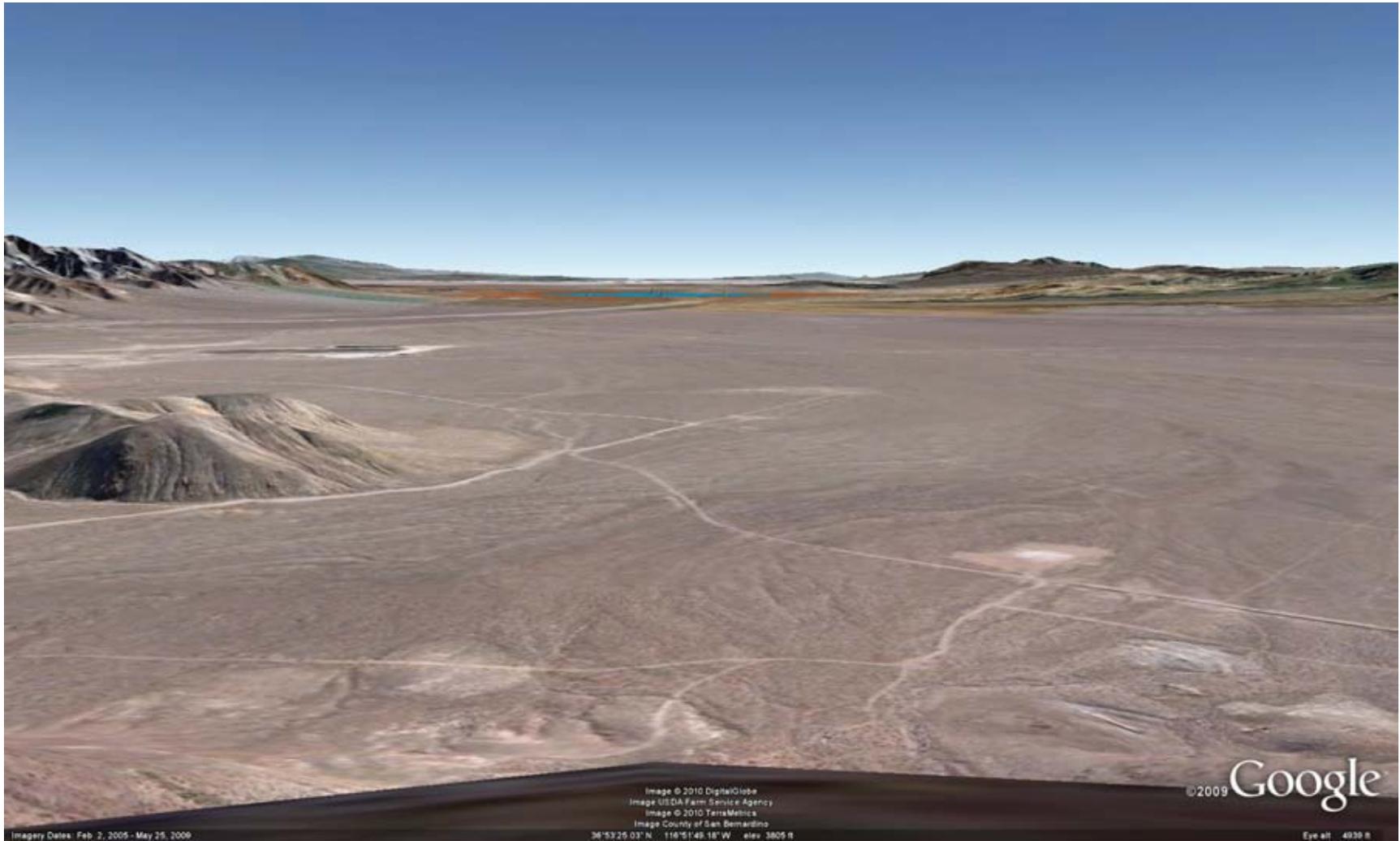
15 If power towers were present within the SEZ, when operating, the receivers
16 would likely appear as bright points of light atop discernable tower structures.
17 At night, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, power towers could have flashing red
18 or hazard navigation lights or red or white strobe lights that would likely be
19 visible from this location, and could be conspicuous in the area's dark night
20 skies. Other lighting associated with solar facilities could be visible as well.
21

22 Visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ would depend
23 on the numbers, types, sizes and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and
24 other visibility factors. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the
25 PEIS, weak to moderate visual contrasts could be expected at this location.
26

27 Figure 11.1.14.2-4 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
28 orange) as seen from Bullfrog Mountain in the northeastern portion of the
29 Death Valley NP, on the park border in Nevada and about 13 mi (21 km) from
30 the northwest corner of the SEZ. The viewpoint is elevated about 2,100 ft
31 (640 m) above the nearest point in the SEZ. The upper slopes and peak of the
32 mountain are barren, with little opportunity for screening.
33

34 The visualization suggests that from this elevated viewpoint, the tops of
35 collector/reflector arrays within the SEZ might be visible, but the angle of
36 view would be low because of the 13-mi (21-km) distance to the SEZ. The
37 SEZ and solar facilities within it would be seen as a thin band below the
38 southwest horizon, and the facilities would tend to repeat the line of the
39 horizon, reducing visual contrast somewhat. Taller solar facility components,
40 such as transmission towers, could be visible, depending on lighting, but
41 might not be noticed by casual observers.
42

43 If power towers were present within the SEZ, they would be visible as bright
44 star-like points of light against a backdrop of the Amargosa Valley floor. At
45 night, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, power towers would have navigation
46



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FIGURE 11.1.14.2-4 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint on Bullfrog Mountain within Death Valley NP

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1 warning lights that could potentially be visible from this location. Other
2 lighting associated with solar facilities could potentially be visible as well.

3
4 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
5 their designs, and other visibility factors, weak to moderate visual contrasts
6 from solar energy development within the SEZ could be expected at this
7 location.

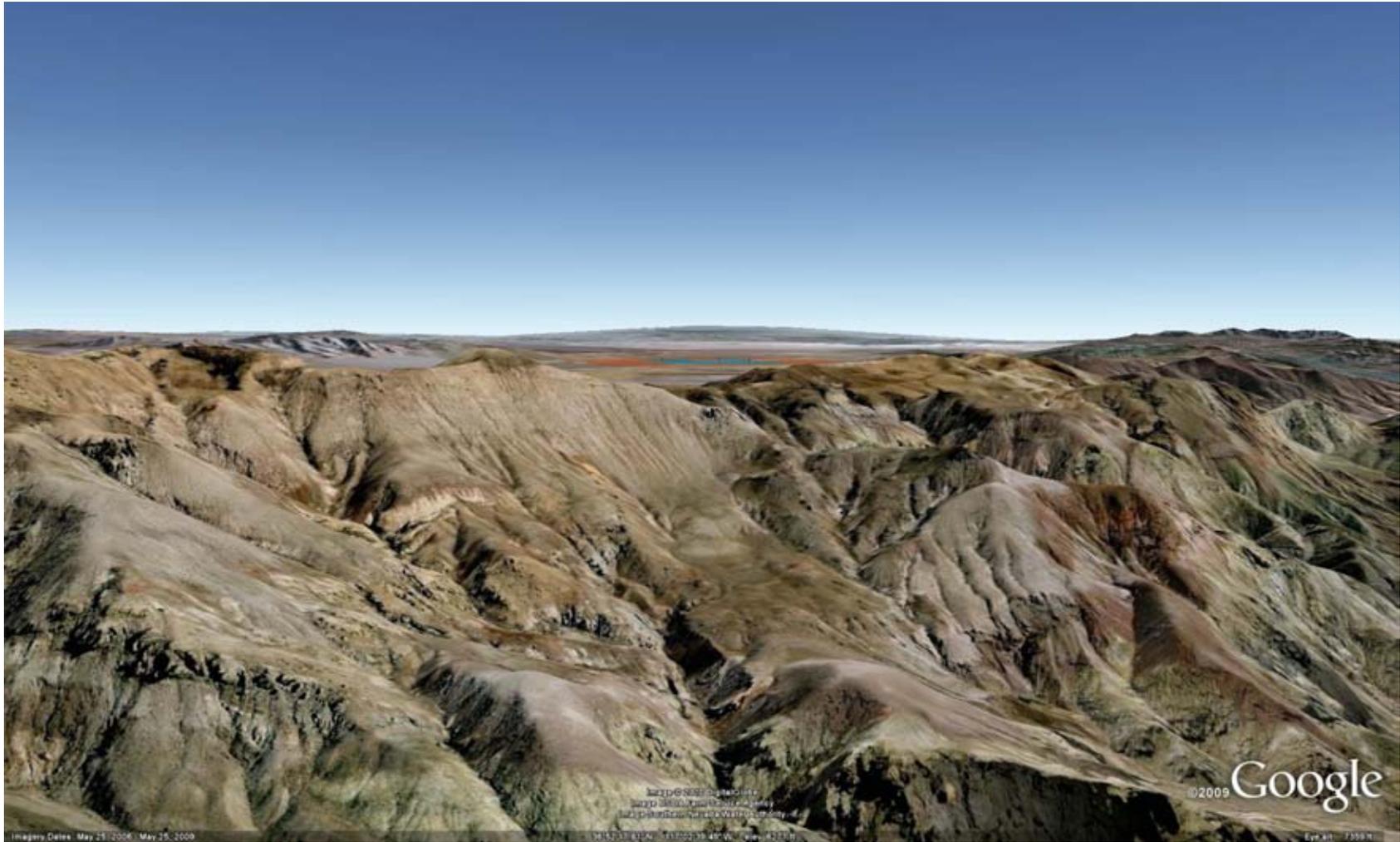
8
9 Figure 11.1.14.2-5 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
10 orange) as seen from an unnamed peak in the Amargosa Range in the
11 northeastern portion of the NP near the California-Nevada border in
12 California, and approximately 21 mi (34 km) from the northwest corner of the
13 SEZ. The viewpoint is elevated about 3,800 ft (1,160 m) above the nearest
14 point in the SEZ.

15
16 The visualization suggests that from this elevated viewpoint, the SEZ would
17 be visible in a gap between mountains located southeast of the viewpoint.
18 Despite the large elevation difference between the viewpoint and the SEZ, the
19 angle of view would be low because of the 21-mi (34-km) distance to the
20 SEZ. The SEZ and solar facilities within it would be seen as a thin band
21 between the southeast horizon and the mountains of the Amargosa Range to
22 the southeast of the viewpoint. Solar facilities located in the SEZ would tend
23 to repeat the line of the horizon, reducing visual contrast somewhat. If power
24 towers were present within the SEZ, they would be visible as star-like points
25 of light against a backdrop of the Amargosa Valley floor. At night, if more
26 than 200 ft (61 m) tall, power towers would have navigation warning lights
27 that could potentially be visible from this location. Depending on project
28 location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and their designs, and
29 other visibility factors, weak visual contrasts from solar energy development
30 within the SEZ would be expected at this location.

31
32 Figure 11.1.14.2-6 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
33 orange) as seen from an unnamed peak in the Amargosa Range directly west
34 of the southernmost portion of the SEZ in California and about 6.5 mi
35 (10.4 km) from the western border of the SEZ. The viewpoint is elevated
36 about 2,500 ft (760 m) above the nearest point in the SEZ.

37
38 The visualization suggests that from this elevated viewpoint, the SEZ would
39 occupy a substantial portion of the viewer's field of view to the east. Because
40 of the large elevation difference between the viewpoint and the SEZ and the
41 relatively short distance to the SEZ, the tops of solar facilities within the SEZ
42 would be visible, which would increase their apparent size and make the
43 strong regular geometry of the collector/reflector array more apparent.

44
45 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, and
46 cooling towers; and plumes (if present) would likely be visible projecting



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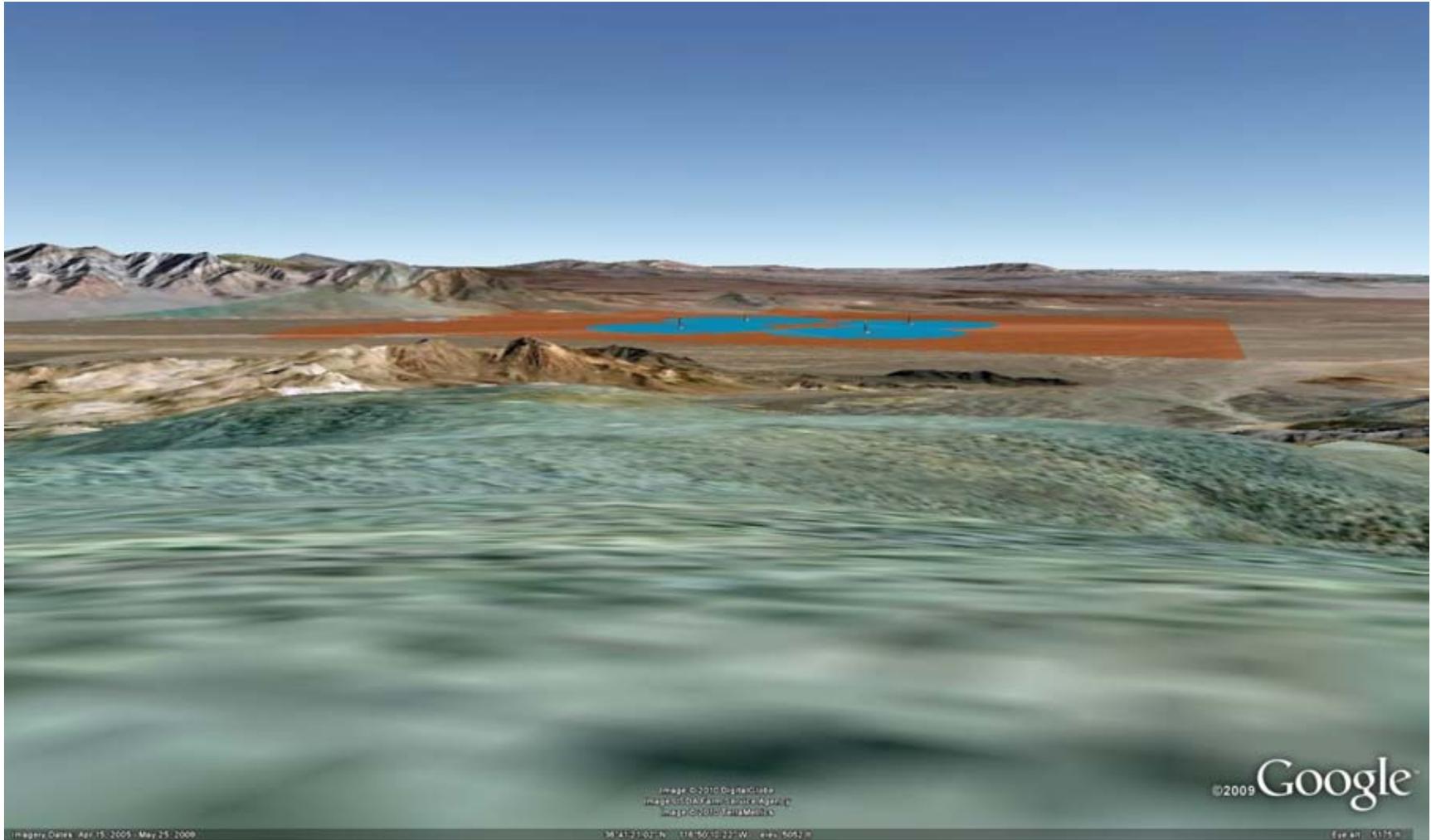
FIGURE 11.1.14.2-5 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint within Northern Portion of the Amargosa Range in Death Valley NP

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2 **FIGURE 11.1.14.2-6 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands,**
3 **with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint within Central Portion of the Amargosa Range in Death Valley NP**
4

1 above the collector/reflector arrays, and their structural details could be
2 evident, at least for facilities in the closest portion of the SEZ. The ancillary
3 facilities could create form and line contrasts with the strongly horizontal,
4 regular, and repeating forms and lines of the collector/reflector arrays. Color
5 and texture contrasts would also be possible, but their extent would depend on
6 the materials and surface treatments utilized in the facilities.
7

8 If power towers were present within the SEZ, they would be visible as very
9 bright light sources against a backdrop of the Amargosa Valley floor, and the
10 supporting tower structures would be visible. At night, if more than 200 ft (61
11 m) tall, power towers would have navigation warning lights that would likely
12 be visible from this location, and could be very conspicuous from this
13 location, given the area's dark night skies. Other lighting associated with solar
14 facilities could be visible as well.
15

16 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, solar facilities
17 within the SEZ would attract visual attention, could potentially dominate the
18 view, and would be expected to create strong visual contrasts as viewed from
19 this location within the Death Valley NP.
20

21 Figure 11.1.14.2-7 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
22 orange) as seen from an unnamed peak in the Amargosa Range just west and
23 7 mi (11 km) south of the SEZ in California. The viewpoint is elevated about
24 1,000 ft (300 m) above the nearest point in the SEZ.
25

26 The visualization suggests that from this elevated viewpoint, the SEZ would
27 occupy a substantial portion of the field of view to the east. Because it is
28 farther from the SEZ and also lower in elevation than the viewpoint for
29 Figure 11.1.14.2-6, the angle of view is lower, so that the SEZ and solar
30 facilities within the SEZ would appear as bands across the valley floor,
31 tending to repeat the line of the flat valley floor.
32

33 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, and
34 cooling towers; and plumes (if present) would likely be visible projecting
35 above the collector/reflector arrays. Their more vertical and irregular
36 geometries and forms could create form and line contrasts with the strongly
37 horizontal, regular, and repeating forms and lines of the collector/reflector
38 arrays.
39

40 If power towers were present within the SEZ, when operating, they would be
41 visible as very bright light sources against a backdrop of the Amargosa Valley
42 floor or the bajada at the base of Bare Mountain, and the supporting tower
43 structures would be visible. At night sufficiently tall power towers would have
44 navigation warning lights that would likely be visible from this location, and
45 could be conspicuous. Other lighting associated with solar facilities could be
46 visible as well.



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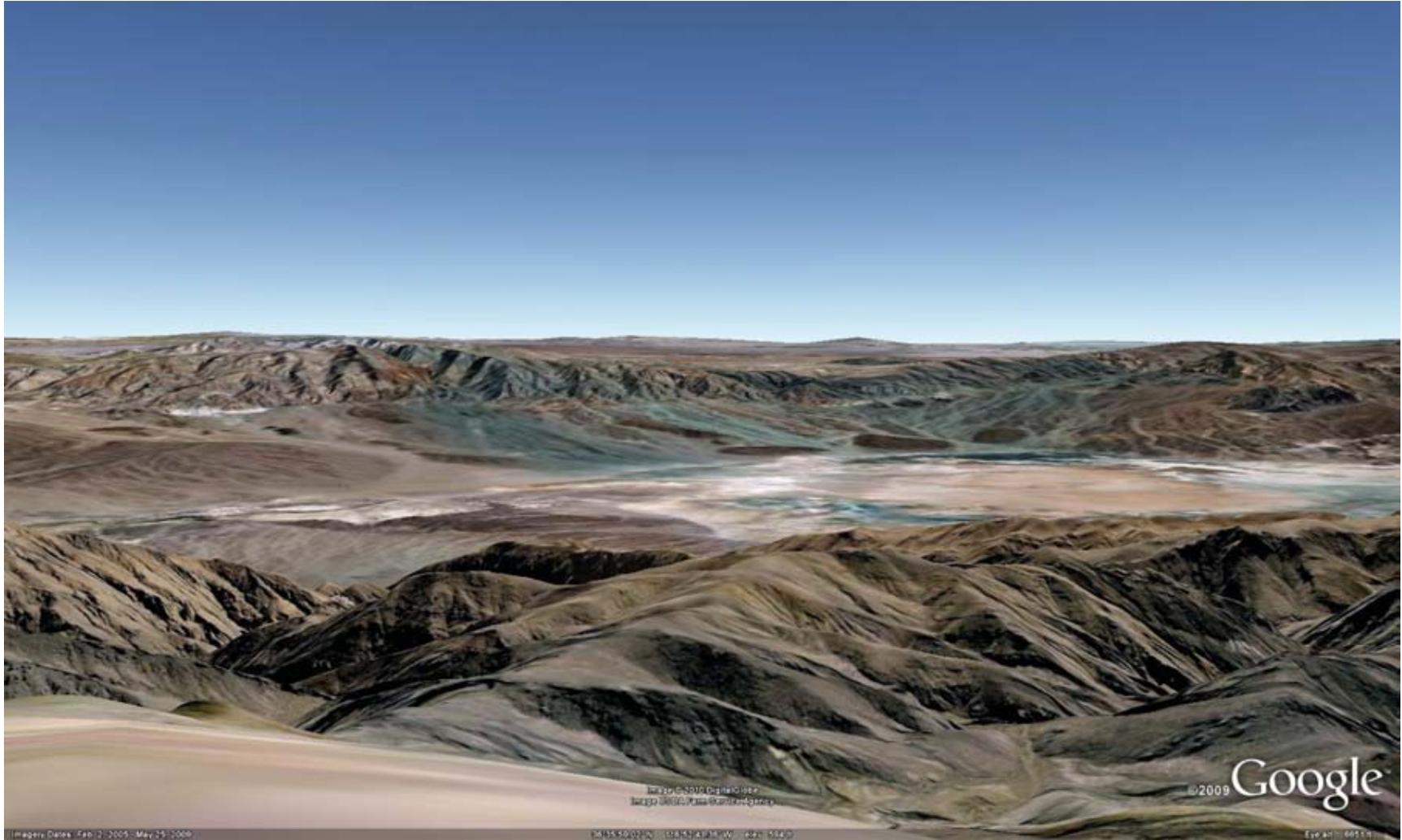
FIGURE 11.1.14.2-7 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint within Southern Portion of the Amargosa Range in Death Valley NP

1 Despite the low viewing angle, because the SEZ would occupy a large portion
2 of the view from this location, under the 80% development scenario analyzed
3 in this PEIS, solar facilities within the SEZ would attract visual attention,
4 could potentially dominate the view and would be expected to create strong
5 visual contrasts as viewed from this location within the National Park.
6

7 Figure 11.1.14.2-8 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
8 orange) as seen from an unnamed peak on Tucki Mountain on the western
9 side of Death Valley in the interior of the Death Valley NP. The viewpoint is
10 approximately 25 mi (40 km) southwest of the SEZ. The viewpoint is elevated
11 about 3,900 ft (1,200 m) above the nearest point in the SEZ.
12

13 The visualization suggests that from this elevated viewpoint, the view of the
14 SEZ is partially screened by mountains in the Amargosa Range across Death
15 Valley to the east; however, the far southern portion of the SEZ would be
16 visible. The visible portion of the SEZ would occupy a very small portion of
17 the field of view to the east. Because of the very long distance to the SEZ, the
18 angle of view would be low, and the SEZ and solar facilities within the SEZ
19 would appear as a very narrow band across the valley floor just above the
20 Amargosa Range, tending to repeat the line of the flat valley floor. If power
21 towers were present within the SEZ, when operating, they would be visible as
22 distant star-like light sources against a backdrop of the Amargosa Valley floor
23 during the day and, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, would have navigation
24 warning lights at night that could be visible from this location. Under the 80%
25 development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, solar facilities within the SEZ
26 would be expected to create weak visual contrasts as viewed from this
27 location within the National Park.
28

29 In summary, portions of Death Valley NP are within the BLM's foreground-
30 middleground distance from the Amargosa Valley SEZ. The areas are located
31 either in the Amargosa Range along the California-Nevada border or at lower
32 elevations in the Nevada portion of the National Park. Most views of the SEZ
33 in these areas would be from elevated viewpoints, and strong visual contrasts
34 would be likely to occur where clear views of the SEZ exist, even beyond the
35 5-mi (8-km) limit of the foreground-middleground zone. The SEZ would not
36 be visible from lower elevations within the National Park west of the
37 Amargosa Range. There would be very limited visibility of the SEZ from
38 higher elevations on Tucki Mountain and in the Panamint Range, but because
39 of topographic screening and the long distance to the SEZ from these areas,
40 expected visual contrasts would be weak. Potential impacts on the National
41 Park would include night sky pollution, such as increased skyglow, light
42 spillage, and glare.
43



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FIGURE 11.1.14.2-8 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint on Tucki Mountain within Death Valley NP

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1 **Wilderness Areas**
2

- 3 • *Death Valley*—Death Valley is a 3,074,256-acre (12,441.07-km²)
4 congressionally designated wilderness area (WA) located 0.7 mi (1.1 km)
5 southwest of the SEZ. According to the NPS Web site (NPS 2010b), it is the
6 largest area of designated National Park wilderness within the contiguous
7 United States (NPS 2010). Within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar energy
8 facilities within the SEZ could be visible from the northeastern portions of the
9 WA (about 67,944 acres [275 km²] in the 650-ft [198.1-m] viewshed, or 2%
10 of the total WA acreage, and 51,303 acres [208 km²] in the 25-ft [7.5-m]
11 viewshed, or 2% of the total WA acreage). The visible area of the WA extends
12 to beyond 25 mi (40 km) from the southwestern boundary of the SEZ.
13

14 The Death Valley WA is located entirely within the California portions of
15 Death Valley NP and includes most of the park lands within California.
16 Expected visual contrast levels for the WA are the same as those expected for
17 the NP within California (see above).
18

- 19 • *Funeral Mountains*—Funeral Mountains is a 27,567-acre (111.56-km²)
20 congressionally designated WA located 18 mi (29 km) at the point of closest
21 approach southeast of the SEZ, in California. Elevations range from 2,200 ft
22 (670 m) to 5,300 ft (1,600 m) in the western portions of the WA. There are
23 few visitors to this dry, desolate, and trail-free wilderness.
24

25 Within 25 mi (40 km), solar energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible
26 from portions of the northern and northwestern slopes of the mountains within
27 the WA. Visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi (40-km) radius of analysis
28 total about 3,876 acres (15.69 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or 14%
29 of the total WA acreage, and 3,263 acres (13.20 km²) in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m)
30 viewshed, or 12% of the total WA acreage. The visible area of the WA
31 extends about 22 mi (35 km) from the southern boundary of the SEZ.
32

33 Views of the Amargosa Valley SEZ from within the WA are screened at least
34 partially by an intervening range of hills just on the Nevada side of the border
35 with California, about 3.5 mi (5.6 km) west of Big Dune. As seen from within
36 the WA, the hills screen much of the western portion of the SEZ from view,
37 substantially reducing the potential visual impacts from solar development
38 within the SEZ.
39

40 Figure 11.1.14.2-9 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
41 orange) as seen from an unnamed peak in the northeastern portion of the WA,
42 about 22 mi (35 km) from the southeast corner of the SEZ, near the point of
43 maximum visibility of the SEZ from the WA.
44

45 The visualization illustrates that because of the long distance to the SEZ from
46 the WA, and the partial screening of the SEZ by the intervening range of hills,
47 the SEZ would occupy a very small portion of the field of view, and the angle



1

FIGURE 11.1.14.2-9 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint within the Funeral Mountains WA

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1 of view to solar facilities within the SEZ would be very low. Solar
2 collector/reflector arrays within the SEZ visible from the WA would be seen
3 edge-on, reducing their apparent size, concealing their strong regular
4 geometry and repeating the line of the horizon, which would tend to reduce
5 visual contrast. Power towers within the SEZ could be visible as distant points
6 of light on the northern horizon, against the backdrop of the Amargosa Valley
7 floor or the lower slopes of Bare Mountain. At night, if more than 200 ft
8 (61 m) tall, power towers would have navigation warning lights that could
9 potentially be visible from the WA.

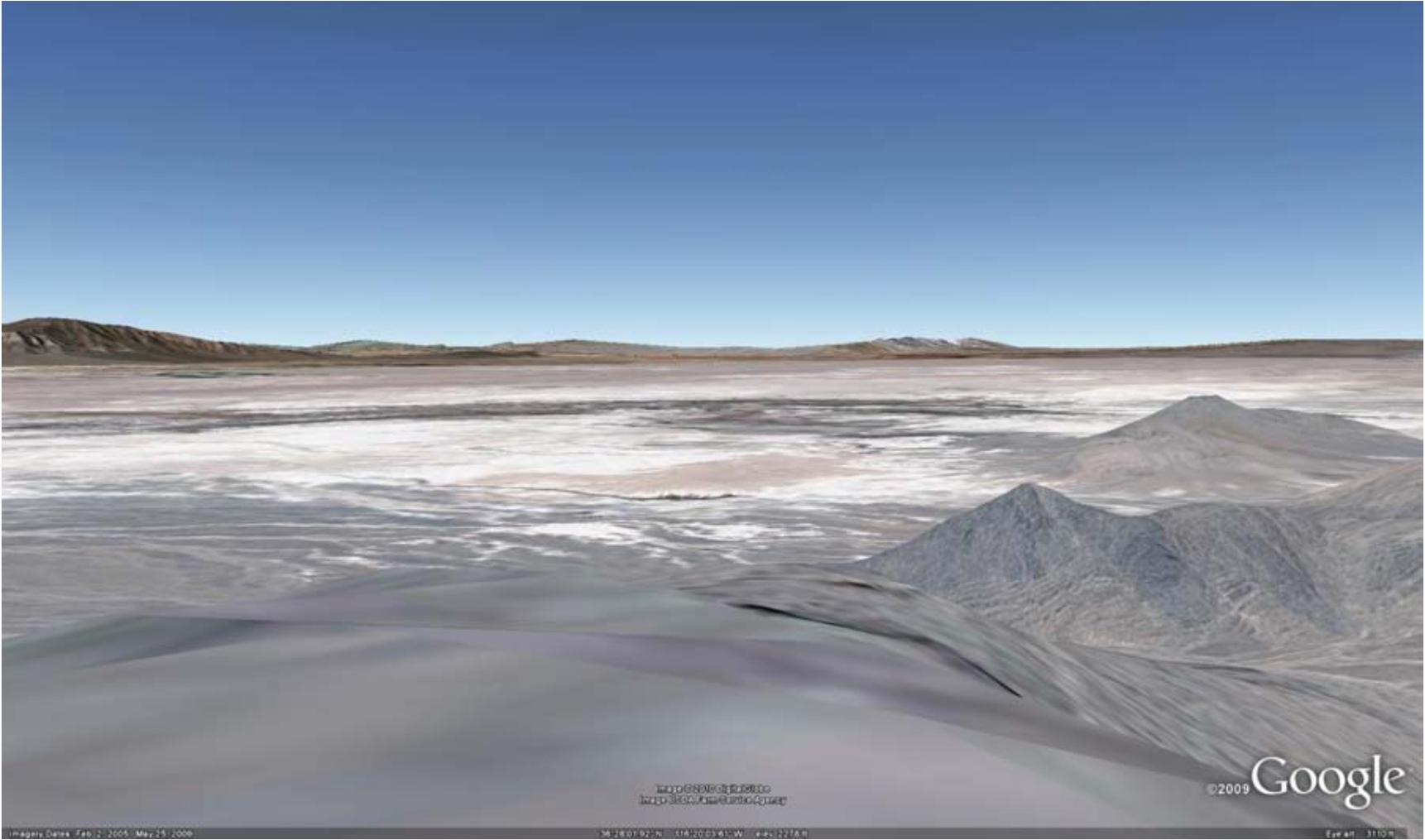
10
11 Visual contrasts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ
12 would depend on viewer location within the WA; solar facility type, size,
13 and location within the SEZ; and other visibility factors. Under the 80%
14 development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, weak levels of visual contrast
15 would be expected. The highest contrast levels would be expected for peaks
16 in the northern part of the WA, with lower contrasts expected for lower
17 elevations and viewpoints in the southern part of the WA.

18 19 20 *National Wildlife Refuge*

- 21
- 22 • *Ash Meadows*—The 24,193-acre (97.906-km²) Ash Meadows NWR is 16 mi
23 (26 km) southeast of the SEZ at the closest point of approach. Approximately
24 68,000 visitors come each year to view the Ash Meadows NWR's spring-fed
25 wetlands and alkaline desert uplands that provide habitat for a variety of
26 unique plants and animals (USFWS 2010b). As shown in Figure 11.1.14.2-2,
27 about 11,731 acres (47.474 km²), or 49% of the NWR, are within the 650-ft
28 (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ, and 1,750 acres (7.082 km²), or 7% of the
29 Ash Meadows NWR, are within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. The portions of
30 the Ash Meadows NWR within the viewshed extend from 20 mi (32 km)
31 southeast of the SEZ to beyond 25 mi (40 km) from the SEZ.

32
33 Most of the Ash Meadows NWR (the western portion) is several hundred feet
34 lower in elevation than the SEZ, so the angle of view is very low, and at a
35 distance of 20 mi (32 km), the SEZ would occupy a very small portion of the
36 field of view. In fact, for most of the Ash Meadows NWR, only the upper
37 portions of sufficiently tall power towers would be visible; they would appear
38 as distant points of light on the northwest horizon.

39
40 The northeastern portion of the Ash Meadows NWR includes lands at the
41 same or greater elevation than the SEZ, and in some areas, lower-height
42 facilities (PV, trough, and solar dish) could be visible from these higher-
43 elevation areas within the Ash Meadows NWR. Figure 11.1.14.2-10 is a
44 Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in orange) as seen from an
45 unnamed ridge in the northeastern portion of the Ash Meadows NWR, about
46 1.1 mi (1.8 km) north of Devils Hole, and about 25 mi (40 km) from the



1

2 **FIGURE 11.1.14.2-10 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands,**
3 **with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint within Ash Meadows NWR**
4
5

1 southeast corner of the SEZ. The viewpoint is about 500 ft (150 m) higher in
2 elevation than the nearest point in the SEZ.

3
4 The visualization suggests that at this distance, the SEZ would occupy a very
5 small portion of the field of view. Despite the elevated viewpoint, the SEZ is
6 far enough away that solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen edge-on,
7 reducing the associated visual contrasts. If power towers were located within
8 the SEZ, they would be visible as distant points of light on the northwest
9 horizon, against the backdrop of the base of the Amargosa Range. At night, if
10 sufficiently tall, power towers would have navigation warning lights that
11 could potentially be visible from the NWR.

12
13 Visual contrasts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ
14 would depend on viewer location within the Ash Meadows NWR; solar
15 facility type, size, and location within the SEZ; and other visibility factors.
16 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, weak levels of
17 visual contrast would be expected. The highest contrast levels would be
18 expected for highlands in the northeastern part of the Ash Meadows NWR,
19 with lower contrasts expected for lower elevations and viewpoints in the
20 southwestern part of the NWR.

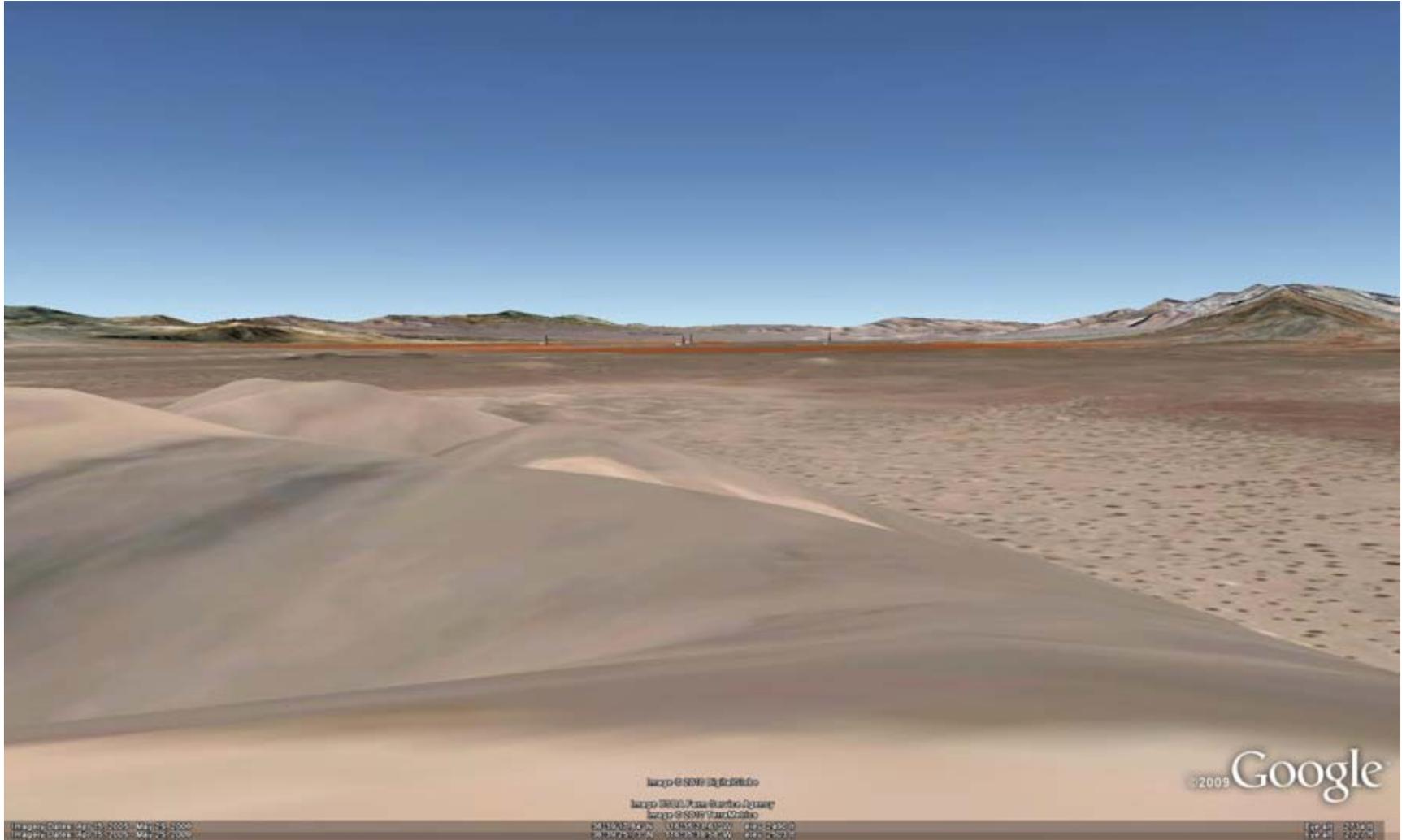
21 22 23 ***Special Recreation Management Area***

- 24
- 25 • *Big Dune*—The Big Dune SRMA is a BLM-designated SRMA located 0.4 mi
26 (0.6 km) east of the SEZ at the point of closest approach, and encompassing
27 11,572 acres (46.830 km²). Big Dune SRMA is a 1.5-mi² (3.9-km²) complex
28 with a highest point of about 500 ft (150 m) above the valley floor. It is the
29 second most popular dune in Nevada.

30
31 Much of Big Dune could potentially have views of solar facilities in the SEZ,
32 but with dunes screening the view of the SEZ from some of the southeast-
33 facing dune slopes and depressions between dunes. The area of the SRMA
34 within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes 11,198 acres
35 (45.317 km²), or 97% of the total SRMA acreage. The area of the SRMA
36 within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes 10,909 acres
37 (44.147 km²), or 94% of the total SRMA acreage.

38
39 The base of Big Dune is slightly lower in elevation than the nearby southeast
40 corner of the SEZ, but the tops of the highest dunes are equal in elevation to
41 the central portion of the SEZ. The entire dune complex is within the BLM
42 foreground-middleground distance to the SEZ, and the SEZ would be in full
43 view of much of the Big Dune SRMA.

44
45 Figure 11.1.14.2-11 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
46 orange) as seen from the top of the highest dune in the SRMA, about 3.9 mi



1

FIGURE 11.1.14.2-11 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint within Big Dune SRMA

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1 (6.3 km) from the southeast corner of the SEZ. Because the viewpoint and the
2 SEZ are close in elevation, the angle of view is low, and solar facilities within
3 the SEZ would tend to repeat the line of the horizon as seen from Big Dune,
4 which would tend to reduce visual contrasts. Because Big Dune is relatively
5 close to the SEZ, however, the SEZ occupies much of the field of view. Tops
6 of solar collector/reflector arrays in the nearest part of the SEZ might be just
7 visible, but the SEZ would essentially be visible as a narrow band stretching
8 across the valley floor.

9
10 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, and
11 cooling towers; and plumes (if present) would likely be visible projecting
12 above the collector/reflector arrays, and their structural details could be
13 evident at least for nearby facilities. The ancillary facilities could create form
14 and line contrasts with the strongly horizontal, regular, and repeating forms
15 and lines of the collector/reflector arrays. Color and texture contrasts would
16 also be likely, but their extent would depend on the materials and surface
17 treatments utilized in the facilities.

18
19 If power towers were present within the SRMA, the tower structures would
20 likely be visible, as well as the receivers, which would appear as very bright to
21 brilliant white light sources, depending on their design, the project layout, and
22 their location within the SEZ. The lights of the receivers would likely be
23 visible against the backdrop of the very distant mountains in the Amargosa
24 Range. At night, the aircraft warning lights on the receiver tower would likely
25 be visible for many miles, and would likely be very conspicuous from any
26 point within the SRMA.

27
28 Visual contrasts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ
29 would depend on viewer location within the SRMA; solar facility type, size,
30 and location within the SEZ; and other visibility factors. Under the 80%
31 development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, strong levels of visual contrast
32 would be expected in areas with a clear view of the SEZ. Contrast would be
33 slightly weaker from viewpoints in the southeastern portion of the SRMA,
34 because the distance to the SEZ is greater. Potential impacts on the SRMA
35 would include night sky pollution, such as increased skyglow, light spillage,
36 and glare.

37 38 39 ***ACEC Designated for Outstandingly Remarkable Scenic Values***

- 40
41 • *Amargosa River*—The 27,797-acre (112.49-km²) Amargosa River ACEC is
42 located in California, 16 mi (26 km) southeast of the SEZ at the closest point
43 of approach. The ACEC's scenic value is noted in its implementation plan
44 (BLM 2007). The ACEC viewshed includes natural scenery entirely or partly
45 within the boundaries of eight WAs and two Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)
46 managed by the BLM, as well as substantial wilderness acreage within Death

1 Valley NP. Approximately 2,919 acres (11.81 km²), or 11% of the ACEC, is
2 within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ, and 189 acres (0.765 km²)
3 is in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 0.7% of the total ACEC acreage. The
4 portion of the ACEC within the SEZ viewshed extends to approximately
5 25 mi (40 km) from the southern boundary of the SEZ.
6

7 The Amargosa River ACEC is several hundred feet lower in elevation than the
8 Amargosa Valley SEZ and more than 23 mi (37 km) away from the SEZ, so
9 the angle of view would be very low, and the distant SEZ would occupy a
10 very small portion of the field of view. In addition, the western portions of the
11 SEZ are screened from view of the ACEC by intervening terrain. Much of the
12 ACEC is within the viewshed of the SEZ, but for most of the ACEC, visibility
13 would be limited to the upper portions of sufficiently tall power towers.
14

15 Because of the long distance and very low viewing angle between the ACEC
16 and the SEZ, solar facilities within the SEZ (except for power towers) would
17 be unlikely to be seen from the ACEC. Sufficiently tall power towers placed
18 within certain portions of the SEZ might be visible as distant points of light on
19 the northwestern horizon. At night, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, power
20 towers would have navigation warning lights that could potentially be visible
21 from the ACEC. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS,
22 minimal levels of visual contrast would be expected.
23
24

25 *National Conservation Area*

- 26
27 • *California Desert*—The California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) is
28 a 26-million-acre (105,000-km²) parcel of land in southern California
29 designated by Congress in 1976 through the Federal Land Policy and
30 Management Act. About 10 million acres (40,000 km²) of the CDCA is
31 administered by the BLM. Portions of the CDCA are within the viewshed
32 of the Amargosa Valley SEZ.
33

34 The CDCA management plan (BLM 1999) notes the “superb” variety of
35 scenic values in the CDCA and lists scenic resources as needing management
36 to preserve their value for future generations. The CDCA management plan
37 divides CDCA lands into multiple-use classes based on management
38 objectives. The class designations govern the type and degree of land use
39 actions allowed within the areas defined by class boundaries. All land use
40 actions and resource-management activities on public lands within a multiple-
41 use class delineation must meet the guidelines given for that class.
42

43 CDCA land within the viewshed of the Amargosa Valley SEZ is within Death
44 Valley NP. Portions of the CDCA within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed for
45 the Amargosa Valley SEZ include approximately 94,485 acres (382.37 km²),
46 or 0.4% of the total CDCA acreage. Portions of the CDCA within the 24.6-ft

1 (7.5-m) viewshed encompass about 61,851 acres (250.30 km²), or 0.2% of the
2 total CDCA acreage. Absent screening and other visibility factors that would
3 prevent viewers from seeing solar energy facilities within the SEZ, all CDCA
4 lands within the SEZ viewshed would be subject to visual impacts from solar
5 development within the SEZ. The nature of the impacts experienced would
6 vary with the distance from the SEZ; the angle of view; project numbers,
7 sizes, and locations; and other project- and site-specific factors. It should be
8 noted that more than 16,000 acres (65 km²) of the CDCA are within the 5-mi
9 (8-km), 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed of the SEZ, while almost 20,000 acres
10 (81 km²) are within the 5-mi (8-km), 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed. Some or all
11 of these areas, and possibly substantially greater areas, would be subject to
12 large potential impacts from the solar development within the SEZ, given the
13 close proximity of the CDCA to the SEZ. Potential impacts on the CDCA
14 would include night sky pollution, such as increased skyglow, light spillage,
15 and glare.
16

17 Additional scenic resources exist at the national, state, and local levels, and impacts may
18 occur on both federal and nonfederal lands, including sensitive traditional cultural properties
19 important to Tribes. Note that in addition to the resource types and specific resources analyzed
20 in this PEIS, future site-specific NEPA analyses would include state and local parks, recreation
21 areas, other sensitive visual resources, and communities close enough to the proposed project to
22 be affected by visual impacts. Selected other lands and resources are included in the discussion
23 below.
24

25 In addition to impacts associated with the solar energy facilities themselves, sensitive
26 visual resources could be affected by other facilities that would be built and operated in
27 conjunction with the solar facilities. With respect to visual impacts, the most important
28 associated facilities would be access roads and transmission lines, the precise location of which
29 cannot be determined until a specific solar energy project is proposed. Currently a 138-kV
30 transmission line is within the proposed SEZ, so construction and operation of a transmission
31 line outside the proposed SEZ would not be required. However, construction of transmission
32 lines within the SEZ to connect facilities to the existing line would be required. For this analysis,
33 the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside of the SEZ were not
34 assessed, assuming that the existing 138-kV transmission line might be used to connect some
35 new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-specific analysis would be done
36 for new transmission construction or line upgrades. Note that depending on project- and site-
37 specific conditions, visual impacts associated with access roads, and particularly transmission
38 lines, could be large. Detailed information about visual impacts associated with transmission
39 lines is presented in Section 5.7.1. A detailed site-specific NEPA analysis would be required to
40 determine visibility and associated impacts precisely for any future solar projects, based on more
41 precise knowledge of facility location and characteristics.
42
43
44

1 **Impacts on Selected Other Lands and Resources**
2
3

4 **U.S. 95.** U.S. 95, a two-lane highway, passes through the northeast corner of the
5 Amargosa Valley SEZ. The AADT value for U.S. 95 in the vicinity of the SEZ is about
6 3000 vehicles (NV DOT 2009), although traffic would increase slightly as a result of solar
7 energy development within the SEZ. Under the PEIS development scenario, travelers on
8 U.S. 95 could be subject to large visual impacts from solar energy development within the SEZ.
9

10 About 31 mi (50 km) of U.S. 95 is within the SEZ viewshed, and solar facilities within
11 the SEZ would be in full view from U.S. 95 as travelers approached from both directions. For
12 travelers approaching the SEZ from Beatty, northwest of the SEZ, the SEZ would come into
13 view about 2.6 mi (4.2 km) southeast of Beatty, or about 8.2 mi (13.2 km) from the SEZ. For
14 travelers at highway speed, the SEZ would be in view for about 6 to 7 minutes before entering
15 the SEZ. Facilities located within the SEZ, and especially near the road would strongly attract
16 the eye as travelers approached the SEZ and would likely dominate views from the road.
17

18 Travelers approaching the SEZ from the east would have similar visual experiences to
19 those just described for travelers from the west; however, the SEZ would come into view much
20 earlier, at about 18 mi (29 km) from the SEZ, and would be in view for 15 to 18 minutes before
21 reaching the SEZ boundary. The buildup in apparent size of the SEZ would thus be much more
22 gradual than for eastbound travelers.
23

24 U.S. 95 passes through the SEZ for about 4.8 mi (7.7 km), which would take about
25 5 minutes at highway speeds. Because the road passes through the SEZ, strong visual contrasts
26 could result, depending on solar project characteristics and location within the SEZ. Details of
27 collector/reflector array and other structures might be visible, as well as strong contrasts of light
28 and shadows falling between the collectors. Views of the Amargosa Desert and surrounding
29 mountains could be completely or partially screened by solar facilities, depending on the layout
30 of those facilities within the SEZ. If solar facilities were located on both sides of the road, the
31 banks of solar collectors could form a visual “tunnel” that travelers would pass through.
32

33 Depending on lighting conditions, the solar technologies present, facility layout, and
34 mitigation measures employed, there would be the potential for significant levels of reflections
35 from facility components as travelers approached and passed through the SEZ. These effects
36 could potentially distract drivers and/or impair views toward the facilities. These potential
37 impacts could be reduced by siting reflective components away from the byway, employing
38 various screening mechanisms, and adjusting the mirror operations to reduce potential impacts.
39 However, because of their height, the receivers of power towers located close to the roadway
40 could be difficult to screen.
41

42 If power tower facilities were located close to the road in the SEZ, the receivers could
43 appear as brilliant white cylindrical or rectangular light sources as viewed from the road, and if
44 sufficiently close to the road would likely strongly attract views, although they might be difficult
45 for some people to look at for extended periods. Also, during certain times of the day from
46 certain angles, sunlight on dust particles in the air might result in the appearance of light

1 streaming down from the tower. At night, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, power towers would
2 have navigation warning lights that would be very conspicuous from this location, especially
3 given the area's dark night skies. Other lighting associated with solar facilities would be visible
4 as well.
5

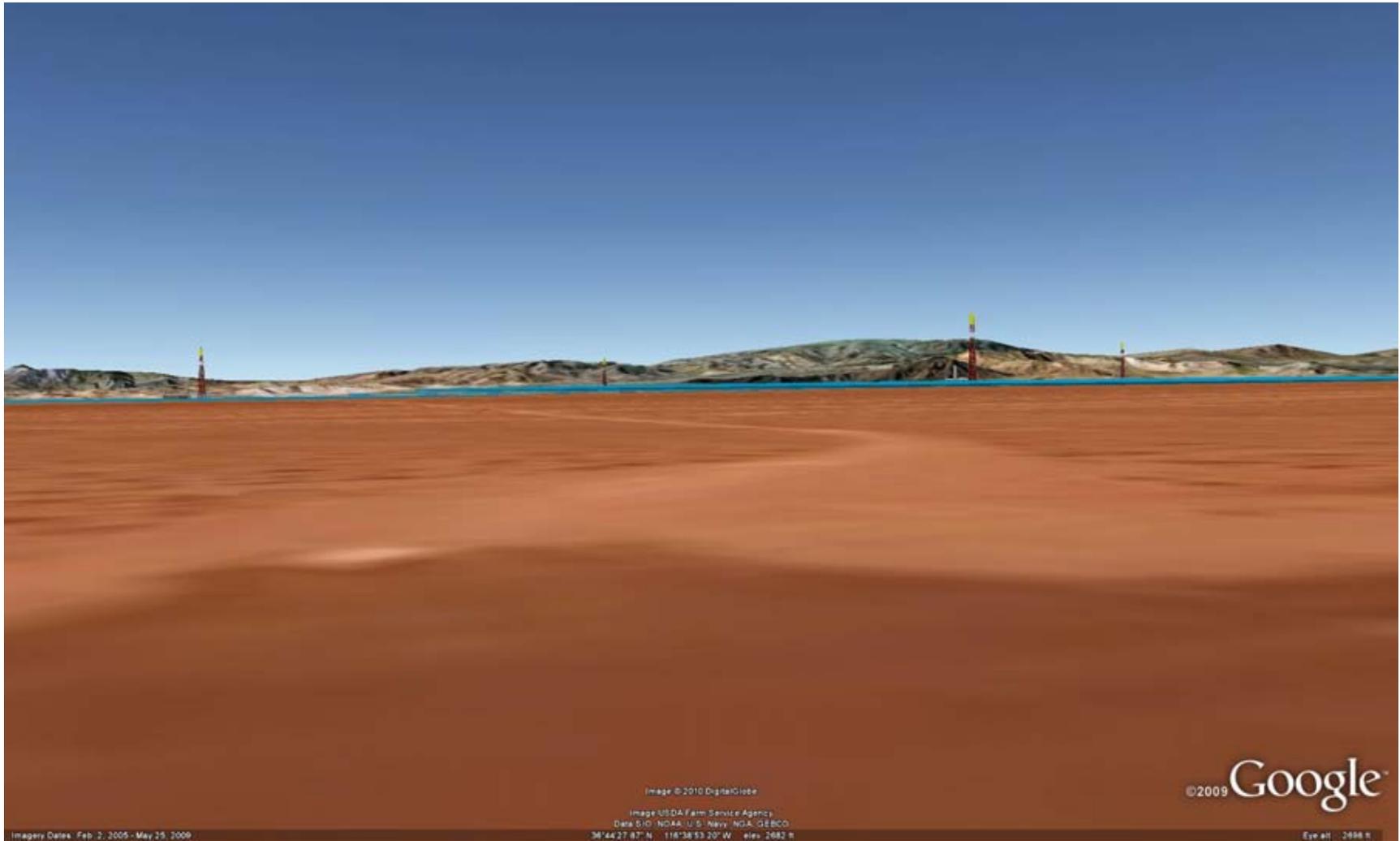
6 Figure 11.1.14.2-12 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in orange) as
7 seen from U.S. 95 from within the SEZ. The closest power tower model in this view is 1.5 mi
8 (2.4 km) from the viewpoint. From this location, solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen
9 nearly edge-on, and they would repeat the strong line of the horizon, which would tend to reduce
10 visual contrast. However, ancillary facilities and plumes could project above the
11 collector/reflector arrays, depending on the solar technology employed, and could add strong
12 contrasts in form, line, color, and texture from this short distance. The SEZ occupies more than
13 the horizontal field of view, so viewers would have to turn their heads to see the full extent of the
14 facilities within the SEZ. At this distance, solar facilities within the SEZ would strongly
15 command visual attention and would likely dominate views from this location. Power towers
16 located near the road could project beyond the mountain backdrop to be viewed against the sky.
17
18

19 **State Route 374.** Approximately 9 mi (14 km) of State Route 374 passes through the
20 viewshed of the SEZ about 9 mi (14 km) northwest of the SEZ, extending northeast to southwest.
21 The AADT value for State Route 374 in the vicinity of the SEZ is about 250 vehicles
22 (NV DOT 2009). Solar energy development within the SEZ would likely be visible to
23 travelers on State Route 374 for 7 to 8 minutes as they crossed Amargosa Valley between
24 Beatty and Death Valley NP; however, intervening topography would provide partial screening
25 of portions of the SEZ in the southwestern portion of the valley on State Route 374.
26

27 Figure 11.1.14.2-3 (presented in the Death Valley NP discussion above) is a Google
28 Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in orange) as seen from State Route 374 at the
29 entrance to Death Valley NP, approximately 9.3 mi (15 km) from the northwest corner of the
30 SEZ. The viewpoint is about 800 ft (244 m) higher in elevation than the SEZ. From this location,
31 solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen nearly edge-on, and they would repeat the strong
32 line of the horizon, which would tend to reduce visual contrast. However, the SEZ is close
33 enough that it would occupy a moderate amount of the horizontal field of view.
34

35 Visual contrasts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ would depend
36 on viewer location on State Route 374; solar facility type, size, and location within the SEZ; and
37 other visibility factors. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, weak to
38 moderate levels of visual contrast would be expected at locations along State Route 374 with a
39 clear view of the SEZ.
40
41

42 **State Route 373.** About 16.4 mi (26.4 km) of State Route 373 passes through the
43 viewshed of the SEZ about 13 mi (21 km) southeast of the SEZ, extending north to south.
44 The AADT value for State Route 373 in the vicinity of the SEZ is about 910 vehicles
45 (NV DOT 2009). Solar energy development within the SEZ would likely be visible to travelers
46



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FIGURE 11.1.14.2-12 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint on U.S. 95 within the SEZ

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1 on State Route 373 for 12 to 16 minutes as they crossed Amargosa Valley between the Nevada-
2 California state line and the Amargosa Valley stop on U.S. 95. However, topography would
3 screen views of the lower height solar technologies for more than half of the route from the state
4 line northward.

5
6 The Amargosa Valley slopes gently downward to the south, and State Route 373 is at
7 about the same elevation as the SEZ for most of its length. Because the distance between State
8 Route 373 and the SEZ exceeds 13 mi (21 km), the SEZ would occupy only a small portion of
9 the horizontal field of view, and the angle of view would be very low.

10
11 Visual contrasts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ would depend
12 on viewer location on State Route 373; solar facility type, size, and location within the SEZ; and
13 other visibility factors. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, minimal to
14 weak levels of visual contrast would be expected at locations along State Route 373 with a clear
15 view of the SEZ.

16
17 *Other impacts.* In addition to the impacts described for the resource areas above, nearby
18 residents and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities
19 located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) from their
20 residences, or as they travel area roads, including but not limited to U.S. 95 and State Routes 374
21 and 373, as noted above. The range of impacts experienced would be highly dependent on
22 viewer location, project types, locations, sizes, and layouts, as well as the presence of screening,
23 but under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, from some locations, strong
24 visual contrasts from solar development within the SEZ could potentially be observed.

25
26
27
28 ***11.1.14.2.3 Summary of Visual Resource Impacts for the Proposed***
29 ***Amargosa Valley SEZ***

30
31 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, the SEZ would contain
32 multiple solar facilities utilizing differing solar technologies, as well as a variety of roads and
33 ancillary facilities. The array of facilities could create a visually complex landscape that would
34 contrast strongly with the strongly horizontal, relatively uncluttered, and generally natural
35 appearing landscape of the flat valley in which the SEZ is located. Large visual impacts on the
36 SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed would be associated with solar energy
37 development due to major modification of the character of the existing landscape. There is the
38 potential for additional impacts from construction and operation of transmission lines and access
39 roads within the SEZ.

40
41 The SEZ is in an area of low scenic quality. Residents, workers, and visitors to the area
42 may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any
43 associated access roads and transmission lines) as they travel area roads. The residents nearest to
44 the SEZ could be subjected to large visual impacts from solar energy development within the
45 SEZ.

1 Utility-scale solar energy development within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is
2 likely to result in weak to strong visual contrasts for some viewpoints within Death Valley NP
3 and WA, which are within 1 mi (1.6 km) of the SEZ; strong visual contrasts for some viewpoints
4 within Big Dune SRMA; and strong contrasts for travelers on U.S. 95, which passes through the
5 SEZ. Weak to moderate visual contrasts could be observed by travelers on State Route 374, and
6 minimal to weak visual contrasts for some viewpoints within other sensitive visual resource
7 areas within the SEZ 25-mi (40 km) viewshed.
8
9

10 **11.1.14.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

11

12 The presence and operation of large-scale solar energy facilities and equipment in the
13 SEZ would introduce major visual changes into a nonindustrialized landscape and could create
14 strong visual contrasts in line, form, color, and texture that could not easily be mitigated
15 substantially. Implementation of design features intended to reduce visual impacts (described in
16 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, of this PEIS) would be expected to reduce visual impacts associated
17 with utility-scale solar energy development within the SEZ; however, the degree of effectiveness
18 of these design features could be assessed only at the site- and project-specific level. Given the
19 large scale, reflective surfaces, strong regular geometry of utility-scale solar energy facilities,
20 and the lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities
21 away from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive viewing areas is the primary means
22 of mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other visual impact mitigation measures would
23 generally be limited..
24

25 While the applicability and appropriateness of some measures would depend on site- and
26 project-specific information that would be available only after a specific solar energy project had
27 been proposed, some SEZ-specific design features can be identified for the Amargosa Valley
28 SEZ at this time, as follows:
29

- 30 • Within the SEZ, in areas visible from and within 5 mi (8 km) of the boundary
31 of Death Valley NP, visual impacts associated with solar energy project
32 operation should be consistent with VRM Class II management objectives
33 (see Table 11.1.14.3-1), as experienced from KOPs (to be determined by the
34 BLM in conjunction with NPS) within the National Park.
35

36 The VRM Class II impact level consistency mitigation would affect about 15,359 acres
37 (62.2 km²) within the southwestern portion of the SEZ. The affected area includes approximately
38 49% of the total area of the proposed SEZ. The area subject to SEZ-specific design features
39 requiring consistency with VRM Class II management objectives is shown in Figure 11.1.14.3-1.
40

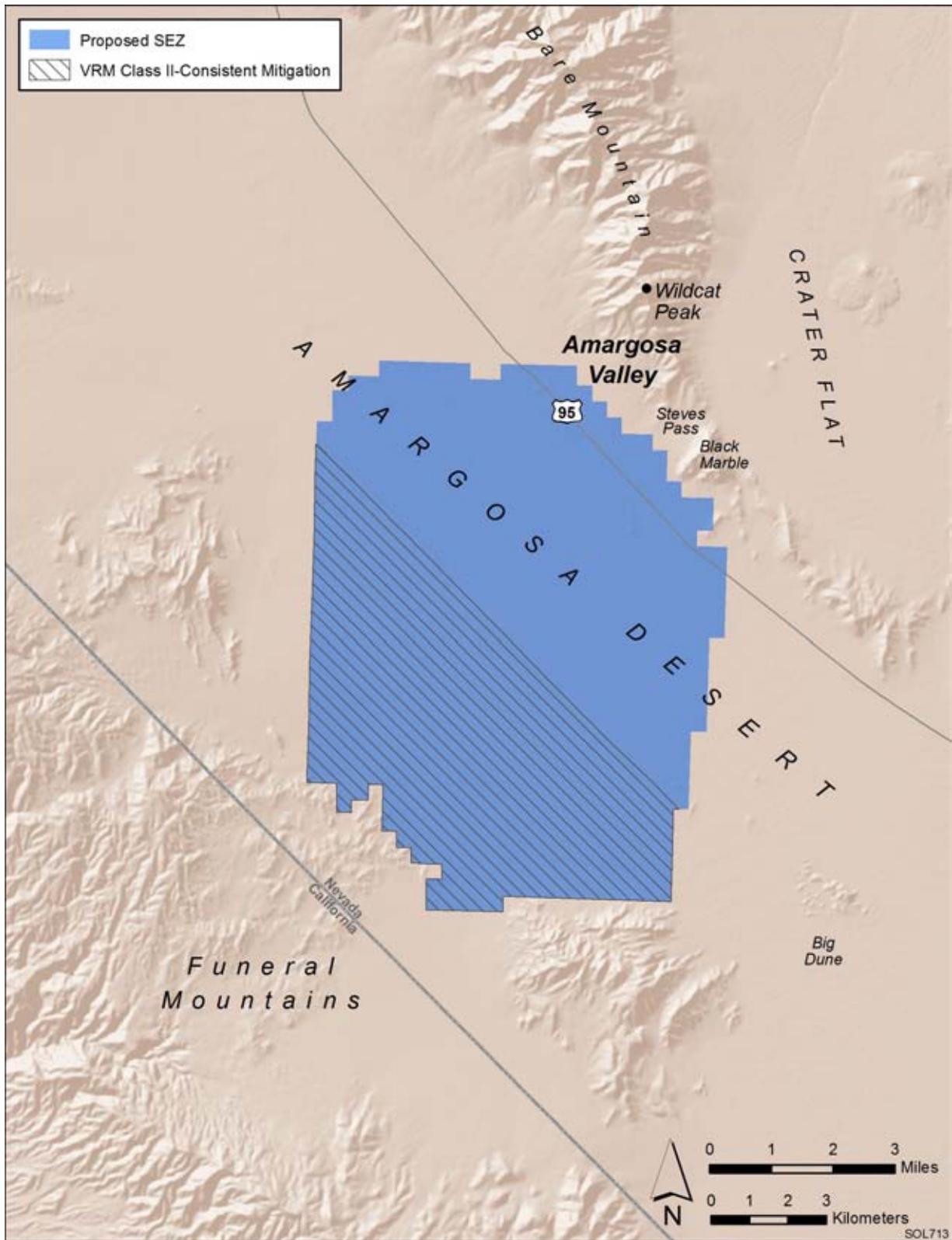
41 Application of the SEZ-specific design feature above would substantially reduce visual
42 impacts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ and would substantially also
43 reduce potential visual impacts on the Death Valley NP by limiting impacts within the BLM-
44 defined foreground of the viewshed of this area, where potential visual impacts would be
45 greatest. This measure would also reduce impacts to the Big Dune SRMA, the Amargosa River
46 Scenic ACEC (California), and the Ash Meadows NWR.

TABLE 11.1.14.3-1 VRM Class Objectives

Class I	The objective of this class is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. This class provides for natural ecological changes; however, it does not preclude very limited management activity. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.
Class II	The objective to this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
Class III	The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should both dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
Class IV	The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

Source: BLM (1986b).

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1
 2 **FIGURE 11.1.14.3-1 Areas within the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ Affected by SEZ-Specific**
 3 **Distance-Based Visual Impact Design Features**

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1 **11.1.15 Acoustic Environment**

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3
4 **11.1.15.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located in south-central Nevada, in the southern
7 portion of Nye County. Neither the State of Nevada nor Nye County has established quantitative
8 noise-limit regulations.
9

10 U.S. 95 runs through the northeast portion of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. State
11 Routes 373 and 374, which lead to Death Valley National Park in California, run about 13 mi
12 (21 km) and 9 mi (14.5 km) to the southeast and northwest of the SEZ, respectively. Several
13 existing dirt roads penetrate the area. Several airports are located around the SEZ: Beatty
14 Airport, about 7 mi (11 km) north-northwest of the SEZ; Fran’s Star Ranch Airport, about 11 mi
15 (18 km) north of the SEZ; Jackass Aeropark, which is currently abandoned, about 12 mi (19 km)
16 east-southeast of the SEZ; and Death Valley Airport, which is located about 15 mi (24 km)
17 southwest of the SEZ. Small-scale irrigated agricultural lands are scattered to the south-
18 southeast, starting from 4.5 mi (7.2 km) from the SEZ up to State Route 373. Industrial activities
19 related to minerals and mining are located around the SEZ, while a disposal facility owned by
20 US Ecology, Inc., is located adjacent to the north central SEZ boundary. No sensitive receptors
21 (e.g., hospitals, schools, or nursing homes) exist around the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ.
22 The nearest residence lies about 4.5 mi (7.2 km) to the south-southeast of the SEZ, from which
23 point many residences are scattered up to State Route 373. The nearby population centers with
24 schools are Amargosa Valley, about 10 mi (16 km) to the southeast, and Beatty, about 10 mi
25 (16 km) to the north. Accordingly, noise sources around the SEZ include road traffic, aircraft
26 flyover, agricultural activities, industrial activities, and community activities and events. Other
27 noise sources are associated with current land use around the SEZ, including outdoor recreation
28 and OHV use. Noise levels would be relatively higher in the northeastern portion of the SEZ
29 along U.S. 95, while noise levels in the western portion of the SEZ are similar to natural
30 wilderness background levels. The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is in an undeveloped area,
31 the overall character of which is rural. To date, no environmental noise survey has been
32 conducted around the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. On the basis of the population density,
33 the day-night average noise level (L_{dn} or DNL) is estimated to be 25 dBA for Nye County, well
34 below the level typical of a rural area in the range of 33 to 47 dBA L_{dn} (Eldred 1982;
35 Miller 2002).¹⁰
36
37

38 **11.1.15.2 Impacts**

39
40 Potential noise impacts associated with solar projects in the Amargosa Valley SEZ would
41 occur during all phases of the projects. During the construction phase, potential noise impacts
42 associated with operation of heavy equipment and vehicular traffic on the nearest residence

¹⁰ Rural and undeveloped areas have sound levels in the range of 33 to 47 dBA as L_{dn} (Eldred 1982). Typically, the nighttime level is 10 dBA lower than daytime level, and it can be interpreted as 33 to 47 dBA (mean 40 dBA) during the daytime hours and 23 to 37 dBA (mean 30 dBA) during nighttime hours.

1 (about 4.5 mi [7.2 km] to the south-southeast of the southern SEZ boundary) would be
2 anticipated, albeit of short duration. During the operations phase, potential impacts on nearby
3 residences would be anticipated, depending on the solar technologies employed. Noise impacts
4 shared by all solar technologies are discussed in detail in Section 5.13.1, and technology-specific
5 impacts are presented in Section 5.13.2. Impacts specific to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ
6 are presented in this section. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation
7 of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,k and through
8 the application of any additional SEZ-specific design features (see Section 11.1.15.3 below).
9 This section primarily addresses potential noise impacts on humans, although potential impacts
10 on wildlife at nearby sensitive areas are discussed. Additional discussion on potential noise
11 impacts on wildlife is presented in Section 5.10.2.

14 ***11.1.15.2.1 Construction***

15
16 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ has a relatively flat terrain; thus, minimal site
17 preparation activities would be required, and associated noise levels would be lower than those
18 during general construction (e.g., erecting building structures and installing equipment, piping,
19 and electrical).

20
21 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, the highest construction noise
22 levels would occur at the power block area where key components (e.g., steam turbine/generator)
23 needed to generate electricity are located; a maximum of 95 dBA at a distance of 50 ft (15 m) is
24 assumed, if impact equipment such as pile drivers or rock drills is not being used. Typically, the
25 power block area is located in the center of the solar facility, at a distance of more than 0.5 mi
26 (0.8 km) from the facility boundary. Noise levels from construction of the solar array would be
27 lower than 95 dBA. When geometric spreading and ground effects are considered, as explained
28 in Section 4.13.1, noise levels would attenuate to about 40 dBA at a distance of 1.2 mi (1.9 km)
29 from the power block area. This noise level is typical of daytime mean rural background level.
30 In addition, mid- and high-frequency noise from construction activities is significantly
31 attenuated by atmospheric absorption under the low-humidity conditions typical of an arid desert
32 environment and by temperature lapse conditions typical of daytime hours; thus noise attenuation
33 to a 40-dBA level would occur at distances somewhat shorter than 1.2 mi (1.9 km). If a 10-hour
34 daytime work schedule is considered, the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential
35 areas (EPA 1974) would occur at about 1,200 ft (370 m) from the power block area, which
36 would be well within the facility boundary. For construction activities occurring near the nearest
37 residence of the southern SEZ boundary, estimated noise levels at the nearest residence would be
38 about 25 dBA, which is well below a typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. In
39 addition, an estimated 40-dBA L_{dn} ¹¹ at this residence (i.e., no contribution from construction
40 activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.

41
42 It is assumed that a maximum of three projects would be developed at any one time for
43 SEZs greater than 30,000 acres (121.4 km²), such as the Amargosa Valley SEZ. If three projects

¹¹ For this analysis, background levels of 40 and 30 dBA for daytime and nighttime hours, respectively, are assumed, which result in day-night average noise level (L_{dn}) of 40 dBA.

1 were to be built in the southern portion of the SEZ near the nearest residence, noise levels would
2 be about 28 dBA, which is still well below the typical daytime mean rural background level of
3 40 dBA, and their contribution to the existing L_{dn} would be minimal (about 0.1 dBA).

4
5 In addition, noise levels are estimated at the specially designated areas within 5-mi
6 (8-km) range from the Amargosa Valley SEZ, which is the farthest distance that noise, except
7 extremely loud noise, would be discernable. There are two specially designated areas within the
8 range where noise might be an issue: Death Valley NP, which is located as close as about 1 mi
9 (1.6 km) southwest of the SEZ; and Big Dune ACEC, which is located about 1.7 mi (2.7 km)
10 southeast of the SEZ. For construction activities occurring near the SEZ boundary close to the
11 specially designated areas, noise levels are estimated to be about 42 and 36 dBA at the
12 boundaries of the Death Valley NP and Big Dune ACEC, respectively, which are comparable to
13 the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. As discussed in Section 5.10.2,
14 sound levels above 90 dB are likely to adversely affect wildlife (Manci et al. 1988). Thus,
15 construction noise from the SEZ is not likely to adversely affect wildlife or visitors at the nearby
16 specially designated areas.

17
18 Depending on the soil conditions, pile driving might be required for installation of
19 solar dish engines. However, the pile drivers used, such as vibratory or sonic drivers, would be
20 relatively small and quiet rather than the impulsive impact pile drivers frequently seen at large-
21 scale construction sites. Potential impacts on the nearby residences would be anticipated to be
22 negligible, considering the distance to the nearest residence (about 4.5 mi [7.2 km] from the
23 southern SEZ boundary).

24
25 It is assumed that most construction activities would occur during the day, when noise is
26 better tolerated than at night because of the masking effects of background noise. In addition,
27 construction activities for a utility-scale facility are temporary in nature (typically a few years).
28 Construction within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ would cause minimal unavoidable but
29 localized short-term noise impacts on neighboring communities, even when construction
30 activities would occur near the southern SEZ boundary, close to the nearest residence.

31
32 Construction activities could result in various degrees of ground vibration, depending
33 on the equipment used and construction methods employed. All construction equipment causes
34 ground vibration to some degree, but activities that typically generate the most severe vibrations
35 are high-explosive detonations and impact pile driving. As is the case for noise, vibration would
36 diminish in strength with distance. For example, vibration levels at receptors beyond 140 ft
37 (43 m) from a large bulldozer (87 VdB at 25 ft [7.6 m]) would diminish below the threshold of
38 perception for humans, which is about 65 VdB (Hanson et al. 2006). During the construction
39 phase, no major construction equipment that can cause ground vibration would be used, and no
40 residences or sensitive structures are located in close proximity. Therefore, no adverse vibration
41 impacts are anticipated from construction activities, including pile driving for dish engines.

42
43 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
44 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 138-kV transmission line
45 might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-
46 specific analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However,

1 some construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ. Potential noise impacts on
2 nearby residences would be a minor component of construction impacts in comparison to solar
3 facility construction, and would be temporary in nature.
4
5

6 ***11.1.15.2.2 Operations*** 7

8 Noise sources common to all or most types of solar technologies include equipment
9 motion from solar tracking, maintenance and repair activities (e.g., washing mirrors or replacing
10 broken mirrors) at the solar array area, commuter/visitor/support/delivery traffic within and
11 around the solar facility, and control/administrative buildings, warehouses, and other auxiliary
12 buildings/structures. Diesel-fired emergency power generators and firewater pump engines
13 would be additional sources of noise, but their operations would be limited to several hours per
14 month (for preventive maintenance testing).
15

16 With respect to the main solar energy technologies, noise-generating activities in the
17 PV solar array area would be minimal, related mainly to solar tracking, if used. On the other
18 hand, dish engine technology, which employs collector and converter devices in a single unit,
19 generally has the strongest noise sources.
20

21 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, most noise sources during
22 operations would be in the power block area, including the turbine generator (typically in an
23 enclosure), pumps, boilers, and dry- or wet-cooling systems. The power block is typically
24 located in the center of the facility. On the basis of a 250-MW parabolic trough facility with a
25 cooling tower (Beacon Solar, LLC 2008), simple noise modeling indicates that noise levels
26 around the power block would be more than 85 dBA, but about 51 dBA at the facility boundary,
27 about 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from the power block area. For a facility located near the southern SEZ
28 boundary, the predicted noise level would be about 29 dBA at the nearest residence, located
29 about 4.5 mi (7.2 km) from the SEZ boundary, which is much lower than typical daytime mean
30 rural background level of 40 dBA. If TES were not used (i.e., if the operation were limited to
31 daytime, 12 hours only¹²), the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA (as L_{dn} for residential areas)
32 would occur at about 1,370 ft (420 m) from the power block area and thus would not be
33 exceeded outside of the proposed SEZ boundary. At the nearest residence, about 40 dBA L_{dn}
34 (i.e., no contribution from facility operation) would be estimated, which is well below the EPA
35 guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. As for construction, if three parabolic trough
36 and/or power tower facilities were operating around the nearest residence, combined noise levels
37 would be about 32 dBA, which is still below the typical daytime mean rural background level of
38 40 dBA, and their contribution to existing L_{dn} level would be minimal (about 0.3 dBA).
39 However, day-night average noise levels higher than those estimated above by using the simple
40 noise modeling would be anticipated if TES were used during nighttime hours, as explained
41 below and in Section 4.13.1.
42

43 On a calm, clear night typical of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ setting, the
44 air temperature would likely increase with height (temperature inversion) because of strong

¹² Maximum possible operating hours at the summer solstice, but limited to 7 to 8 hours at the winter solstice.

1 radiative cooling. Such a temperature profile tends to focus noise downward toward the ground.
2 There would be little, if any, shadow zone¹³ within 1 or 2 mi (2 or 3 km) of the noise source in
3 the presence of a strong temperature inversion (Beranek 1988). In particular, such conditions
4 add to the effect of noise being more discernable during nighttime hours, when the background
5 noise levels are lowest. To estimate the day-night average noise level (L_{dn}), 6-hour nighttime
6 generation with TES is assumed after 12-hour daytime generation. For nighttime hours under
7 temperature inversion, 10 dB is added to noise levels estimated from the uniform atmosphere
8 (see Section 4.13.1). On the basis of these assumptions, the estimated noise level at the nearest
9 residence (about 4.5 mi [7.2 km] from the southern SEZ boundary) would be 39 dBA, which is
10 higher than the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. The day-night average
11 noise level is estimated to be about 43 dBA L_{dn} , which is well below the EPA guideline of
12 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. The assumptions are conservative in terms of operating hours,
13 and no credit was given to other attenuation mechanisms, so it is likely that sound levels would
14 be lower than 43 dBA L_{dn} at the nearest residence, even if TES were used at a solar facility. In
15 consequence, operating parabolic trough or power tower facilities using TES and located near the
16 southern SEZ boundary could result in minor adverse noise impacts on the nearest residence,
17 depending on background noise levels and meteorological conditions.

18
19 Associated with operation of a parabolic trough or power tower solar facility occurring
20 near the southwestern SEZ boundary, estimated daytime level of 41 dBA at the boundary of the
21 Death Valley NP is comparable to typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA,
22 while estimated nighttime level of 51 dBA is much higher than typical nighttime mean rural
23 background level of 30 dBA. For the facility near the southeastern SEZ boundary, daytime and
24 nighttime noise levels at the Big Dune ACEC are estimated to be 37 and 47 dBA, respectively.
25 Accordingly, operation noise from the SEZ is not likely to adversely affect wildlife or visitors at
26 the nearby specially designated areas (Manci et al. 1988).

27
28 In the permitting process, refined noise propagation modeling would be warranted along
29 with measurement of background noise levels.

30
31 The solar dish engine is unique among CSP technologies because it generates electricity
32 directly and does not require a power block. A single, large solar dish engine has relatively low
33 noise levels, but a solar facility might employ tens of thousands of dish engines, which would
34 cause high noise levels around such a facility. For example, the proposed 750-MW SES Solar
35 Two dish engine facility in California would employ as many as 30,000 dish engines (SES Solar
36 Two, LLC 2008). At the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, on the basis of the assumption of
37 dish engine facilities of up to 2,811 MW total capacity (covering 80% of the total area, or
38 25,300 acres [102.4 km²]), up to 112,440 25-kW dish engines could be employed. For a large
39 dish engine facility, a couple of thousand step-up transformers would be embedded in the dish
40 engine solar field, along with a substation; however, the noise from these sources would be
41 masked by dish engine noise.

42
43 The composite noise level of a single dish engine would be about 88 dBA at a distance of
44 3 ft (0.9 m) (SES Solar Two, LLC 2008). This noise level would be attenuated to about 40 dBA

¹³ A shadow zone is defined as the region in which direct sound does not penetrate because of upward diffraction.

1 (typical of the mean rural daytime environment) within 330 ft (100 m). However, the combined
2 noise level from hundreds of thousands of dish engines operating simultaneously would be high
3 in the immediate vicinity of the facility, for example, about 52 dBA at 1.0 mi (1.6 km) and
4 48 dBA at 2 mi (3.2 km) from the boundary of the squarely-shaped dish engine solar field, both
5 of which are higher than typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. However,
6 these levels would occur at somewhat shorter distance than the aforementioned distances,
7 considering noise attenuation by atmospheric absorption and temperature lapse during daytime
8 hours. To estimate noise levels at the nearest residence, it was assumed dish engines were placed
9 all over the Amargosa Valley SEZ at intervals of 98 ft (30 m). Under these assumptions, the
10 estimated noise level at the nearest residence, about a 4.5-mi (7.2-km) distance from the SEZ
11 boundary, would be about 41 dBA, which is comparable to typical daytime mean rural
12 background level of 40 dBA. Assuming 12-hour daytime operation, the estimated 42 dBA L_{dn} at
13 this residence is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. Considering
14 other noise attenuation mechanisms, noise levels at the nearest residence would be lower than
15 estimated values in the above and thus potential impacts on nearby residences would be
16 anticipated to be minimal. However, noise from dish engines could cause minor adverse impacts
17 on the nearest residence, depending on background noise levels and meteorological conditions.
18

19 For dish engines placed all over the SEZ, estimated noise levels would be about 48 and
20 47 dBA at the boundaries of the Death Valley NP and Big Dune ACEC, respectively, which are
21 higher than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. However, dish engine
22 noise from the SEZ is not likely to adversely affect the wildlife or visitors at the nearby specially
23 designated areas (Manci et al. 1988).
24

25 Consideration of minimizing noise impacts is very important when siting dish engine
26 facilities. Direct mitigation of dish engine noise through noise control engineering could also
27 limit noise impacts.
28

29 During operations, no major ground-vibrating equipment would be used. In addition,
30 no sensitive structures are located close enough to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ to
31 experience physical damage. Therefore, during operation of any solar facility, potential vibration
32 impacts on surrounding communities and vibration-sensitive structures would be minimal.
33

34 Transformer-generated humming noise and switchyard impulsive noises would be
35 generated during the operation of solar facilities. These noise sources would be located near the
36 power block area, typically near the center of a solar facility. Noise from these sources would
37 generally be limited within the facility boundary and not be heard at the nearest residence,
38 assuming a 5-mi (8-km) distance (at least 0.5 mi [0.8 km] to the facility boundary and 4.5 mi
39 [7.2 km] to the nearest residence). Accordingly, potential impacts of these noise sources on the
40 nearest residences would be negligible.
41

42 For impacts from transmission line corona discharge noise during rainfall events
43 (discussed in Section 5.13.1.5), the noise level at 50 ft (15 m) and 300 ft (91 m) from the
44 center of 230-kV transmission line towers would be about 39 and 31 dBA (Lee et al. 1996),
45 respectively, typical of daytime and nighttime mean background noise levels in rural
46 environments. Corona noise includes high-frequency components, considered to be more

1 annoying than low-frequency environmental noise. However, corona noise would not likely
2 cause impacts unless a residence was located close to it (e.g., within 500 ft [152 m] of a 230-kV
3 transmission line). The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located in an arid desert environment,
4 and incidents of corona discharge are infrequent. Therefore, potential impacts on nearby
5 residences from corona noise along transmission lines within the SEZ would be negligible.
6
7

8 **11.1.15.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation**

9

10 Decommissioning/reclamation requires many of the same procedures and equipment
11 used in traditional construction. Decommissioning/reclamation would include dismantling of
12 solar facilities and support facilities such as buildings/structures and mechanical/electrical
13 installations, disposal of debris, grading, and revegetation as needed. Activities for
14 decommissioning would be similar to those for construction, but more limited. Potential
15 noise impacts on surrounding communities would be correspondingly lower than those for
16 construction activities. Decommissioning activities would be of short duration, and their
17 potential impacts would be minimal and temporary in nature. The same mitigation measures
18 adopted during the construction phase could also be implemented during the decommissioning
19 phase.
20

21 Similarly, potential vibration impacts on surrounding communities and vibration-
22 sensitive structures during decommissioning of any solar facility would be lower than those
23 during construction and thus minimal.
24
25

26 **11.1.15.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

27

28 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
29 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for noise impacts from
30 development and operation of solar energy facilities. Due to the considerable distance to the
31 nearest residence, activities within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ during construction and
32 operation would be anticipated to cause only minor increases in noise level at the nearest
33 residence. In addition, these activities are not likely to adversely affect wildlife or visitors at the
34 specially designated areas around the SEZ. Accordingly, no SEZ-specific design features are
35 required.
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1 **11.1.16 Paleontological Resources**

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3
4 **11.1.16.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The surface geology of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is composed predominantly
7 of more than 100-ft (30-m) thick alluvial deposits ranging in age from the Pliocene to Holocene.
8 The alluvial deposits cover 31,192 acres (126 km²) within the SEZ, or nearly 99% of the SEZ.
9 Portions of the southern edge and southwest corner of the SEZ are composed of residual
10 materials developed in sedimentary rocks. These discontinuous residual deposits account for
11 451 acres (1.8 km²), or slightly more than 1% of the SEZ. In the absence of a Potential Fossil
12 Yield Classification (PFYC) map for Nevada, a preliminary classification of PFYC Class 2 is
13 assumed for the young Quaternary alluvial deposits and residual materials. This classification is
14 based on a very preliminary field visit in February 2010 by a BLM Regional Paleontologist and
15 findings on paleontological potential for the nearby Amargosa Farm Road Solar Energy Project
16 (Sprowl 2010). Class 2 indicates that the potential for the occurrence of significant fossil
17 material is low (see Section 4.14 for a discussion of the PFYC system).
18

19
20 **11.1.16.2 Impacts**

21
22 Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely to occur in the
23 proposed SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of the SEZ is needed
24 to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted. If the geological deposits are
25 determined to be as described above and are classified as PFYC Class 2, further assessment
26 of paleontological resources is not likely to be necessary. Important resources could exist; if
27 identified, they would need to be managed on a case-by-case basis. Section 5.14 discusses the
28 types of impacts that could occur on any significant paleontological resources found within the
29 Amargosa Valley SEZ. Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
30 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
31

32 Indirect impacts on paleontological resources outside of the SEZ, such as through looting
33 or vandalism, are unlikely as any such resources would be below the surface and not readily
34 accessed. Programmatic design features for controlling water runoff and sedimentation would
35 prevent erosion-related impacts on buried deposits outside of the SEZ.
36

37 No new roads or transmission lines are currently anticipated for the Amargosa Valley
38 SEZ, based on the assumption that existing corridors would be used, so no impacts on
39 paleontological resources are anticipated from the creation of such new access pathways.
40 However, impacts on paleontological resources related to the creation of new corridors not
41 assessed in this PEIS would be evaluated at the project-specific level if new road or transmission
42 construction or line upgrades are to occur.
43
44
45

1 **11.1.16.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic
4 design features, as described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
5

6 If the geological deposits on the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ are determined to be as
7 described above and are classified as PFYC Class 2, mitigation of paleontological resources
8 within the SEZ is not likely to be necessary.
9
10

1 **11.1.17 Cultural Resources**
2

3 Cultural resources present on or adjacent to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ include
4 archaeological sites, landscapes and features significant to Native Americans, prehistoric and
5 historic trails, railroad grades and associated sites, mining camps and associated artifacts, and
6 sites relating to the NTS and Nellis Air Force Base.
7

8
9 **11.1.17.1 Affected Environment**
10

11
12 ***11.1.17.1.1 Prehistory***
13

14 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located in a transitional area of the Mojave Desert
15 and the Great Basin. The earliest human use of this area was likely during the Paleoindian Period
16 sometime between 12,000 and 10,000 B.P. Several Paleoindian sites have been documented in
17 the Mojave Desert and the Great Basin, usually identified near inland pluvial lake margins
18 (now mostly dry), streams, and desert terraces. The sites are usually surface finds of diffuse lithic
19 scatters, and the location of the sites and the types of tools associated with the sites suggest that
20 subsistence during this time period focused on mega fauna and/or on the local lake and marsh
21 habitats. This region is also interesting for the number of pre-Paleoindian sites that have been
22 suggested. These unsubstantiated claims are a major point of contention among archaeologists,
23 but the fact that so many have been suggested in the region (Calico Man site near Barstow,
24 California, Tule Springs site southeast of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ near Las Vegas,
25 Nevada, and Lake Manix, located in the eastern Mojave Desert) make them worth mentioning
26 here. The mega fauna became extinct around 10,000 to 11,000 B.P., and changes in the lifeways
27 of the Paleoindians likely led to the end of the period around 7,000 to 8,000 B.P. This coincided
28 with a warming climate and the receding of the ancient pluvial lakes. These early Paleoindian
29 sites are characterized by the Clovis complex of fluted points and later by the Western Pluvial
30 Lakes Tradition or San Dieguito complex. The latter complex is characterized by a material
31 culture of core and flaked-based tools, crescents, choppers, planes and scrapers, and some leaf-
32 projectile points (Rogers 1939; Warren and Crabtree 1986).
33

34 The Archaic Period in the Mojave Desert and Great Basin region lasted from
35 approximately 8,000 to 1,500 B.P. In the southwestern portion of the Great Basin, the Pinto
36 Cultural Complex is representative of most of the Early and Middle portions of the Archaic
37 period. There is a lack of evidence for the Archaic Period in the region of the Amargosa Valley
38 SEZ; however, several sites have been located in the eastern and southern portions of the Mojave
39 Desert and north of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ in the Lake Lahontan Basin. The sites
40 during this period are generally identified by distinctive projectile points and ground stone tools
41 used for processing plant resources. The arid conditions in the Great Basin have allowed the
42 preservation of artifacts that are normally perishable, so wicker baskets, split-twigg figurines,
43 duck decoys, and woven sandals appear in the archaeological record. By the Late Archaic
44 Period, characterized by the Gypsum Cultural Complex, there is greater diversity in the material
45 culture, likely an indicator that neighboring cultural groups were influencing people in the
46 region. At this time, the projectile points change, indicating a technological change from the use

1 of the atlatl to the bow and arrow, and probably also indicating a change in subsistence strategy
2 to exploit more diverse ecological zones and smaller rather than larger game. The change in
3 subsistence is also evident in the pattern of site locations towards the end of the Archaic Period,
4 as sites are more frequently located near or in mesquite groves; with the increased presence of
5 mortars and pestles in the archaeological assemblage, it appears plant foods were becoming
6 increasingly important in the diet (Warren and Crabtree 1986).

7
8 The Late Prehistoric/Protohistoric Period began around 1500 B.P., extending until
9 contact with Euro-American explorers and settlement of the area in the nineteenth century. The
10 period can be further divided into the Saratoga Springs Period (1500 B.P. to 800 B.P.) and the
11 Shoshonean Period (800 B.P. to circa AD 1800). During the Saratoga Springs Period, the
12 archaeological record suggests Virgin Anasazi/Puebloan influence in the region, especially in
13 the Muddy River Valley (or Moapa River Valley) in the Eastern Mojave Desert. In addition to
14 the Puebloan influence, there is evidence of Patayan and Hohokam influences, especially in the
15 subsistence systems (slab-lined pits) and ceramic complexes (Patayan grey wares, buff wares,
16 and brown wares). This Patayan and Hohokam influence was likely a result of trading or cross-
17 cultural interactions, as these groups were not the ethnohistoric antecedents of contemporary
18 Tribes. During this period major habitation sites were often located near major rivers and their
19 tributaries, facilitating the practice of floodplain agriculture. Temporary camps are often found
20 related to the more central habitation sites, usually located near springs, and were likely used to
21 supplement agricultural practices by hunting and gathering resources. The archaeological
22 assemblages related to this period include paddle-and-anvil pottery (Patayan–grey ware, buff
23 ware and brown ware, Virgin Anasazi–grey ware, and decorated ceramics), bow-and-arrow
24 technology (evidenced by smaller corner and side-notched points), rock art and intaglios,
25 bedrock milling features, a shift in burial practices from inhumation to cremation techniques, and
26 extensive trail systems along which “pot-drops,” lithics, and shrines are found. Around 800 B.P.,
27 Numic-speaking groups moved into the region and maintained a subsistence system similar to
28 the Archaic hunting and gathering economy. These groups maintained task-specific sites and
29 seasonal camps that were dispersed throughout large regions. The assemblage of this time period
30 is characterized by Desert side-notched points, twined and coiled basketry, and brown ware
31 ceramics. The expression of a Numic period is questioned by contemporary Native American
32 groups in the region, because they see themselves as being descendants of the Anasazi, having
33 occupied the area since the beginning of time, and do not perceive of a disconnect between
34 Virgin Anasazi and Numic periods (Warren and Crabtree 1986; USAF Combat Command 2006;
35 Lyneis 1995)). The following section describes the cultural history of the Native American
36 groups in the area in greater detail.

37 38 39 **11.1.17.1.2 Ethnohistory**

40
41 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located in territory most often ascribed to the
42 Western Shoshone (Thomas et al. 1986). Western Shoshone groups had stable base camps in
43 Oasis Valley near present-day Beatty, 12 mi (20 km) to the north, and in Death Valley on the
44 other side of the Funeral Mountains (Fowler 1991). However, the arid Amargosa Valley bottom
45 also lies in a transition area close to the traditional range of the Southern Paiutes, who shared
46 camps with the Western Shoshone at Ash Meadows 18 mi (30 km) to the southeast. Amargosa

1 Valley appears to have been a joint-use area shared by the Western Shoshone, Southern Paiute,
2 and Owens Valley Paiute (AIWS 1996; Stoffle 2001).
3
4

5 **Western Shoshone**

6

7 The Western Shoshone are a group of ethnically similar Central Numic speakers
8 who traditionally occupied a swath of the central Great Basin stretching from Death Valley
9 in California through central Nevada and northwestern Utah to southeastern Idaho
10 (Thomas et al. 1986). The territory lies primarily within the basin and range province of the
11 Great Basin. They lived in small groups with rather fluid membership, usually identified with
12 the land where they were centered. Their subsistence base and lifestyle varied with the resources
13 within their territory. Those groups close to the SEZ established stable camps near reliable water
14 sources they could use to grow crops. From these base camps, they would move seasonally in a
15 flexible round to exploit resources in the surrounding mountains and other areas as they became
16 available. They gathered a wide variety of plant resources (Stoffle et al. 1990; Crum 1994)
17 supplemented by hunting and fishing. Pine nuts, available in the mountains, were a storable
18 staple. Pronghorn antelope and bighorn sheep were among the large game animals they hunted,
19 but smaller game, including rodents, birds, and, where available, fish, provided more protein in
20 their diet. Groups varied in size and composition with the season. The largest groups gathered for
21 the pine nut harvest, which could include a rabbit or antelope drive as well. Winter villages were
22 usually close to stores of pine nuts. They interacted peacefully with the Southern Paiutes, with
23 whom they were on good terms (Thomas et al. 1986), and with the Owens Valley Paiutes,
24 through whom they were tied in trade to Tribes west of the Sierra Nevada (Liljeblad and
25 Fowler 1986).
26

27 Pre-contact Western Shoshone technology was simple but effective. They produced a
28 wide variety of both coiled and twined basketry vessels and implements, supplemented by
29 simple, rudimentary pottery. Basketry and beaters were used to gather seeds, which were milled
30 using stone manos and metates. They used sinew-backed bows of juniper and arrows of reed or
31 willow. They also made a variety of wooden and horn tools, pipes, and musical instruments
32 (Thomas et al. 1986). They built light structures of branches in their summer camps; in the
33 winter they constructed conical huts finished with slabs of bark held down by stones, along with
34 smaller sweathouses (Thomas et al. 1986; Crum 1994).
35

36 The first recorded Western Shoshone contact with Euro-Americans was in 1827, with the
37 trapper Jedediah Smith, one of the first of many trappers to pass through their territory. Later,
38 beginning in 1849, the Shoshone were more heavily impacted by the onslaught of prospectors
39 seeking gold and other mineral wealth in California and Nevada. The Shoshone were
40 occasionally hostile to miners and those traveling trails to the west. In the Treaty of Ruby Valley,
41 signed in 1863, the Western Shoshone agreed to allow immigrants to cross their lands and the
42 U.S. government to establish roads and forts, but did not relinquish title to their lands. The
43 Western Shoshone were not willing to give up their mobile lifestyle. Nonetheless, reserves or
44 “farms” were set aside for the Western Shoshone beginning in the late 1850s. Reservations were
45 established, beginning with one at Moapa in 1873, and continued to be designated through the
46 twentieth century (Fowler 1991). The Panamint or Timbisha Shoshone community was granted

1 Federal recognition in 1983 and a discontinuous reservation in November 2000. Their
2 reservation includes parcels of land at Furnace Creek in Death Valley National Park; Death
3 Valley Junction, California; Centennial, California; Scotty’s Junction, Nevada, and Lida, Nevada
4 (Sunderland 2007). The search for employment has drawn many Shoshone away from their
5 reservations, and many now live in towns and urban centers, particularly Las Vegas. The
6 Timbisha Reservation is the closest to the SEZ; however, the Western Shoshone norm of
7 group exogamy, and their practice of travelling great distances, means that there is considerable
8 population movement among the Western Shoshone. This, along with intermingling with
9 neighboring Tribal groups, has resulted in individuals with traditional ties to the Amargosa
10 Valley being scattered throughout the Shoshone and Paiute reservations, as well as within many
11 communities outside the reservations (Stoffle 2001).

14 **Southern Paiute**

15
16 The Southern Paiute shared access to the area around the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ
17 with the Western Shoshone (Stoffle 2001). They appear to have moved into southern Nevada
18 around A.D. 1150 (Euler 1964). Before the arrival of Euro-American colonists, the Southern
19 Paiute may have been organized on a Tribal level under the ritual leadership of High Chiefs and
20 bound together by a network of trails used by specialist runners (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983;
21 Stoffle 2001). When first described by ethnographers, these groups had diminished significantly
22 in size and did not maintain any overall Tribal organization. Territories were self-sufficient
23 economically, and the only known organizations were kin-based bands, often no larger than that
24 of a nuclear family (Kelly and Fowler 1986).

25
26 Like the Western Shoshone, the Southern Paiute occupied territory that stretched from
27 the high Colorado plateaus west and southwest, following the bend in the Colorado River
28 through canyon country and the basin and range geologic province into the Mojave Desert. It
29 included high plateau, basin and range, and canyonlands topography. The Las Vegas “Band” was
30 the closest group to the SEZ. Their home range did not extend north of Ash Meadows, but they
31 hunted mountain sheep in Western Shoshone territory in the mountains close to the SEZ (Kelly
32 and Fowler 1986).

33
34 The Southern Paiute practiced a mixed subsistence economy, gathering wild plant
35 resources, hunting, and fishing. They also maintained some floodplain and irrigated agricultural
36 fields, and husbanded wild plants through transplanting, pruning, burning, and irrigation (Stoffle
37 and Dobyns 1983). The diet of the Southern Paiute was varied, if seasonally precarious. Southern
38 Paiute dwellings varied with the seasons. In the summer, they lived under trees with brush
39 bedding, using shades and windbreaks occasionally. After the fall harvest, they resided in conical
40 or sub-conical shaped houses or in caves. It was not until the late nineteenth century that teepees
41 and sweathouses were adopted from the Utes (Kelly and Fowler 1986). Like their Shoshone
42 neighbors, the Southern Paiutes were skilled at basketry, with which they made light containers,
43 and implements suitable to their mobile lifestyle. Pottery, usually unfired, was also made for
44 daily use.

1 The arrival of Europeans in the New World had serious consequences for the Southern
2 Paiute. Even before direct contact, the spread of European diseases and the slave trade
3 implemented by Utes and Navajo for the Spanish colonial markets in New Mexico, Sonora, and
4 California resulted in significant depopulation. The Southern Paiutes retreated from areas where
5 there was an increased presence of Euro-American travelers, such as along the Old Spanish
6 Trail. They were further displaced by Euro-American settlers, who sought the same limited
7 sources of water. Dependence on wild plant resources likely increased during this time, as the
8 Southern Paiute were forced to withdraw into more remote areas (Kelly and Fowler 1986). As
9 Euro-American settlements grew, the Southern Paiute were drawn into the new economy, often
10 serving as transient wage labor. Settlements or colonies of laborers grew up around settlements,
11 farms, and mines, often including individuals from across the Southern Paiute homeland.

12
13 In 1865, an initial attempt to settle the Southern Paiutes in northeastern Utah with their
14 traditional enemies, the Utes, failed. The Moapa Reservation, established in eastern Nevada in
15 1873, was more successful. In the first decades of the twentieth century, small reservations were
16 created in southern Utah for the Shivwits, Indian Peak, Koosharem, and Kanosh Bands, and in
17 northern Arizona for the Kaibab. Colonies at Las Vegas and Pahrump, Nevada, along with
18 Cedar City, Utah, each acquired a small land base. Where feasible, the Southern Paiute farmed
19 or ranched on these reservations, but mostly they served as wage laborers, travelling great
20 distances. The Las Vegas and Pahrump colonies are closest to the Amargosa Valley (Stoffle
21 and Dobyns 1983; Kelly and Fowler 1986).

22 23 24 **Owens Valley Paiute**

25
26 The Owens Valley Paiute inhabit the valley of the Owens River that parallels the eastern
27 slope of the Sierra Nevada. They speak Mono, a Western Numic language, and are linguistically
28 closely tied to the Northern Paiute. Owens Valley is well watered by streams flowing from the
29 Sierra Nevada, and until it was partially diverted in the early twentieth century to help supply
30 Los Angeles, the Owens River flowed into the saline Owens Lake. The valley was rich with
31 game and plant resources, and the Owens Valley bands were able to maintain a more sedentary
32 lifeway and a higher population density than their Great Basin neighbors. Semi-permanent base
33 camps of some durability were constructed in unstructured settlements usually occupied by the
34 same families from year to year (Liljenblad and Fowler 1986).

35
36 Seasonal food gathering followed the ripening cycles of seed and root crops, some 40 of
37 which were harvested along with pine nuts and acorns. Some of these crops were encouraged by
38 systems of irrigation whereby summer floodwaters were communally spread across water
39 meadows. Hunters sought rabbit, mountain sheep, and deer (Liljenblad and Fowler 1986).

40
41 The Sierra Nevada provided resources and was not a barrier to travel and trade. Owens
42 Valley women regularly made the trek to the western slopes to trade pine nuts and salt from
43 Saline Valley with their Monache and Yokuts neighbors for acorns, thus introducing California
44 cultural traits to the Great Basin and linking California in a trade network that stretched as far as
45 Arizona. They shared access to Lake Owens with the Timbisha Shoshone (Liljenblad and
46 Fowler 1986).

1 Owens Valley was relatively undisturbed by Euro-Americans until 1861, when the first
2 settlers arrived. Conflict was immediate as the Paiute resisted the loss of their irrigated meadows.
3 The U.S. military intervened, implementing a scorched earth policy, burning Paiute stores,
4 houses, and equipment. In 1863, 900 Paiute prisoners were marched to the San Sebastian
5 Reservation near Fort Tejon, California for internment, losing 100 along the way to death or
6 escape. San Sebastian was ill-equipped to hold the Paiute, who gradually drifted back to the
7 valley. Between 1902 and 1915, reservations were established at Fort Independence, Bishop,
8 Lone Pine, Big Pine, and Benton. Beginning in 1905, the City of Los Angeles began to acquire
9 water rights in the valley; by 1933 it owned 95% of the farmland and 85% of the town property
10 and sought to consolidate or remove the Indians from the valley in order to obtain the remaining
11 water rights. The issues were resolved by a series of land exchanges in 1937. Currently, each
12 reservation is governed by its own elected council (Liljenblad and Fowler 1986).

13 14 15 **Others**

16
17 With the increased Euro-American presence in the area after about 1850, Native
18 Americans of many ethnic backgrounds became increasingly involved in wage labor, often
19 outside their traditional territories. Native Americans from elsewhere came to and often
20 remained in the Mojave Desert (Stoffle 2001).

21 22 23 ***11.1.17.1.3 History***

24
25 A Euro-American presence in the region did not occur until the early nineteenth century.
26 The Old Spanish Trail was an evolving trail system from Santa Fe to Los Angeles, generally
27 established in the early nineteenth century, tending to follow previously established paths used
28 by Native Americans and earlier explorers. The trail was not a direct route, due to a desire to
29 avoid hostile Indian Tribes and natural land formations such as the Grand Canyon. Several
30 forks and cutoffs were established as more and more travelers made use of the trail system.
31 The 2,700-mi (4,345-km) trail network crosses through six states with various paths between
32 Santa Fe and Los Angeles. It was used primarily between 1829 and 1848 by New Mexican
33 traders exchanging textiles for horses. The closest portion of the trail passes through the southern
34 portion of the Pahrump Valley, about 75 mi (121 km) south of the proposed Amargosa Valley
35 SEZ. In 1829, while following the Old Spanish Trail, Antonio Armijio found an oasis that served
36 as a crucial stopping point along the trail. This oasis was named Las Vegas, Spanish for “The
37 Meadows,” and in using this oasis groups traveling on the trail were able to significantly shorten
38 their trip through the harsh desert (Fehner and Gosling 2000).

39
40 With the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 closing out the
41 Mexican-American War, the area came under American control. In 1847, the first American
42 settlers arrived in the Great Basin, among them Mormon immigrants under the leadership of
43 Brigham Young, who settled in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. They sought to bring
44 the entire Great Basin under their control, establishing an independent State of Deseret. From its
45 center in Salt Lake City, the church sent out colonizers to establish agricultural communities in
46 surrounding valleys and missions to acquire natural resources such as minerals and timber.

1 Relying on irrigation to support their farms, the Mormons often settled in the same places as the
2 Fremont and Virgin Anasazi centuries before. The result was a scattering of planned agricultural
3 communities from northern Arizona to southern Idaho and parts of Wyoming, Nevada, and
4 southern California. In 1855, Brigham Young sent 30 men, led by William Bringham, to the
5 Las Vegas Valley, southeast of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, in an effort to establish a
6 mission in the southern portion of Nevada. They called their mission Las Vegas Fort, but only
7 stayed in the area for a few years before abandoning the mission due to the harsh climate and the
8 closing of the nearby Potosi mine, which had provided the majority of the income and patronage
9 at the mission (Fehner and Gosling 2000).

10
11 Nevada's nickname is the "Silver State," so named for the Comstock Lode strike in
12 Virginia City in 1859, about 300 mi (483 km) north of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. This
13 was the first major silver discovery in the United States, and with the news of the strike hopeful
14 prospectors flocked to the area in an effort to capitalize on the possible wealth under the surface
15 of the earth. The discovery of the Comstock Lode led to the creation of Virginia City and other
16 nearby towns that served the population influx. The population increase due to mining was so
17 dramatic that while in 1850 there were less than a dozen non-native people in the State of
18 Nevada, by 1860 there were 6,857, and by 1875 an estimated 75,000 people had settled in the
19 state. The Comstock Lode strike is important to the history of Nevada not just because of the
20 population growth and significant amount of money that was consequently brought to the area,
21 but also because of several technological innovations that were created and employed in the
22 mines, including the use of square-set timbering. This technique kept loose soil from collapsing
23 on miners, a concept that was eventually employed around the world in other mines
24 (Paheer 1970).

25
26 Mining for valuable deposits occurred in all regions of the state of Nevada, including the
27 vicinity of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Nye County was first settled by Euro-Americans
28 in 1863, but due to inadequate water and timber for mining, mining ventures were short lived
29 until the early 1900s when the Tonopah silver strike, about 100 mi (161 km) north of the
30 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, revived mining interests in the area. The towns of Rhyolite,
31 Bullfrog, Gold Center, and Carrara were established around the town of Beatty as part of the
32 Bullfrog Mining District (approximately 10 mi [16 km] north of the SEZ). None of the mines
33 associated with these towns produced any strikes of major note, but they are important to the
34 history of the area because significant, albeit temporary, population growth occurred in the
35 vicinity of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ as a result of these mines (Paheer 1970). Keane
36 Wonder Mine, one of the most successful gold mines in Death Valley, is also located nearby in
37 California, approximately 8 mi (13 km) west of the proposed SEZ.

38
39 The construction of railroads in Nevada was often directly related to the mining activities
40 that occurred in the state. In relation to the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, two railroads, the
41 Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad and the Las Vegas and Tonopah Railroad, were constructed to
42 connect the Bullfrog Mining District to Ludlow and Las Vegas, respectively. The Tonopah and
43 Tidewater Railroad also connected to the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe, and San Pedro,
44 Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroads. The San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad was
45 one of the most significant factors in making Las Vegas the city it has become. At the turn of
46 the nineteenth century, no railroad existed that connected two of the largest towns in the western

1 United States, Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. Fierce competition between U.S. Senator
2 William Clark and Union Pacific owner Edward Harriman ensued, with Clark eventually
3 ending up constructing the critical railroad in 1905, shortening the trip from Salt Lake City to
4 Los Angeles to one day and making Las Vegas, Nevada, a critical railroad hub along the line
5 (Fehner and Gosling 2000).
6

7 Nevada's desert-mountain landscape has made it a prime region for use by the
8 U.S. military for several decades. Beginning in October of 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt
9 established the Las Vegas Bombing and Gunnery Range, a 3.5-million-acre (14,000-km²) parcel
10 of land northwest of Las Vegas, near Indian Springs, Nevada. The main purpose of the range
11 was to serve as air-to-air gunnery practice, but at the end of the Second World War the gunnery
12 range was closed. It was reopened at the start of the Cold War in 1948 and was re-commissioned
13 as the Las Vegas Air Force Base, later renamed Nellis Air Force Base in 1950 (Fehner and
14 Gosling 2000).
15

16 Prior to dropping the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the
17 only testing of nuclear weapons on U.S. soil was at the Trinity site, near Los Alamos Laboratory
18 in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Tests of nuclear weapons had been conducted at the newly
19 acquired Marshall Islands in the Pacific, but due to logistical constraints, financial expenditures,
20 and security reasons, a test site for nuclear weapons was needed in a more convenient region.
21 Project Nutmeg was commenced in 1948 as a study to determine the feasibility and necessity of
22 a test site in the continental United States. It was determined that due to the public relations
23 issues, radiological safety, and security issues, a continental test site should only be pursued in
24 the event of a national emergency. In 1949 that emergency occurred when the Soviet Union
25 conducted their first test of a nuclear weapon and the Korean War started in the summer of 1950.
26 Five initial test sites were proposed: Alamogordo/White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico,
27 Camp LeJeune in North Carolina, the Las Vegas-Tonopah Bombing and Gunnery Range in
28 Nevada, a site in central Nevada near Eureka, and Utah's Dugway Proving Ground/Wendover
29 Bombing Range. Several factors were taken into consideration when making the final decision,
30 for example, fallout patterns, prevailing winds and predictability of weather, terrain, downwind
31 populations, security, and public awareness and relations, with the Las Vegas-Tonopah
32 Bombing and Gunnery Range being chosen as the Nevada Test Site by President Truman in
33 December 1950.
34

35 Covering 1,375 mi² (3,561 km²), the NTS was a part of the Las Vegas-Tonopah
36 Bombing and Gunnery Range. It stretches from Mercury, Nevada, in the southeast to Pahute
37 Mesa in the northwest. The first set of nuclear tests were conducted in January 1951; originally
38 named FAUST (First American Drop United States Test) and later renamed Ranger, these
39 bombs were detonated over Frenchman Flat, an area about 50 mi (80 km) east of the proposed
40 Amargosa Valley SEZ. Tests were also later conducted at Yucca Flat, an area located northwest
41 of Frenchman Flat, in an effort to minimize the effect of the blasts on the population in Las
42 Vegas, which reported some disturbances (non-radiological in nature) from the series of tests
43 conducted at Frenchman Flat. Tests were conducted at Jackass Flats, to the east of the proposed
44 Amargosa Valley SEZ, and Pahute Mesa, located to the north of the proposed Amargosa Valley
45 SEZ, as well. Nuclear tests were conducted in an effort to verify new weapons concepts, proof
46 test existing weapons, test the impact of nuclear weapons on manmade structures and the

1 physical environment, and conduct experimental testing in search of possible peaceful uses,
2 namely the Pluto ramjet, Plowshare, and Rover rocket programs. The Pluto ramjet project was
3 funded by the Air Force to design a system that could propel a vehicle at supersonic speeds and
4 low altitudes, while the Rover rocket was a design for a nuclear-powered rocket for space travel.
5 The Plowshare project was an attempt to show that nuclear weapons could be effective in
6 moving large amounts of earth for canal and harbor construction. None of these three projects
7 resulted in any sustained results in terms of the goals they were seeking, but they were important
8 in their contribution to the overall work done at the NTS. In the fall of 1958, President Dwight
9 Eisenhower declared a moratorium on nuclear testing, with the Soviet Union following suit, until
10 1961, when testing resumed. However, this testing was performed mostly underground at the
11 NTS, with most atmospheric tests being conducted in the Pacific. The last atmospheric test at the
12 NTS was on July 17, 1962, with the Limited Test Ban Treaty being signed by the United States
13 and Soviet Union on August 5, 1963, ending nuclear testing in the atmosphere, ocean, and space.
14 The last underground nuclear detonation at the NTS was on September 23, 1992, after which
15 Congress declared a moratorium on nuclear testing. In 1996, a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
16 was proposed by an international organization, but it has yet to be ratified by the U.S. Senate;
17 nuclear tests have not been conducted since. In total, 1,021 of the 1,149 nuclear detonations that
18 were detonated by the United States during the Cold War were conducted at the NTS (Fehner
19 and Gosling 2000).

21 22 ***11.1.17.1.4 Traditional Cultural Properties—Landscape***

23
24 The Native Americans whose historical homelands lie within the Great Basin have
25 traditionally taken a holistic view of the world. In this view, the sacred and profane are
26 inextricably intertwined. Most of the groups who have traditionally lived in the Mojave Desert
27 believe they were created there and have a divine right to the land, along with a responsibility to
28 manage and protect it. Landscapes as a whole are often culturally important. Adverse effects on
29 one part damage the whole (Stoffle 2001). From their perspective, landscapes include places of
30 power. Among the most important such places are sources of water; peaks, mountains, and
31 elevated features; caves; distinctive rock formations; and panels of rock art. Places of power are
32 important to the religious beliefs of the Western Shoshone and Southern Paiute. They may be
33 sought out for individual vision quests or healing and may likewise be associated with culturally
34 important plant and animal species. The view from such a point of power or the ability to see
35 from one important place to another can be an important element of its integrity (Stoffle and
36 Zedeño 2001b). Landscapes as a whole are tied together by a network of culturally important
37 trails (Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a).

38
39 For the most part, the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ lies between culturally important
40 landscape features (Stoffle and Zedeño 2001b). It is situated between the water sources and
41 associated Western Shoshone camps at Oasis Valley and the shared camps at Ash Meadows
42 mentioned in Section 11.1.17.1.2. The SEZ also lies between culturally important mountains. For
43 Native Americans, mountain peaks are important both as water sources and as places of power.
44 The SEZ lies directly between the Funeral Mountains in California and Bare Mountain to the
45 northeast, both of which are culturally important. Bare Mountain plays an important role in
46 Native American folklore associated with the formation of Forty Mile Canyon, 15 mi (24 km)

1 to the northeast. Yucca Mountain, between Bare Mountain and Forty Mile Canyon, Shoshone
2 Mountain, east of the canyon, and the Timber Mountains, near Beatty, are also considered
3 sacred. From these peaks, the view south to Charleston Peak (*Nuvagantu*) in the Spring
4 Mountains, the site of Southern Paiute creation accounts, is important (Stoffle 2001; Stoffle and
5 Zedeño 2001b; Fowler 1991). Charleston Peak is 58 mi (94 km) to the southeast and may be
6 visible on the horizon from the SEZ. In the past, development in Pahrump Valley at the foot of
7 the Spring Mountains has been a concern to Native Americans because of its proximity to
8 Charleston Peak.

9
10 Forty Mile Canyon is an important location associated with rock art panels and a pathway
11 providing access to upland resources, such as pine nuts and mountain sheep. Peoples in the Ash
12 Meadows and Pahrump Valley traveled through Crater Flat to reach the canyon. Crater Flat
13 opens onto Amargosa Valley, tying into trails coming through the Funeral Mountains to the west
14 (Fowler 1991). The trails link the area into a network stretching from California to Arizona. It is
15 possible that these trails approached or crossed the SEZ. Trails are also important when they lead
16 to places of power or spiritual importance. Such trails may be traveled either physically or
17 through song, prayer, or dream (Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a). The Southern Fox Trail, the route
18 followed by Southern Fox, a Chemehuevi Southern Paiute culture hero, passes from Pahrump to
19 Death Valley and may pass through or close to the SEZ (Laird 1976). The Salt Song Trail, the
20 Paiute trail to the afterlife, extends as far north as Ash Meadows well south of the SEZ (Stoffle
21 and Zedeño 2001b).

22 23 24 ***11.1.17.1.5 Cultural Surveys and Known Archaeological and Historical Resources***

25
26 At least 17 cultural resource surveys have been conducted in the proposed Amargosa
27 Valley SEZ covering approximately 3% of the SEZ; most of these have been linear surveys
28 along with some small block surveys, and another 53 surveys have been conducted within 5 mi
29 (8 km) of the proposed SEZ. These surveys have resulted in the recording of four sites in the
30 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, and at least 60 sites located within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ.
31 Of the four sites located within the SEZ, two are prehistoric, one is historic, and one is a multi-
32 component site consisting of both prehistoric and historic features. One of the prehistoric sites
33 is located on a stabilized dune in the northern portion of the SEZ. The site consists of
34 crypto-crystalline flakes incorporated into the desert pavement and several fire-cracked
35 rock concentrations; it is a potentially eligible site with possible time depth (Hattori and
36 McLane 1982). The historic site located in the SEZ is an historic tent camp site with associated
37 trash scatters, likely related to the railroad construction that occurred in the area (Hattori and
38 McLane 1982). However, the site has not been evaluated in terms of its possible NRHP
39 designation, as more contextual information is needed. The Ashton site is a historic railroad
40 siding associated with the Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad; however, due to a lack of integrity,
41 the site is not eligible for listing in the NRHP. The fourth site in the SEZ is a lithic scatter
42 consisting of debitage and biface fragments, but due to significant disturbance to the site it is not
43 eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. Only 5 of the 60 sites within the 5-mi (8-km) radius of the
44 SEZ are within 1 mi (1.6 km) of the SEZ; most of these are not considered eligible for listing in
45 the NRHP. One site adjacent to the SEZ is potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP. A site
46 located just to the southeast of the SEZ is a possible temporary prehistoric camp, rock formation,

1 and lithic scatter consisting of 100 to 300 cryptocrystalline flakes (NVCRIS 1991). A possible
2 gravesite is located within 1 mi (1.6 km) north of the SEZ along State Route 95, but it is unclear
3 at the present time whether this site was mitigated prior to powerline construction.
4

5 Located about 1 mi (1.6 km) to the southwest of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is
6 Death Valley National Park, an expansive area managed by the NPS, home to several
7 ethnohistoric groups and archaeological resources. Also located in the vicinity of the proposed
8 SEZ are the NTS and Nellis Air Force Base, two military installations that have contributed to
9 the overall historical context of the region.
10

11 ***National Register of Historic Places*** 12

13
14 There are no historic properties listed in the NRHP within the SEZ or within 5 mi (8 km)
15 of the SEZ. However, as stated above, at least one site in the SEZ, as well as another, may
16 potentially be eligible for NRHP listing. There are 53 NRHP-listed properties in Nye County,
17 Nevada; all but 6 of them are located in or near Tonopah to the north. Sedan Crater is the closest
18 listed property within the county at over 40 mi (64 km) northeast of the SEZ. Harmony Borax
19 Works and Leadfield, in Inyo County, California, are the nearest listed properties, located
20 approximately 15 mi (24 km) southwest of the SEZ and 18 mi (29 km) northwest of the SEZ
21 in the Grapevine Mountains of the Amargosa Range within Death Valley National Park,
22 respectively. Also located in Inyo County are the Death Valley Junction Historic District,
23 26 mi (42 km) to the south of the SEZ, and Skidoo, 27 mi (43 km) southwest of the SEZ.
24 Although not currently listed, several of the mining districts (see Section 11.1.17.1.3) are also
25 eligible properties, such as Keane Wonder Mine, Bullfrog, Rhyolite, Carrara, and Gold Center.
26

27 **11.1.17.2 Impacts** 28

29
30 Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed Amargosa
31 Valley SEZ; however, further investigation is needed. At least four sites have been recorded
32 within the SEZ, and at least one of them is considered potentially eligible for listing on the
33 NRHP; one is unevaluated and two were determined not eligible. Consistent with findings at
34 other SEZs, dune areas continue to be an area with potential for significant sites within valley
35 floors that are suitable for solar development. A cultural resource survey of the entire area of
36 potential effect, including consultation with affected Native American Tribes, would first need
37 to be conducted to identify archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and traditional
38 cultural properties, and an evaluation would need to follow to determine whether any are eligible
39 for listing in the NRHP as historic properties. Section 5.15 discusses the types of effects that
40 could occur on any significant cultural resources found to be present within the proposed
41 Amargosa Valley SEZ. Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
42 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Programmatic design
43 features assume that the necessary surveys, evaluations, and consultations will occur. No
44 traditional cultural properties have been identified to date within the vicinity of the SEZ.
45

1 Indirect impacts on cultural resources that result from erosion outside of the SEZ
2 boundary (including along ROWs) are unlikely, assuming programmatic design features to
3 reduce water runoff and sedimentation are implemented (as described in Appendix A,
4 Section A.2.2).

5
6 No needs for new transmission or access corridors have currently been identified,
7 assuming existing corridors would be used; therefore, no new areas of cultural concern would
8 be made accessible as a result of development within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, so
9 indirect effects resulting from vandalism or theft of cultural resources are not anticipated.
10 However, impacts on cultural resources related to the creation of new corridors not assessed in
11 this PEIS would be evaluated at the project-specific level if new road or transmission
12 construction or line upgrades are to occur.

13 14 15 **11.1.17.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

16
17 Programmatic design features to mitigate adverse effects on significant cultural
18 resources, such as avoidance of significant sites and features and cultural awareness training for
19 the workforce, are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.

20
21 SEZ-specific design features would be determined in consultation with the Nevada SHPO
22 and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations.
23

1 **11.1.18 Native American Concerns**

2
3 Native Americans share many environmental and socioeconomic concerns with other
4 ethnic groups. This section focuses on concerns specific to Native Americans and to which
5 Native Americans bring a distinct perspective. For a discussion of issues of possible Native
6 American concern shared with the population as a whole, several sections in this PEIS should
7 be consulted. General topics of concern are addressed in Section 4.16. Specifically for the
8 proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, Section 11.1.17 discusses archaeological sites, structures,
9 landscapes, trails, and traditional cultural properties; Section 11.1.8 discusses mineral resources;
10 Section 11.1.9.1.3 discusses water rights and water use; Section 11.1.10 discusses plant species;
11 Section 11.1.11 discusses wildlife species, including wildlife migration patterns; Section 11.1.13
12 discusses air quality; Section 11.1.14 discusses visual resources; Sections 11.1.19 and 11.1.20
13 discuss socioeconomics and environmental justice, respectively; and issues of human health and
14 safety are discussed in Section 5.21.

15
16
17 **11.1.18.1 Affected Environment**

18
19 The Amargosa SEZ falls within the Tribal traditional use area generally attributed to
20 the Western Shoshone (Liljeblad and Fowler 1986). It lies between the traditional territories
21 recognized by the Indian Claims Commission for the Western Shoshone and Southern Paiute
22 (Royster 2008). The Northern Amargosa Valley lies in an area of joint use shared by the Western
23 Shoshone, Southern Paiute, and Owens Valley Paiute (Stoffle 2001). All federally recognized
24 Tribes with Western Shoshone, Southern Paiute, or Owens Valley Paiute roots have been
25 contacted and provided an opportunity to comment or consult regarding this PEIS. They are
26 listed in Table 11.1.18.1-1. Details of government-to-government consultation efforts are
27 presented in Chapter 14; a listing of all federally recognized tribes contacted for this PEIS is
28 given in Appendix K.

29
30
31 ***11.1.18.1.1 Territorial Boundaries***

32
33
34 **Western Shoshone**

35
36 The Western Shoshone traditionally occupied a swath of the central Great Basin
37 stretching from Death Valley in California through central Nevada and northwestern Utah to
38 southeastern Idaho (Thomas et al. 1986). The Amargosa Valley SEZ lies at the southern edge
39 of their traditional range where Shoshone territory blends into Southern Paiute territory.

40
41
42 **Southern Paiutes**

43
44 The traditional territory of the Southern Paiute lies mainly in the Mojave Desert,
45 stretching from California to the Colorado Plateau. It generally follows the right bank of the
46 Colorado River, including its tributary streams and canyons in southern Nevada and Utah. Near

TABLE 11.1.18.1-1 Federally Recognized Tribes with Traditional Ties to the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Tribe	Location	State
Benton Paiute-Shoshone Tribe	Benton	California
Big Pine Paiute Tribe	Big Pine	California
Bishop Paiute Tribe	Bishop	California
Chemehuevi Indian Tribe	Lake Havasu	California
Colorado River Indian Tribes	Parker	Arizona
Duckwater Shoshone Tribe	Duckwater	Nevada
Ely Shoshone Tribe	Ely	Nevada
Fort Independence Indian Tribe	Fort Independence	California
Kaibab Paiute Tribe	Fredonia	Arizona
Las Vegas Paiute Tribe	Las Vegas	Nevada
Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Tribe	Lone Pine	California
Moapa Band of Paiutes	Moapa	Nevada
Pahrump Paiute Tribe	Pahrump	Nevada
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah	Cedar City	Utah
Cedar Band	Cedar City	Utah
Indian Peak Band	Cedar City	Utah
Kanosh Band	Kanosh	Utah
Koosharem Band	Cedar City	Utah
Shivwits Band	Ivins	Utah
Timbisha Shoshone Tribe	Death Valley	California
Yomba Shoshone Tribe	Austin	Nevada

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the SEZ, it extends as far north as Ash Meadows, where the Southern Paiutes shared traditional camp areas and hunting ground with the Western Shoshone (Fowler 1991).

Owens Valley Paiutes

The Owens Valley Paiutes occupy five relatively small reservations within Owens Valley in Inyo and Mono Counties, California, west of the SEZ. Their traditional use area ranged from the headwaters of the Owens River near Benton, California, southward to Owens Lake. They shared the shores of Owens Lake with Western Shoshone groups. The Indian Claims Commission placed Owens Valley within the traditional territory of the Northern Paiutes with whom the Owens Valley Tribes are linked linguistically (Liljeblad and Fowler 1986; Royster 2008).

11.1.18.1.2 Plant Resources

Native Americans continue to make use of a wide range of indigenous plants for food, medicine, construction materials, and other uses. The vegetation present at the Amargosa Valley SEZ is described in Section 11.1.10. The cover type present at the SEZ is almost entirely Sonora-

1 Mojave Creosotebush-White Bursage Desert Shrub, with small patches of Sonora-Mojave
 2 Mixed Salt Desert Scrub, North American Warm Desert Wash, and North American Warm
 3 desert Playa (USGS 2005a). The SEZ is sparsely vegetated. Creosotebush and white bursage are
 4 the dominant species. Of these, creosotebush has Native American medicinal uses. As shown in
 5 Table 11.1.18.1-2, there are likely to be some plants used by Native Americans for food in the
 6 SEZ (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983; Stoffle et al. 1999). Project-specific analyses will be needed to
 7 determine their presence at any proposed development site.

8
 9
 10 **11.1.18.1.3 Other Resources**

11
 12 Water is an essential prerequisite for life in the arid areas of the Great Basin; as a result, it
 13 is a keystone of desert cultures’ religion. Desert cultures consider all water sacred and a
 14 purifying agent. Water sources are often associated with rock art. Springs are often associated
 15 with powerful beings, and hot springs in particular figure prominently in Owens Valley Paiute
 16 and Southern Paiute creation stories. Water sources are seen as connected, so damage to one
 17 source damages all (Fowler 1991; Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a). Tribes are also sensitive about the
 18
 19

TABLE 11.1.18.1-2 Plant Species Important to Native Americans Observed or Likely To Be Present in the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Food		
Beavertail Prickly Pear ^a	<i>Opuntia basilaris</i>	Possible
Desert Trumpet ^a	<i>Eriogonum inflatum</i>	Possible
Cat Claw	<i>Acacia greggii</i>	Possible
Dropseed	<i>Sporobolus</i> spp.	Possible
Greasewood	<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>	Observed
Indian Rice Grass	<i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>	Possible
Iodine Bush	<i>Allenrolfea occidentalis</i>	Possible
Honey Mesquite	<i>Prosopis Glandolosa</i>	Observed
Wolfberry ^a	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	Possible
Medicine		
Burro Bush	<i>Hymenoclea salsola</i>	Possible
Creosotebush ^a	<i>Larrea tridentata</i>	Observed
Greasewood	<i>Sacarbatus vermiculatus</i>	Possible
Mormon Tea ^a	<i>Ephedra nevadensis</i>	Possible
Palmer’s Phacelia ^a	<i>Phacelia palermi</i>	Possible
Saltbush ^a	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	Possible

^a Possible in dominant land cover class.

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005a); Stoffle and Dobyns (1983); Stoffle et al. (1999).

1 use of scarce local water supplies for the benefit of far distant communities and recommend that
2 determination of adequate water supplies be a primary consideration for whether a site is suitable
3 for the development of a utility-scale solar energy facility (Moose 2009).

4
5 Wildlife likely to be found in the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is described in
6 Section 11.1.11. Few game species traditionally important to Native Americans are found within
7 the SEZ. The most important are the black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*) and the mule
8 deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) (Kelly and Fowler 1986; Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Big horn sheep
9 (*Ovis Canadensis*) occur in the Funeral Mountains but are less common on the desert floor.
10 Smaller game important to Native Americans found in the SEZ include cottontails (*Sylvilagus*
11 *audubonii*) and wood rats (*Neotoma lepida*).

12 Other animals traditionally important to the Southern Paiute include lizards, at least
13 six species of which are likely to occur in the SEZ, and the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*).
14 The SEZ falls within the extent of the wide-ranging eagle. Animals important to Native
15 Americans that are likely to be present in the proposed SEZ are listed in Table 11.1.18.1-3.

16
17 Other natural resources traditionally important to Native Americans include clay
18 for pottery, salt, and naturally occurring mineral pigments for the decoration and protection
19 of the skin (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). None of these have been reported from the SEZ
20 (see Section 11.1.7).

21 22 23 **11.1.18.2 Impacts**

24
25 In the past, the Western Shoshone, Southern Paiutes, and Owens Valley Paiutes have
26 expressed concern over project impacts on a variety of resources. They tend to take a holistic
27 view of their traditional homeland. For them, cultural and natural features are inextricably
28 bound together. Effects on one part have ripple effects on the whole. Western distinctions
29 between the sacred and the secular have no meaning in their traditional world view (Stoffle and
30 Dobyns 1983). While no comments specific to the Amargosa Valley SEZ have been received
31 from Native American Tribes to date, the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley has
32 commented on the scope of this PEIS. The Tribe recommends that the BLM preserve
33 undisturbed lands intact and that recently disturbed lands, such as abandoned farm fields, rail
34 yards, mines, and air fields, be given primary consideration for solar energy development.
35 Potential impacts on existing water supplies were also a primary concern (Moose 2009). During
36 energy development projects in adjacent areas, the Southern Paiute have expressed concern over
37 adverse effects on a wide range of resources. Geophysical features and physical cultural remains
38 are listed in Section 11.1.17.1.4. However, these places are often seen as important because they
39 are the location of or have ready access to a variety of plant, animal, and mineral resources
40 (Stoffle et al. 1997). Resources mentioned as important include food plants, medicinal plants,
41 plants used in basketry, and plants used in construction; large game animals, small game
42 animals, and birds; and sources of clay, salt, and pigments (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Those
43 likely to be found within the Amargosa Valley SEZ are discussed in Section 11.1.18.1.2.
44 Traditional plant knowledge is found most abundantly among Tribal elders, especially female
45 elders (Stoffle et al. 1999).

TABLE 11.1.18.1-3 Animal Species Used by Native Americans as Food Whose Range Includes the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Mammals		
Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	All year
Black-tailed jack rabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>	All year
Bobcat	<i>Lynx rufus</i>	All year
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	All year
Desert cottontail	<i>Silvilagus audubonii</i>	All year
Desert woodrat	<i>Neotoma lepida</i>	All year
Gray fox	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	All year
Kangaroo rats	<i>Dipodomys</i> spp.	All year
Kit fox	<i>Vulpes macotis</i>	All year
Mule deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	All year
Pocket gopher	<i>Thomomys bottae</i>	All year
Pocket mice	<i>Perognathus</i> spp.	All year
Porcupine	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>	All year
Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	All year
White-tailed antelope squirrel	<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>	All year
Birds		
Burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicular</i>	Summer
Common raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	All year
Gambel's quail	<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>	All year
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	All year
Great blue heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Spring/fall
Great horned owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	All year
Greater road runner	<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>	All year
Mourning dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	All year
Northern mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	All year
Sandhill crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>	Spring/fall
Reptiles		
Desert horned-lizard	<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>	All year
Desert tortoise	<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	All year
Large lizards	Various species	All year

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005b); Fowler (1986).

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The Amargosa Desert appears to have been a joint use area shared by the surrounding Native American groups. Although it includes some plant species traditionally important to Native Americans, they appear to be relatively scant. Surrounding mountains and better watered valleys to the north and south of the SEZ are likely to be more abundant sources of resources important to Native Americans. The most important traditionally collected resource likely to be present in the valley is the black-tailed jackrabbit.

1 As consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it
2 is possible that there will be Native American concerns expressed over potential visual and other
3 effects of solar energy development within the SEZ on specific resources and any culturally
4 important landscape, such as features associated with the journeys of the culture hero Southern
5 Fox (Laird 1976). Since solar energy facilities cover large tracts of land, even taking into account
6 the implementation of programmatic design features, it is unlikely that avoidance of all resources
7 important to Native Americans would be possible.
8

9 Implementation of programmatic design features, as discussed in Appendix A,
10 Section A.2.2, should eliminate impacts on Tribes' reserved water rights and the potential for
11 groundwater contamination issues.
12
13

14 **11.1.18.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

15
16 Programmatic design features to address impacts of potential concern to Native
17 Americans, such as avoidance of sacred sites, water resources, and Tribally important plant
18 and animal species are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Mitigation of impacts on
19 archaeological sites and traditional cultural properties is discussed in Section 11.1.17.3, in
20 addition to mitigation strategies for historic properties discussed in Section 5.15.
21

22 The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features addressing issues of potential
23 concern would be determined during government-to-government consultation with the affected
24 Tribes listed in Table 11.1.18.1-1.
25
26

1 **11.1.19 Socioeconomics**

2
3
4 **11.1.19.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section describes current socioeconomic conditions and local community services
7 within the region of influence (ROI) surrounding the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. The ROI
8 is a two-county area composed of Clark and Nye Counties in Nevada. It encompasses the area
9 in which workers are expected to spend most of their salaries and in which a portion of site
10 purchases and non-payroll expenditures from the construction, operation, and decommissioning
11 phases of the proposed SEZ facility are expected to take place.

12
13
14 **11.1.19.1.1 ROI Employment**

15
16 In 2008, employment in the ROI stood at 938,914 (Table 11.1.19.1-1). Over the period
17 1999 to 2008, the annual average employment growth rate was higher in Clark County (3.2%)
18 than in Nye County (0.5%). At 3.1%, growth rates in the ROI as a whole were higher than the
19 average rate for Nevada (2.7%).

20
21 In the ROI in 2006, the services sector provided the highest percentage of employment
22 at 59.5%, followed by the wholesale and retail trade at 14.9%, with a smaller employment share
23 held by construction (11.6%) (Table 11.1.19.1-2). Within the two counties in the ROI, the
24 distribution of employment across sectors is different from that of the ROI as a whole, with
25 employment in wholesale and retail trade (48.1%), mining (8.3%), agriculture (3.6%), and
26 manufacturing (3.6%) higher in Nye County than in the ROI as a whole, while employment in
27 construction (10.2%), and services (48.1%) were lower than the ROI average.

28
29
TABLE 11.1.19.1-1 ROI Employment in the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Location	1999	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999–2008 (%)
Clark County	675,693	922,878	3.2
Nye County	15,325	16,036	0.5
ROI	691,288	938,914	3.1
Nevada	978,969	1,282,012	2.7

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a,b).

TABLE 11.1.19.1-2 ROI Employment in the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ by Sector, 2006

Industry	Clark County		Nye County		ROI	
	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total
Agriculture ^a	213	0.0	325	3.6	538	0.1
Mining	522	0.1	750	8.3	1,272	0.1
Construction	100,817	11.6	925	10.2	101,742	11.6
Manufacturing	25,268	2.9	329	3.6	25,597	2.9
Transportation and public utilities	38,529	4.4	292	3.2	38,821	4.4
Wholesale and retail trade	128,498	14.8	1,714	19.0	130,212	14.9
Finance, insurance, and real estate	56,347	6.5	328	3.6	56,675	6.5
Services	516,056	59.6	4,340	48.1	520,396	59.5
Other	105	0.0	–	0.0	105	0.0
Total	866,093		9,029		875,122	

^a Agricultural employment includes 2007 data for hired farmworkers.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a); USDA (2009).

11.1.19.1.2 ROI Unemployment

The average unemployment rate in Nye County over the period over the period 1999 to 2008 was 6.9%, higher than the rate in Clark County (5.6%) (Table 11.1.19.1-3). The average rate in the ROI over this period was 5.0%, the same as the average rate for Nevada. Unemployment rates for the first 11 months of 2009 contrast with rates for 2008 as a whole; in

TABLE 11.1.19.1-3 ROI Unemployment Rates for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (%)

Location	1999–2008	2008	2009 ^a
Clark County	5.0	6.6	11.8
Nye County	6.9	9.7	14.3
ROI	5.0	6.6	11.8
Nevada	5.0	6.7	11.7

^a Rates for 2009 are the average for January through November.

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a–c).

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1 Nye County, the unemployment rate increased to 14.3%, while in Clark County the rate reached
 2 11.8%. The average rates for the ROI (11.8%) and for Nevada as a whole (11.7%) were also
 3 higher during this period than the corresponding average rates for 2008.
 4
 5

6 **11.1.19.1.3 ROI Urban Population**
 7

8 The population of the ROI in 2008 was 55% urban, with all urban areas in the ROI
 9 located in Clark County, and none in Nye County. The largest city, Las Vegas, had an estimated
 10 2008 population of 562,849; other large cities in Clark County include Henderson (253,693) and
 11 North Las Vegas (217,975) (Table 11.1.19.1-4). In addition, there are two cities in the county,
 12 Mesquite (16,528) and Boulder City (14,954). There are a number of unincorporated urban areas
 13 in Clark County that are not included in the urban population, meaning that the percentage of the
 14 county population not living in urban areas is overstated.
 15

16 Population growth rates in the ROI have varied over the period 2000 to 2008
 17 (Table 11.1.19.1-4). North Las Vegas grew at an annual rate of 8.3% during this period, with
 18 higher than average growth also experienced in Mesquite (7.3%) and Henderson (4.7%). The
 19 city of Las Vegas (2.1%) experienced a lower growth rate between 2000 and 2008, while
 20 Boulder City (0.0%) experienced static population growth during this period.
 21
 22

23 **11.1.19.1.4 ROI Urban Income**
 24

25 Median household incomes vary across cities in the ROI. Two cities for which data are
 26 available for 2006 to 2008—Henderson (\$67,886) and North Las Vegas (\$60,506)—had median
 27
 28

TABLE 11.1.19.1-4 ROI Urban Population and Income for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

City	Population			Median Household Income (\$ 2008)		
	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000–2008 (%)	1999	2006–2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999 and 2006–2008 (%) ^a
Boulder City	14,966	14,954	0.0	65,049	NA ^b	NA
Henderson	175,381	253,693	4.7	72,035	67,886	–0.7
Las Vegas	478,434	562,849	2.1	56,739	55,113	–0.3
Mesquite	9,389	16,528	7.3	52,005	NA	NA
North Las Vegas	115,488	217,975	8.3	56,299	60,506	0.2

^a Data are averages for the period 2006 to 2008.

^b NA = data not available.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b-d).

1 incomes in 2006 to 2008 that were higher than the average for the state (\$56,348), while median
 2 incomes in Las Vegas (\$55,113) were slightly lower than the state average (Table 11.1.19.1-4).

3
 4 Growth rates between 1999 and 2006 to 2008 were small in North Las Vegas (0.2%), and
 5 negative in Henderson (-0.7%) and Las Vegas (-0.3%). The average median household income
 6 growth rate for the state as a whole over this period was 0.2%.

7
 8
 9 **11.1.19.1.5 ROI Population**

10
 11 Table 11.1.19.1-5 presents recent and projected populations in the ROI and state as a
 12 whole. Population in the ROI stood at 1,923,268 in 2008, having grown at an average annual
 13 rate of 4.0% since 2000. Growth rates for ROI were higher than those in Nevada (3.4%) over
 14 the same period.

15
 16 Both counties in the ROI experienced growth in population from 2000 to 2008;
 17 population in Clark County grew at an annual rate of 4.0%, while in Nye County population
 18 grew by 3.9%. The ROI population is expected to increase to 2,787,038 by 2021 and to
 19 2,870,613 by 2023.

20
 21
 22 **11.1.19.1.6 ROI Income**

23
 24 Total personal income in the ROI stood at \$75.5 billion in 2007 and has grown at an
 25 annual average rate of 5.0% over the period 1998 to 2007 (Table 11.1.19.1-6). Per-capita income
 26 also rose over the same period at a rate of 1.0%, increasing from \$36,327 to \$40,109. Per-capita
 27 incomes were higher in Clark County (\$40,307) than in Nye County (\$31,836) in 2007. Growth
 28
 29

TABLE 11.1.19.1-5 ROI Population for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Location	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000–2008 (%)	2021	2023
Clark County	1,375,765	1,879,093	4.0	2,710,303	2,791,161
Nye County	32,485	44,175	3.9	76,735	79,452
ROI	1,408,250	1,923,268	4.0	2,787,038	2,870,613
Nevada	1,998,257	2,615,772	3.4	3,675,890	3,779,745

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009e,f); Nevada State Demographers Office (2008).

TABLE 11.1.19.1-6 ROI Personal Income for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Location	1998	2007	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1998–2007 (%)
Clark County			
Total income ^a	45.7	74.1	5.0
Per-capita income	36,509	40,307	1.0
Nye County			
Total income ^a	0.9	1.4	4.8
Per-capita income	28,857	31,836	1.0
ROI			
Total income ^a	46.6	75.5	5.0
Per-capita income	36,327	40,109	1.0
Nevada			
Total income ^a	68.9	105.3	4.3
Per-capita income	37,188	41,022	1.0

^a Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ billion 2008.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce (2009); U.S. Bureau of Census (2009e,f).

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rates in total personal income have been slightly higher in Clark County than in Nye County. Personal income growth rates in the ROI were higher than the state rate (4.3%), but per-capita income growth rates in both counties were the same as in Nevada as a whole (1.0%).

Median household income during the period 2006 to 2008 varied from \$42,275 in Nye County to \$56,954 in Clark County (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009d).

11.1.19.1.7 ROI Housing

In 2007, more than 770,750 housing units were located in the two ROI counties, with about 97% of these located in Clark County (Table 11.1.19.1-7). Owner-occupied units compose approximately 60% of the occupied units in the two counties, with rental housing making up 40% of the total. Vacancy rates in 2007 were 19.3% in Nye County and 12.2% in Clark County; with an overall vacancy rate of 12.4% in the ROI, there were 95,346 vacant housing units in the ROI in 2007, of which 56,902 are estimated to be rental units that would be available to construction workers. There were 8,977 units in seasonal, recreational, or occasional use in the

TABLE 11.1.19.1-7 ROI Housing Characteristics for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Parameter	2000	2007
Clark County		
Owner-occupied	302,834	393,453
Rental	209,419	268,572
Vacant units	47,546	92,144
Seasonal and recreational use	8,416	NA ^a
Total units	559,799	754,169
Nye County		
Owner-occupied	10,167	9,630
Rental	3,142	3,760
Vacant units	2,625	3,202
Seasonal and recreational use	562	NA
Total units	15,934	16,592
ROI		
Owner-occupied	313,001	403,083
Rental	212,561	272,332
Vacant units	50,171	95,346
Seasonal and recreational use	8,977	NA
Total units	575,733	770,761

^a NA = data not available.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009h-j).

ROI at the time of the 2000 Census, with 1.5% of housing units in Clark County and 3.5% in Nye County used for seasonal or recreational purposes.

Housing stock in the ROI as a whole grew at an annual rate of 4.3% over the period 2000 to 2007, with 195,028 new units added to the existing housing stock (Table 11.1.19.1-7).

The median value of owner-occupied housing in 2006 to 2008 varied between \$187,100 in Nye County and \$299,200 in Clark County (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009g).

11.1.19.1.8 ROI Local Government Organizations

The various local and county government organizations in the ROI are listed in Table 11.1.19.1-8. In addition, two Tribal governments are located in the ROI, with members of other Tribal groups located in the state whose Tribal governments are located in adjacent states.

TABLE 11.1.19.1-8 ROI Local Government Organizations and Social Institutions in the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Governments	
City	
Boulder City	Mesquite
Henderson	North Las Vegas
Las Vegas	
County	
Clark County	Nye County
Tribal	
Las Vegas Tribe of Paiute Indians of the Las Vegas Indian Colony, Nevada	
Moapa Band of Paiute Indians of the Moapa River Indian Reservation, Nevada	

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b); U.S. Department of the Interior (2010).

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11.1.19.1.9 ROI Community and Social Services

This section describes educational, health care, law enforcement, and firefighting resources in the ROI.

Schools

In 2007, the two-county ROI had a total of 344 public and private elementary, middle, and high schools (NCES 2009). Table 11.1.19.1-9 provides summary statistics for enrollment and educational staffing and two indices of educational quality—student-teacher ratios and levels of service (number of teachers per 1,000 population). The student-teacher ratio in Clark County schools (19.0) is higher than that in Nye County schools (16.2), while the level of service is slightly higher in Nye County (9.0) than in Clark County, where there are fewer teachers per 1,000 population (8.7).

Health Care

The total number of physicians (4,220) and the number of physicians per population of 1,000 (2.3) is higher in Clark County than in Nye County (41; 0.9) (Table 11.1.19.1-10).

Public Safety

Several state, county, and local police departments provide law enforcement in the ROI (Table 11.1.19.1-11). Nye County has 104 officers and would provide law enforcement

TABLE 11.1.19.1-9 ROI School District Data for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, 2007

Location	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Student-Teacher Ratio	Level of Service ^a
Clark County	303,448	15,930	19.0	8.7
Nye County	6,427	396	16.2	9.0
ROI	309,875	16,326	19.0	8.7

^a Number of teachers per 1,000 population.

Source: NCES (2009).

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TABLE 11.1.19.1-10 Physicians in the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ ROI, 2007

Location	Number of Primary Care Physicians	Level of Service ^a
Clark County	4,220	2.3
Nye County	41	0.9
ROI	4,261	2.3

^a Number of physicians per 1,000 population.

Source: AMA (2009).

3
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TABLE 11.1.19.1-11 Public Safety Employment in the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ ROI

Location	Number of Police Officers ^a	Level of Service ^b	Number of Firefighters ^c	Level of Service
Clark County	3,214	1.7	991	0.5
Nye County	104	2.4	82	1.9
ROI	3,318	1.8	1,073	0.6

^a 2007 data.

^b Number per 1,000 population.

^c 2008 data; number does not include volunteers.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2008); Fire Departments Network (2009).

1 services to the SEZ; there are 3,214 officers in Clark County. Levels of service of police
 2 protection are 1.7 per 1,000 population in Clark County and 2.4 in Nye County. Currently,
 3 there are 1,073 professional firefighters in the ROI (Table 11.1.19.1-11).

4
 5
 6 **11.1.19.1.10 ROI Social Structure and Social Change**

7
 8 Community social structures and other forms of social organization within the ROI
 9 are related to various factors, including historical development, major economic activities
 10 and sources of employment, income levels, race and ethnicity, and forms of local political
 11 organization. Although an analysis of the character of community social structures is beyond
 12 the scope of the current programmatic analysis, project-level NEPA analyses would include a
 13 description of ROI social structures, contributing factors, their uniqueness, and consequently,
 14 the susceptibility of local communities to various forms of social disruption and social change.

15
 16 Various energy development studies have suggested that once the annual growth in
 17 population is between 5 and 15% in smaller rural communities, alcoholism, depression, suicide,
 18 social conflict, divorce, and delinquency would increase and levels of community satisfaction
 19 would deteriorate (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996). Data on violent crime and property crime rates and
 20 on alcoholism and illicit drug use, mental health, and divorce, which might be used as indicators
 21 of social change, are presented in Tables 11.1.19.1-12 and 11.1.19.1-13, respectively.

22
 23 There is some variation in the level of crime across the ROI, with higher rates of violent
 24 crime in Clark County (8.0 per 1,000 population) than in Nye County (2.9) (Table 11.1.19.1-12).
 25 Property-related crime rates are also higher in Clark County (34.5) than in Nye County (20.8);
 26 overall crime rates in Clark County (42.5) were higher than in Nye County (23.7).

27
 28 **TABLE 11.1.19.1-12 County and ROI Crime Rates for the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ^a**

Location	Violent Crime ^b		Property Crime ^c		All Crime	
	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate
Clark County	15,505	8.0	66,905	34.5	82,410	42.5
Nye County	124	2.9	892	20.8	1,016	23.7
ROI	15,629	7.9	67,797	34.2	83,426	42.1

^a Rates are the number of crimes per 1,000 population.

^b Violent crime includes murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

^c Property crime includes burglary, larceny, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2009a,b).

TABLE 11.1.19.1-13 Alcoholism, Drug Use, Mental Health, and Divorce in the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ ROI^a

Geographic Area	Alcoholism	Illicit Drug Use	Mental Health ^b	Divorce ^c
Nevada Clark	8.2	2.7	10.5	— ^d
Nevada Rural (includes Nye County)	8.0	2.7	9.5	—
Nevada				6.5

^a Data for alcoholism and drug use represent percentage of the population over 12 years of age with dependence or abuse of alcohol, illicit drugs. Data are averages for 2004 to 2006.

^b Data for mental health represent percentage of the population over 18 years of age suffering from serious psychological distress. Data are averages for 2002 to 2004.

^c Divorce rates are the number of divorces per 1,000 population. Data are for 2007.

^d A dash indicates data not available.

Sources: SAMHSA (2009); CDC (2009).

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Other measures of social change—alcoholism, illicit drug use, and mental health—are not available at the county level and thus are presented for the SAHMSA region in which the ROI is located. There is slight variation across the two regions in which the two counties are located; rates for alcoholism and mental health are slightly higher in the region in which Clark County is located (Table 11.1.19.1-13).

11.1.19.1.11 ROI Recreation

Various areas in the vicinity of the proposed SEZ are used for recreational purposes, with natural, ecological, and cultural resources in the ROI attracting visitors for a range of activities, including hunting, fishing, boating, canoeing, wildlife watching, camping, hiking, horseback riding, mountain climbing, and sightseeing. These activities are discussed in Section 11.1.5.

Because the number of visitors using state and federal lands for recreational activities is not available from the various administering agencies, the value of recreational resources in these areas, based solely on the number of recorded visitors, is likely to be an underestimation. In addition to visitation rates, the economic valuation of certain natural resources can also be assessed in terms of the potential recreational destination for current and future users, that is, their nonmarket value (see Section 5.17.1.1.1).

Another method is to estimate the economic impact of the various recreational activities supported by natural resources on public land in the vicinity of the proposed solar development by identifying sectors in the economy in which expenditures on recreational activities occur. Not all activities in these sectors are directly related to recreation on state and federal lands,

1 with some activity occurring on private land (e.g., dude ranches, golf courses, bowling alleys,
 2 and movie theaters). Expenditures associated with recreational activities form an important
 3 part of the economy of the ROI. In 2007, 245,549 people were employed in the ROI in
 4 the various sectors identified as recreation, constituting 26.8% of total ROI employment
 5 (Table 11.1.19.1-14). Recreation spending also produced almost \$9,273 million in income in
 6 the ROI in 2007. The primary sources of recreation-related employment were hotels and
 7 lodging places and eating and drinking places.

8
 9
 10 **11.1.19.2 Impacts**

11
 12 The following analysis begins with a description of the common impacts of solar
 13 development, including common impacts on recreation and on social change. These impacts
 14 would occur regardless of the solar technology developed in the SEZ. The impacts of projects
 15 employing various solar energy technologies are analyzed in detail in subsequent sections.

16
 17
 18 **11.1.19.2.1 Common Impacts**

19
 20 Construction and operation of a solar energy facility at the proposed SEZ would produce
 21 direct and indirect economic impacts. Direct impacts would occur as a result of expenditures on
 22 wages and salaries, procurement of goods and services required for project construction and
 23 operation, and the collection of state sales and income taxes. Indirect impacts would occur as
 24 project wages and salaries, procurement expenditures, and tax revenues subsequently circulate
 25 through the economy of each state, thereby creating additional employment, income, and tax
 26 revenues. Facility construction and operation would also require in-migration of workers and
 27
 28

**TABLE 11.1.19.1-14 Recreation Sector Activity in
 the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ ROI, 2007**

ROI	Employment	Income (\$ million)
Amusement and recreation services	4,720	129.6
Automotive rental	2,914	88.4
Eating and drinking places	107,823	3,129.0
Hotels and lodging places	117,074	5,557.6
Museums and historic sites	2,779	64.2
Recreational vehicle parks and campsites	386	11.3
Scenic tours	5,459	215.5
Sporting goods retailers	4,394	76.9
Total ROI	245,549	9,273

Source: MIG, Inc. (2009).

1 their families into the ROI surrounding the site, which would affect population, rental housing,
2 health service employment, and public safety employment. Socioeconomic impacts common to
3 all utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in detail in Section 5.17. These impacts will
4 be minimized through the implementation of programmatic design features described in
5 Appendix A, Section A.2.2.

6 7 8 **Recreation Impacts** 9

10 Estimating the impact of solar facilities on recreation is problematic because it is not
11 clear how solar development in the SEZ would affect recreational visitation and nonmarket
12 values (i.e., the value of recreational resources for potential or future visits; see
13 Section 5.17.1.2.3). While it is clear that some land in the ROI would no longer be accessible
14 for recreation, the majority of popular recreational locations would be precluded from solar
15 development. It is also possible that solar development in the ROI would be visible from popular
16 recreation locations and that construction workers residing temporarily in the ROI would occupy
17 accommodations otherwise used for recreational visits, thus reducing visitation and consequently
18 affecting the economy of the ROI.

19 20 21 **Social Change** 22

23 Although an extensive literature in sociology documents the most significant components
24 of social change in energy boomtowns, the nature and magnitude of the social impact of energy
25 projects in small rural communities are still unclear (see Section 5.17.1.1.4). While some degree
26 of social disruption is likely to accompany large-scale in-migration during the boom phase, there
27 is insufficient evidence to predict the extent to which specific communities are likely to be
28 affected, which population groups within each community are likely to be most affected, and
29 the extent to which social disruption is likely to persist beyond the end of the boom period
30 (Smith et al. 2001). Accordingly, because of the lack of adequate social baseline data, it has
31 been suggested that social disruption is likely to occur once an arbitrary population growth rate
32 associated with solar energy development projects has been reached, with an annual rate of
33 between 5 and 10% growth in population assumed to result in a breakdown in social structures,
34 with a consequent increase in alcoholism, depression, suicide, social conflict, divorce,
35 delinquency, and deterioration in levels of community satisfaction (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996).

36
37 In overall terms, the in-migration of workers and their families into the ROI would
38 represent an increase of 0.1% in county population during construction of the trough technology,
39 with smaller increases for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies, and during the
40 operation of each technology. While it is possible that some construction and operations workers
41 will choose to locate in communities closer to the SEZ, the lack of available housing in smaller
42 rural communities in the ROI to accommodate all in-migrating workers and families and the
43 insufficient range of housing choices to suit all solar occupations make it likely that many
44 workers will commute to the SEZ from larger communities elsewhere in the ROI, thereby
45 reducing the potential impact of solar development on social change. Regardless of the pace of
46 population growth associated with the commercial development of solar resources and the

1 likely residential location of in-migrating workers and families in communities some distance
2 from the SEZ itself, the number of new residents from outside the ROI is likely to lead to some
3 demographic and social change in small rural communities in the ROI. Communities hosting
4 solar development are likely to be required to adapt to a different quality of life, with a transition
5 away from a more traditional lifestyle involving ranching and taking place in small, isolated,
6 close-knit, homogenous communities with a strong orientation toward personal and family
7 relationships, toward a more urban lifestyle, with increasing cultural and ethnic diversity and
8 increasing dependence on formal social relationships within the community.

11.1.19.2.2 *Technology-Specific Impacts*

13 The economic impacts of solar energy development in the proposed SEZ were measured
14 in terms of employment, income, state tax revenues (sales and income), population in-migration,
15 housing, and community service employment (education, health, and public safety). More
16 information on the data and methods used in the analysis are presented in Appendix M.

18 The assessment of the impact of the construction and operation of each technology was
19 based on SEZ acreage, assuming 80% of the area could be developed. To capture a range of
20 possible impacts, solar facility size was estimated on the basis of the land requirements of
21 various solar technologies, assuming that 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) would be required for
22 power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies and 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) would be
23 required for solar trough technologies. Impacts of multiple facilities employing a given
24 technology at each SEZ were assumed to be the same as impacts for a single facility with the
25 same total capacity. Construction impacts were assessed for a representative peak year of
26 construction, assumed to be 2021 for each technology. Construction impacts assumed that a
27 maximum of three projects could be constructed within a given year, with a corresponding
28 maximum land disturbance of up to 9,000 acres (36 km²). For operations impacts, a
29 representative first year of operations was assumed to be 2023 for trough and power tower,
30 2022 for the minimum facility size for dish engine and PV, and 2023 for the maximum
31 facility size for these technologies. The years of construction and operations were selected as
32 representative of the entire 20-year study period because they are the approximate midpoint;
33 construction and operations could begin earlier.

Solar Trough

39 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
40 and indirect impacts) from the use of solar trough technologies would be up to 8,765 jobs
41 (Table 11.1.19.2-1). Construction activities would constitute 0.6% of total ROI employment.
42 A solar facility would also produce \$541.7 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
43 \$3.5 million.

45 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
46 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some

TABLE 11.1.19.2-1 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ with Trough Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	5,232	1,103
Total	8,765	1,655
Income ^b		
Total	541.7	62.7
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	3.5	0.5
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA	2.0
Capacity fee ^d	NA	33.3
In-migrants (no.)	2,229	141
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	1,114	127
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	19	1
Physicians (no.)	5	0
Public safety (no.)	5	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 1,800 MW (corresponding to 9,000 acres [36 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 5,060 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
2 2,229 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
3 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
4 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
5 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
6 with 1,114 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
7 2.0% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
8

9 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
10 community service employment (education, health, and public safety). An increase in such
11 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
12 19 new teachers, 5 physicians, and 5 public safety employees (career firefighters and uniformed
13 police officers) would be required in the ROI. These increases would represent 0.1% of total ROI
14 employment expected in these occupations.
15

16
17 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
18 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using solar trough technologies would be 1,655 jobs
19 (Table 11.1.19.2-1). Such a solar facility would also produce \$62.7 million in income.
20 Direct sales taxes would be \$0.5 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar
21 Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), acreage-related fees would be \$2.0 million, and
22 solar generating capacity fees, at least \$33.3 million.
23

24 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
25 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
26 from outside the ROI would be required, with 141 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
27 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
28 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
29 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
30 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 127 owner-occupied units expected to be
31 occupied in the ROI.
32

33 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
34 community service (health, education, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
35 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the provision of these
36 services in the ROI. Accordingly, one new teacher would be required in the ROI.
37

38 39 **Power Tower** 40

41
42 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
43 and indirect impacts) from the use of power tower technologies would be up to 3,491 jobs
44 (Table 11.1.19.2-2). Construction activities would constitute 0.3 % of total ROI employment.
45 Such a solar facility would also produce \$215.8 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
46 less than \$1.4 million.

TABLE 11.1.19.2-2 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ with Power Tower Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	2,084	570
Total	3,491	754
Income ^b		
Total	215.8	26.2
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	1.4	0.1
BLM payments ^c		
Acreage-related fee	NA	2.0
Capacity fee ^d	NA	18.5
In-migrants (no.)	888	73
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	444	65
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	8	1
Physicians (no.)	2	0
Public safety (no.)	2	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 1,000 MW (corresponding to 9,000 acres [36 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 2,811 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
2 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
3 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
4 888 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
5 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
6 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
7 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
8 with 444 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
9 0.8% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

10
11 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
12 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
13 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
14 eight new teachers, two physicians, and two public safety employee would be required in the
15 ROI. These increases would represent less than 0.1% of total ROI employment expected in these
16 occupations.

17
18
19 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
20 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using power tower technologies would be 754 jobs
21 (Table 11.1.19.2-2). Such a solar facility would also produce \$26.2 million in income. Direct
22 sales taxes would be less than \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar
23 Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), acreage-related fees would be \$2.0 million, and
24 solar generating capacity fees, at least \$18.5 million.

25
26 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
27 operation of a solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their families from
28 outside the ROI would be required, with 73 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
29 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
30 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
31 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
32 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 65 owner-occupied units expected to be
33 required in the ROI.

34
35 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
36 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
37 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
38 one new teacher would be required in the ROI.

39 40 41 **Dish Engine**

42
43
44 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
45 and indirect impacts) from the use of dish engine technologies would be up to 1,419 jobs
46 (Table 11.1.19.2-3). Construction activities would constitute 0.1% of total ROI employment.

TABLE 11.1.19.2-3 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ with Dish Engine Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	847	554
Total	1,419	733
Income ^b		
Total	87.7	25.5
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.6	0.1
BLM payments ^c		
Acreage-related fee	NA	2.0
Capacity fee ^d	NA	18.5
In-migrants (no.)	361	71
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	180	63
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	3	1
Physicians (no.)	1	0
Public safety (no.)	1	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 1,000 MW (corresponding to 9,000 acres [36 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 2,811 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 Such a solar facility would also produce \$87.7 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
2 \$0.6 million.
3

4 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
5 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
6 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
7 361 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
8 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
9 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
10 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
11 with 180 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
12 0.3% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
13

14 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
15 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
16 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
17 three new teachers, one physician, and one public safety employee would be required in the
18 ROI. These increases would represent less than 0.1% of total ROI employment expected in
19 these occupations.
20

21
22 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
23 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using dish engine technologies would be 733 jobs
24 (Table 11.1.19.2-4). Such a solar facility would also produce \$25.5 million in income.
25 Direct sales taxes would be \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar
26 Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), acreage-related fees would be \$2.0 million, and
27 solar generating capacity fees, at least \$18.5 million.
28

29 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
30 operation of a dish engine solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their
31 families from outside the ROI would be required, with 71 persons in-migrating into the ROI.
32 Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number
33 of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile
34 home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-
35 occupied housing units would not be expected to be large, with 63 owner-occupied units
36 expected to be required in the ROI.
37

38 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
39 community service employment (education, health, and public safety). An increase in such
40 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
41 one new teacher would be required in the ROI.
42
43
44

1 **Photovoltaic**

2
3
4 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
5 indirect impacts) from the use of PV technologies would be up to 662 jobs (Table 11.1.19.2-4).
6 Construction activities would constitute less than 0.1 % of total ROI employment. Such a solar
7 development would also produce \$40.9 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
8 \$0.3 million.
9

10 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
11 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
12 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
13 168 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
14 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
15 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
16 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
17 with 84 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
18 0.1% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
19

20 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
21 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
22 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
23 one new teacher would be required in the ROI. This increase would represent less than 0.1% of
24 total ROI employment expected in this occupation.
25
26

27 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
28 indirect impacts) of a build-out using PV technologies would be 73 jobs (Table 11.1.19.2-4).
29 Such a solar facility would also produce \$2.5 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
30 less than \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental
31 Policy (BLM 2010d), acreage-related fees would be \$2.0 million, and solar generating capacity
32 fees, at least \$14.8 million.
33

34 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
35 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
36 from outside the ROI would be required, with seven persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
37 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
38 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
39 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
40 housing units would not be expected to be large, with six owner-occupied units expected to be
41 required in the ROI.
42

43 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
44 service in the ROI.
45
46

TABLE 11.1.19.2-4 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ with PV Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	395	55
Total	662	73
Income ^b		
Total	40.9	2.5
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.3	<0.1
BLM payments ^c		
Acreage-related fee	NA	2.0
Capacity fee ^d	NA	14.8
In-migrants (no.)	168	7
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	84	6
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	1	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	0	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 1,000 MW (corresponding to 9,000 acres [36 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 2,811 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$5,256 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), assuming full build-out of the site.

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1 **11.1.19.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 No SEZ-specific design features addressing socioeconomic impacts have been identified
4 for the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features
5 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program, would
6 reduce the potential for socioeconomic impacts during all project phases.
7
8

1 **11.1.20 Environmental Justice**

2
3
4 **11.1.20.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 On February 11, 1994, the President signed Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to
7 Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” which
8 formally requires federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice as part of their missions
9 (*Federal Register*, Volume 59, page 7629, Feb. 11. 1994). Specifically, it directs them to
10 address, as appropriate, any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental
11 effects of their actions, programs, or policies on minority and low-income populations.

12
13 The analysis of the impacts of solar energy projects on environmental justice issues
14 follows guidelines described in the Council on Environmental Quality’s (CEQ’s) *Environmental*
15 *Justice Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997). The analysis
16 method has three parts: (1) a description of the geographic distribution of low-income and
17 minority populations in the affected area is undertaken; (2) an assessment is conducted to
18 determine whether construction and operation would produce impacts that are high and adverse;
19 and (3) if impacts are high and adverse, a determination is made as to whether these impacts
20 disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations.

21
22 Construction and operation of solar energy projects in the proposed SEZ could affect
23 environmental justice if any adverse health and environmental impacts resulting from either
24 phase of development are significantly high and if these impacts disproportionately affect
25 minority and low-income populations. If the analysis determines that health and environmental
26 impacts are not significant, there can be no disproportionate impacts on minority and low-income
27 populations. In the event impacts are significant, disproportionality would be determined by
28 comparing the proximity of any high and adverse impacts with the location of low-income and
29 minority populations.

30
31 The analysis of environmental justice issues associated with the development of solar
32 facilities considered impacts within the SEZ and an associated 50-mi (80-km) radius around the
33 boundary of the SEZ. A description of the geographic distribution of minority and low-income
34 groups in the affected area was based on demographic data from the 2000 Census (U.S. Bureau
35 of the Census 2009k,1). The following definitions were used to define minority and low-income
36 population groups:

- 37
38 • **Minority.** Persons who identify themselves as belonging to any of the
39 following racial groups: (1) Hispanic, (2) Black (not of Hispanic origin) or
40 African American, (3) American Indian or Alaska Native, (4) Asian, or
41 (5) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

42
43 Beginning with the 2000 Census, where appropriate, the census form allows
44 individuals to designate multiple population group categories to reflect their
45 ethnic or racial origin. In addition, persons who classify themselves as being
46 of multiple racial origins may choose up to six racial groups as the basis of

1 their racial origins. The term minority includes all persons, including those
2 classifying themselves in multiple racial categories, except those who classify
3 themselves as not of Hispanic origin and as White or “Other Race”
4 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009k).

5
6 The CEQ guidance proposed that minority populations should be identified
7 where either (1) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50% or
8 (2) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully
9 greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or
10 other appropriate unit of geographic analysis.

11
12 This PEIS applies both criteria in using the Census data for census block
13 groups, wherein consideration is given to the minority population that is
14 both greater than 50% and 20 percentage points higher than in the state
15 (the reference geographic unit).

- 16
17 • **Low-Income.** Individuals who fall below the poverty line. The poverty line
18 takes into account family size and age of individuals in the family. In 1999,
19 for example, the poverty line for a family of five with three children below
20 the age of 18 was \$19,882. For any given family below the poverty line, all
21 family members are considered as being below the poverty line for the
22 purposes of analysis (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009l).

23
24 The data in Table 11.1.20.1-1 show the minority and low-income composition of the
25 total population located in the proposed SEZ based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines.
26 Individuals identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino are included in the table as a separate
27 entry. However, because Hispanics can be of any race, this number also includes individuals
28 identifying themselves as being part of one or more of the population groups listed in the table.

29
30 A large number of minority and low-income individuals are located in the 50-mi (80-km)
31 area around the boundary of the SEZ. Within the 50-mi (80-km) radius in California, 22.8% of
32 the population is classified as minority, while 10.4% is classified as low-income. However, the
33 number of minority individuals does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area, and the
34 number of minority individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or
35 more; thus, in aggregate, there is no minority population in the SEZ area based on 2000 Census
36 data and CEQ guidelines. The number of low-income individuals does not exceed the state
37 average by 20 percentage points or more and does not exceed 50% of the total population in the
38 area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the SEZ.

39
40 In the Nevada portion of the 50-mi (80-km) radius, 34.8% of the population is classified
41 as minority, while 10.3% is classified as low-income. The number of minority individuals does
42 not exceed 50% of the total population in the area and the number of minority individuals does
43 not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more; thus, in aggregate, there is no
44 minority population in the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines. The
45 number of low-income individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or
46

TABLE 11.1.20.1-1 Minority and Low-Income Populations within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius Surrounding the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Parameter	California	Nevada
Total population	2,034	32,758
White, non-Hispanic	1,570	27,236
Hispanic or Latino	245	2,816
Non-Hispanic or Latino minorities	219	2,706
One race	162	1,920
Black or African American	2	1,029
American Indian or Alaskan Native	132	420
Asian	17	290
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	9	105
Some other race	2	76
Two or more races	57	786
Total minority	464	5,522
Low-income	212	3,377
Percentage minority	22.8	16.9
State percentage minority	53.3	34.8
Percentage low-income	10.4	10.3
State percentage low-income	14.2	10.5

Source: U.S Bureau of the Census (2009k,l).

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more and does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the SEZ.

11.1.20.2 Impacts

Environmental justice concerns common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities are described in detail in Section 5.18. These impacts will be minimized through the implementation of the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, which address the underlying environmental impacts contributing to the concerns. The potentially relevant environmental impacts associated with solar facilities within the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ include noise and dust during the construction; noise and electromagnetic field (EMF) effects associated with operations; visual impacts of solar generation and auxiliary facilities, including transmission lines; access to land used for economic, cultural, or religious purposes; and effects

1 on property values as areas of concern that might potentially affect minority and low-income
2 populations.

3
4 Potential impacts on low-income and minority populations could be incurred as a result
5 of the construction and operation of solar facilities involving each of the four technologies.
6 Impacts are likely to be small, and there are no minority populations defined by CEQ guidelines
7 (Section 11.1.20.1) within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ; this means
8 that any adverse impacts of solar projects would not disproportionately affect minority
9 populations. Because there are also no low-income populations within the 50-mi (80-km) radius,
10 there would be no impacts on low-income populations.

11 12 13 **11.1.20.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

14
15 No SEZ-specific design features addressing environmental justice impacts have been
16 identified for the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design
17 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
18 Program, would reduce the potential for environmental justice impacts during all project phases.
19

1 **11.1.21 Transportation**
2

3 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is accessible by road via U.S. 95. The nearest
4 railroad access is approximately 100 mi (161 km) away. One small airport serves the area, and
5 three other public use airports are within a drive of approximately 100 mi (161 km). General
6 transportation considerations and impacts are discussed in Sections 3.4 and 5.19, respectively.
7
8

9 **11.1.21.1 Affected Environment**
10

11 U.S. 95 extends northwest–southeast along the northeast border of the Amargosa Valley
12 SEZ (Figure 11.1.21.1-1), and several local unimproved dirt roads cross the SEZ. The small
13 town of Beatty is 11 mi (18 km) north-northwest of the SEZ along U.S. 95. Las Vegas is about
14 84 mi (135 km) southwest of the SEZ via U.S. 95. U.S. 95 connects with State Route 267 north
15 of Beatty and State Route 374 in Beatty to the north and with State Routes 373 and 160 toward
16 Las Vegas. Both State Route 267 and State Route 374 travel south from U.S. 95 into Death
17 Valley in California. State Route 373 also travels south toward Death Valley. State Route 160
18 leads south to Pahrump, near the Nevada–California border. The area in and around the proposed
19 SEZ has been designated as “Limited to existing roads, trails, and dry washes,” indicating that
20 these features are open for vehicle and OHV use (BLM 2010b). As shown in Table 11.1.21.1-1,
21 U.S. 95 carries an annual average daily traffic (AADT) volume of about 3,000 vehicles in the
22 vicinity of the Amargosa Valley SEZ (NV DOT 2009).
23

24 The Union Pacific (UP) Railroad serves the region. The nearest rail access is in Las
25 Vegas. The main line passes through Las Vegas on its way between Los Angeles and Salt Lake
26 City.
27

28 The nearest public airport is the Beatty Airport, a small county airport, about a 9-mi
29 (15-km) drive north-northeast of the SEZ. The airport has one asphalt runway in good condition
30 (as listed in Table 11.1.21.1-2). Another small county airport is the Tonopah Airport, located
31 north of Beatty at a driving distance of approximately 115 mi (185 km). Neither the Beatty nor
32 Tonopah Airports has scheduled commercial passenger service or regular freight service. North
33 Las Vegas Airport, 95 mi (153 km) southeast, does not have scheduled commercial passenger
34 service, but caters to smaller private and business aircraft (North Las Vegas Airport 2010). In
35 2008, 22,643 passengers arrived at North Las Vegas Airport and 23,950 departed (BTS 2008).
36 Nearby in Las Vegas, McCarran International Airport is served by all major U.S. airlines. In
37 2008, 20.43 million and 20.48 million passengers arrived at and departed from McCarran
38 International Airport, respectively (BTS 2008). About 83.2 million lb (37.7 million kg) of freight
39 departed and 117 million lb (53.2 million kg) arrived at McCarran in 2008 (BTS 2008).
40
41

42 **11.1.21.2 Impacts**
43

44 As discussed in Section 5.19, the primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be
45 from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day,
46 with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum). This additional traffic on U.S. 95
47 would represent a two-thirds increase in traffic volume in the area of the SEZ. Should up to

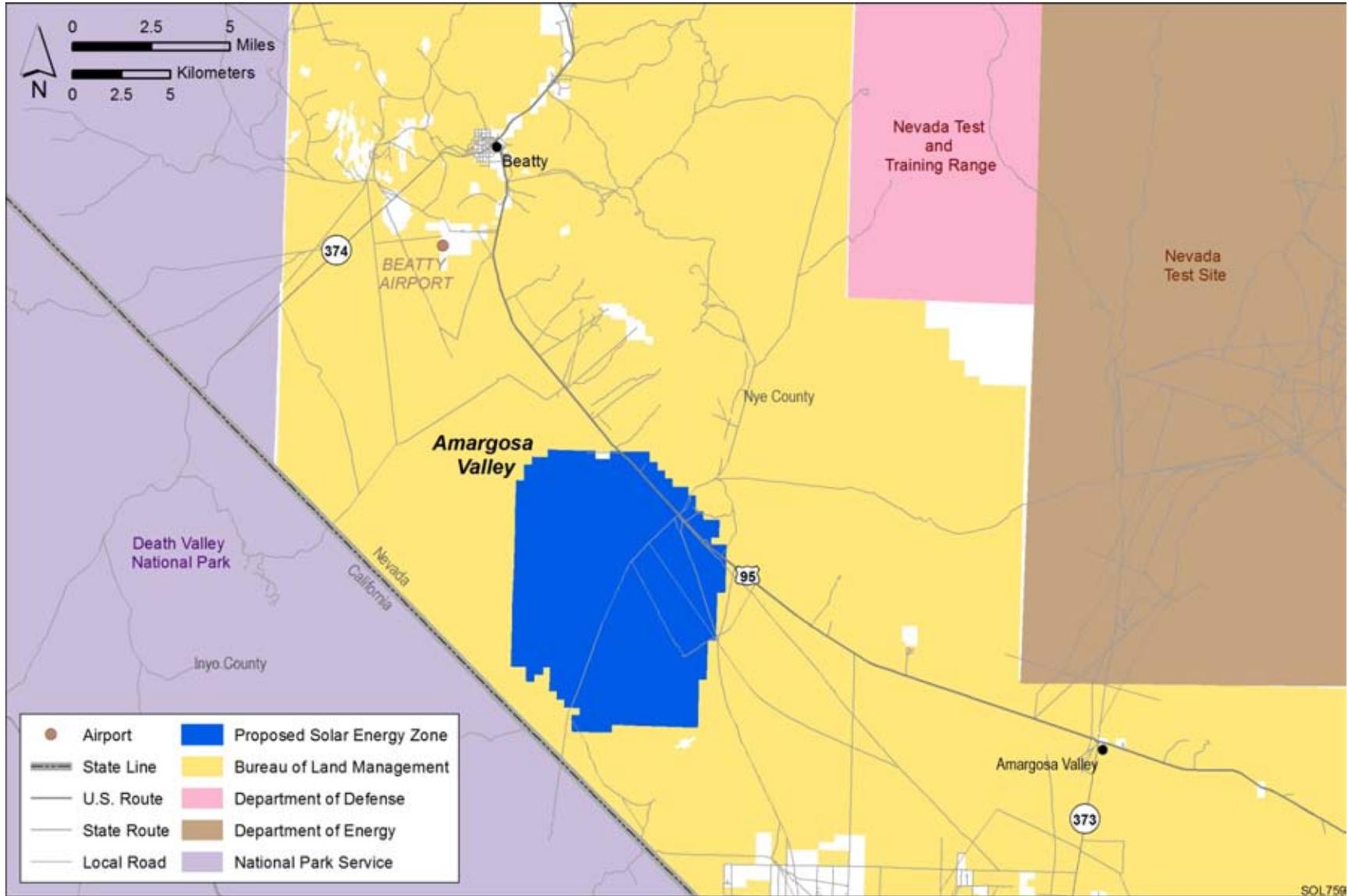


FIGURE 11.1.21.1-1 Local Transportation Network Serving the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

TABLE 11.1.21.1-1 AADT on Major Roads near the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ in 2008

Road	General Direction	Location	AADT (Vehicles)
U.S. 95	Northwest–Southeast	Junction State Route 266	2,000
		Between State Routes 267 and 374	2,300
		North of Beatty	2,500
		South of State Route 374 junction in Beatty, north of the SEZ	3,400
		North of State Route 373 junction, south of the SEZ	2,600
		South of State Route 373 junction	2,900
		East of State Route 160 junction	2,900
State Route 267	Southwest–Northeast	Southwest of U.S. 95	50
State Route 374	Southwest–Northeast	0.6 mi (1 km) west of U.S. 95	390
		4.2 mi (6.8 km) west of U.S. 95	250
State Route 373	North–South	South of junction with U.S. 95	910
State Route 160	North–South	Junction U.S. 95	1,000
		Outskirts of Pahrump, south of Leslie Road	1,600
		East of State Route 372 junction in Pahrump	23,000
		West of State Route 372 Junction in Pahrump	21,000

Source: NV DOT (2009).

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three large projects with approximately 1,000 daily workers each be under development simultaneously, up to 6,000 vehicle trips per day could be added to U.S. 95 in the vicinity of the SEZ, which is about a 200% increase in the current average daily traffic level on most segments of U.S. 95 near the SEZ. Because higher traffic volumes would be experienced during shift changes, traffic on U.S. 95 could experience moderate slowdowns during these time periods in the general area of the SEZ. Local road improvements would be necessary on any portion of U.S. 95 that might be developed so as not to overwhelm the local access roads near any site access point(s). Potential existing site access roads would require improvements, including asphalt pavement.

Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes designated open and available for public use. If there are any designated as open within the proposed SEZ, open routes crossing areas granted ROWs for solar facilities would be re-designated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for more details on how routes coinciding with proposed solar facilities would be treated).

TABLE 11.1.21.1-2 Airports Open to the Public in the Vicinity of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Airport	Location	Owner/ Operator	Runway 1			Runway 2		
			Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition	Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition
Beatty	South of Beatty, about 9 mi (14.5 km) via U.S. 95 north of the SEZ	Nye County	5,600 (1,707)	Asphalt	Good	NA ^a	NA	NA
North Las Vegas	Near U.S. 95 in North Las Vegas, 95 mi (153 km) drive from the SEZ	Clark County	4,202 (1,281)	Asphalt	Good	5,000 (1,524)	Asphalt	Good
McCarran International	Off I-15 in Las Vegas, about 108 mi (174 km) from SEZ	Clark County	8,985 (2,739)	Concrete	Good	9,775 (2,979)	Concrete	Good
Tonopah	East of Tonopah, 115 mi (185 km) north of the SEZ via U.S. 95 and U.S. 6	Nye County	6,196 (1,889)	Asphalt	Good	7,161 (2,183)	Asphalt	Good

^a NA = not applicable.

Source: FAA (2009).

1 **11.1.21.3 Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 No SEZ-specific design features have been identified related to impacts on transportation
4 systems around the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. The programmatic design features
5 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, including local road improvements, multiple site access
6 locations, staggered work schedules, and ride-sharing, would all provide some relief to traffic
7 congestion on local roads leading to the site. Depending on the location of solar facilities within
8 the SEZ, more specific access locations and local road improvements could be implemented
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1 **11.1.22 Cumulative Impacts**
2

3 The analysis presented in this section addresses the potential cumulative impacts in the
4 vicinity of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ in Nye County, Nevada. The CEQ guidelines for
5 implementing NEPA define cumulative impacts as environmental impacts resulting from the
6 incremental effects of an action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable
7 future actions (40 CFR 1508.7). The impacts of other actions are considered without regard to
8 the agency (federal or nonfederal), organization, or person that undertakes them. The time frame
9 of this cumulative impacts assessment could appropriately include activities that would occur up
10 to 20 years in the future (the general time frame for PEIS analyses), but little or no information is
11 available for projects that could occur further than 5 to 10 years in the future.
12

13 The land surrounding the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is undeveloped with few
14 permanent residents living in the area. The nearest population centers are the small community
15 of Beatty, population 1,600, approximately 11 mi (18 km) north of the SEZ, and Amargosa
16 Valley, about 12 mi (20 km) southeast of the SEZ. The SEZ is located 84 mi (135 km) northwest
17 of Las Vegas, Nevada. Death Valley NP in California is adjacent to the southwestern border of
18 the SEZ. The Nevada Test and Training Range is located 10 mi (16 km) northeast of the SEZ,
19 and the NTS is located 10 mi (16 km) east of the SEZ. The Funeral Mountains WA is located
20 20 mi (32 km) south of the SEZ in California, and the Ash Meadow NWR is located 20 mi
21 (32 km) southeast of the SEZ. The Desert NWR is located 40 mi (64 km) east of the SEZ, and
22 the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area is located 40 mi (64 km) southeast of the SEZ.
23 Two other WAs (both in California) are within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ.
24

25 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
26 resources near the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is identified in Section 11.1.22.1. An
27 overview of ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions is presented in Section 11.1.22.2.
28 General trends in population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate change are
29 discussed in Section 11.1.22.3. Cumulative impacts for each resource area are discussed in
30 Section 11.1.22.4.
31

32
33 **11.1.22.1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis**
34

35 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
36 resources evaluated near the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is provided in Table 11.1.22.1-1.
37 These geographic areas define the boundaries encompassing potentially affected resources. Their
38 extent may vary based on the nature of the resource being evaluated and the distance at which an
39 impact may occur (thus, for example, the evaluation of air quality may have a greater regional
40 extent of impact than visual resources). The BLM, the USFWS, the NPS, the DOE, and the DoD
41 administer most of the land around the SEZ; the Tribal lands of the Death Valley Timbi-Sha
42 Shoshone Band of California are also about 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ. The BLM
43 administers approximately 28% of the lands within a 50 mi (80 km) radius of the SEZ.
44
45

TABLE 11.1.22.1-1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis by Resource Area: Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Resource Area	Geographic Extent
Land Use	Southern Nye County
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Southern Nye County
Rangeland Resources	Southern Nye County
Recreation	Southern Nye County
Military and Civilian Aviation	Southern Nye County
Soil Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Amargosa Valley SEZ
Minerals	Southern Nye County
Water Resources	
Surface Water	Amargosa River; Fortymile Wash; Topopah Wash; Unnamed Wash; Ash Meadows NWR (wetlands, streams, surface seeps)
Groundwater	Amargosa Desert groundwater basin; Ash Meadows NWR (springs and seeps); Devils Hole (geothermal pool); springs within DVNP (Travertine, Nevares); Texas Springs within the Furnace Creek discharge area of the lower carbonate rock aquifer
Air Quality and Climate	A 31 mi (50 km) radius from the center of the Amargosa Valley SEZ
Vegetation, Wildlife and Aquatic Biota, Special Status Species	A 50 mi (80 km) radius from the center of the Amargosa Valley SEZ, including portions of Nye, Clark, and Esmeralda Counties in Nevada, and Inyo County in California
Visual Resources	Viewshed within a 25 mi (40 km) radius of the Amargosa Valley SEZ
Acoustic Environment (noise)	Areas adjacent to the Amargosa Valley SEZ
Paleontological Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Amargosa Valley SEZ
Cultural Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Amargosa Valley SEZ for archaeological sites; viewshed within a 25 mi (40 km) radius of the Amargosa Valley SEZ for other properties, such as traditional cultural properties
Native American Concerns	Northern Amargosa Valley and surrounding mountains; viewshed within a 25 mi (40 km) radius of the Amargosa Valley SEZ
Socioeconomics	Nye County, Clark County
Environmental Justice	Nye County
Transportation	U.S. 95, State Routes 374 and 373

1 **11.1.22.2 Overview of Ongoing and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions**
2

3 The future actions described below are those that are “reasonably foreseeable”; that is,
4 they have already occurred, are ongoing, are funded for future implementation, or are included in
5 firm near-term plans. Types of proposals with firm near-term plans are as follows:
6

- 7 • Proposals for which NEPA documents are in preparation or finalized;
- 8
- 9 • Proposals in a detailed design phase;
- 10
- 11 • Proposals listed in formal NOIs published in the *Federal Register* or state
12 publications;
- 13
- 14 • Proposals for which enabling legislations has been passed; and
- 15
- 16 • Proposals that have been submitted to federal, state, or county regulators to
17 begin a permitting process.
- 18

19 Projects in the bidding or research phase or that have been put on hold were not included in the
20 cumulative impact analysis.
21

22 The ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions described below are grouped
23 into two categories: (1) actions that relate to energy production and distribution, including
24 potential solar energy projects under the proposed action (Section 11.1.22.2.1), and (2) other
25 ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions, including those related to mining and mineral
26 processing, grazing management, transportation, recreation, water management, and
27 conservation (Section 11.1.22.2.2). Together, these actions and trends have the potential to
28 affect human and environmental receptors within the geographic range of potential impacts
29 over the next 20 years.
30

31
32 **11.1.22.2.1 Energy Production and Distribution**
33

34 There are no existing energy production facilities within a 50 mi (80 km) radius of the
35 center of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, which includes portions of Nye, Clark, and
36 Esmeralda Counties in Nevada, and Inyo County in California. Reasonably foreseeable future
37 actions related to energy production and distribution are identified in Table 11.1.22.2-1 and
38 are described in the following sections. Renewable energy projects identified include solar
39 and wind, but no foreseeable geothermal projects have been identified. The area is otherwise
40 largely undeveloped and would be expected to remain so in the absence of renewable energy
41 development. Thus, this analysis focuses on existing facilities, renewable energy development,
42 and any other foreseeable large projects nominally covering 500 acres (2 km²) or more, or
43 requiring amounts of water on the scale of utility-scale CSP.
44
45
46

1 **Renewable Energy Development**
2

3 On February 16, 2007, Governor Jim Gibbons of Nevada signed an Executive Order to
4 encourage the development of renewable energy resources in the state (Gibbons 2007a). The
5 Executive Order requires all relevant state agencies to review their permitting processes to
6 ensure the timely and expeditious permitting of renewable energy projects. On May 9, 2007,
7 and June 12, 2008, the Governor signed Executive Orders creating the Nevada Renewable
8 Energy Transmission Access Advisory Committee Phase I and Phase II that will propose
9 recommendations for improved access to the grid system for renewable energy industries
10 (Gibbons 2007b, 2008). On May 28, 2009, the Nevada legislature passed a bill modifying the
11 Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards (Senate Bill 358, 2009). The bill requires that 25% of
12 the electricity sold to be produced by renewable energy sources by 2025.
13

14 The DOE and U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) intend to construct and operate solar
15 energy demonstration projects (EERE 2010). These projects will be located in a 25-mi² (64-km²)
16 Solar Demonstration Zone located in the southwest corner of the NTS, about 10 mi (16 km) east
17 of the SEZ. DOE will use the site to demonstrate CSP technologies.
18

19 Table 11.1.22.2-1 lists two foreseeable solar energy projects on public land, one that is a
20 fast-track project. Fast-track projects are those on public lands for which the environmental
21 review and public participation process is under way and the applications could be approved by
22 December 2010 (BLM 2010c). The fast-track project is considered foreseeable because the
23 permitting and environmental review processes are under way. The second project has issued an
24 NOI to prepare an EIS.
25

26
27 **Solar Energy Development**
28

29
30 ***Amargosa Farm Road (Solar Millennium) Solar Energy Project (NVN 084359)***. This
31 proposed fast-track project would be a two-unit parabolic trough facility with an output of
32 464 MW. The project would be located on 4350 acres (17.6 km²) of mostly BLM-administered
33 land in the Amargosa Valley in Nye County, Nevada, 80 mi (130 km) northwest of Las Vegas.
34 The solar collectors follow the path of the sun, and incident solar radiation is focused on receiver
35 tubes containing an HTF, synthetic oil, which is heated to 752°F (400°C). The HTF flows
36 through a heat exchanger, producing steam that drives a steam turbine and generator. Each unit
37 would have a net output of 232 MW. A nitrate salt thermal energy storage system would be
38 utilized to store excess heat, which would be used to generate electricity during periods of
39 cloud cover and up to 4.5 h after sundown. The proposed project would include power blocks
40 (located in the center of each solar field), an office and maintenance building, a parking area, a
41 laydown area, a stormwater detention basin, and a switchyard. The project would utilize a dry-
42 cooling system.
43

44 The project would be constructed in two phases, beginning in 2010, and would require
45 39 months. Construction would require an average of about 650 workers, with a peak of 1,300;
46 operation would require about 180 employees.

TABLE 11.1.22.2-1 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions Related to Energy Development and Distribution and Other Major Actions near the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ^a

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
<i>Fast-Track Solar Energy Projects on BLM-Administered Land</i>			
Amargosa Farm Road Solar Energy Project (Solar Millennium) (NVN-84359), 464 MW, parabolic trough, 4,350 acres ^b	DEIS March 19, 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	6 mi (10 km) southeast of the SEZ
<i>Renewable Energy Development</i>			
Amargosa North Solar Project (NVN-84465), 150 MW, PV, 7,500 acres	NOI Dec. 14, 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	Adjacent to the SEZ
<i>Transmission and Distribution Systems</i>			
138-kV transmission line	Operating		Corridor passes adjacent to the SEZ

^a Projects in later stages of agency environmental review and project development.

^b Project approved. Updated information will be included in the Final EIS. See http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/energy/renewable_energy/fast-track_renewable.html for details.

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Four special-status or sensitive wildlife species have the potential to occur on the site: desert tortoise (Mojave Population), western burrowing owl, prairie falcon, and LeConte’s Thrasher. Construction will require 1,950 ac-ft (2,400,000 m³) of water over the 39-month construction period. Water requirements for operation will be about 400 ac-ft/year (490,000 m³/yr). Options for the water supply are either leasing from three wells located on private land near the site or purchasing the existing water rights from these three wells (BLM 2010c).

Amargosa North Solar Project (NVN 084465). Pacific Solar Investments is planning to build a 150-MW thin-film solar PV energy generation facility on 7,500 acres (30 km²) of public land adjacent to the SEZ in the Amargosa Valley in Nye County, Nevada, 80 mi (130 km) northwest of Las Vegas. Thin-film PV arrays will be mounted in rows attached to fixed support systems. The arrays are stationary and are oriented along an east–west axis. The arrays are fixed at an angle of 25 degrees, tilted towards the south. This tilt angle is chosen in order to maintain the most favorable angle between the panel and the sun over the course of the operating period.

The proposed project includes the solar facility, a substation, a 20 mi (32 km) transmission line that will connect to the Nevada Power grid, an operation and maintenance building, and access roads. The facility would occupy 1,232 acres (4.99 km²), and the

1 interconnecting transmission line and substation would require 1,124 acres (4.55 km²). The
2 project would be constructed in three phases, 50 MW each, beginning in 2010. The first phase
3 would require 13 months to complete, and subsequent phases 12 months each. Construction
4 would require more than 200 workers, and operation about 10 employees.

5
6 Five special status or sensitive wildlife species have the potential to occur on the site:
7 desert tortoise (Mojave Population), western burrowing owl, and three species of bat.
8 Construction would require up to 3 ac-ft (3,800 m³) of water for dust control. Panel cleaning will
9 require up to 0.3 ac-ft/yr (380 m³/yr). Options for water supply include tanker truck delivery, on-
10 site groundwater, or reclaimed water from local sources (BLM 2009c).

11 12 13 **Pending Solar and Wind ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Lands**

14
15 Applications for right-of-way grants that have been submitted to the BLM include
16 12 pending solar projects, two pending authorization for wind site testing and one authorized
17 for wind testing that would be located either within the Amargosa Valley SEZ or within
18 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ (BLM 2010c). Table 11.1.22.2-2 lists these applications and
19 Figure 11.1.22.2-1 shows their locations.

20
21 The likelihood of any of the regular-track application projects actually being developed
22 is uncertain, but it is generally assumed to be less than that for fast-track applications. The
23 projects are all listed in Table 11.1.22.2-2 for completeness and as an indication of the level
24 of interest in development of solar and wind energy in the region. Some number of these
25 applications would be expected to result in actual projects. Thus, the cumulative impacts of these
26 potential projects are analyzed in their aggregate effects. The following paragraph summarizes
27 wind site testing activities for the AltaGas Renewable Energy Pacific wind project, which is a
28 project authorized for wind site testing, as listed in the table.

29
30
31 ***Ryolite Wind Energy Site Testing and Monitoring (NVN 084067)***. AltaGas Renewable
32 Energy Pacific proposes to install one 197 ft (60 m) meteorological tower to collect wind data on
33 a site about 4 mi (6 km) southwest of Beatty, Nevada. The 6,798-acre (27.5-km²) site is being
34 considered for wind energy generation. The disturbed area would be about 3 acres (0.012 km²)
35 (BLM 2009a).

36 37 38 **Transmission and Distribution**

39
40
41 ***Existing 138-kV Transmission Line***. The Valley Electric Association owns the existing
42 138-kV transmission that runs parallel to U.S. 95 adjacent to the SEZ.

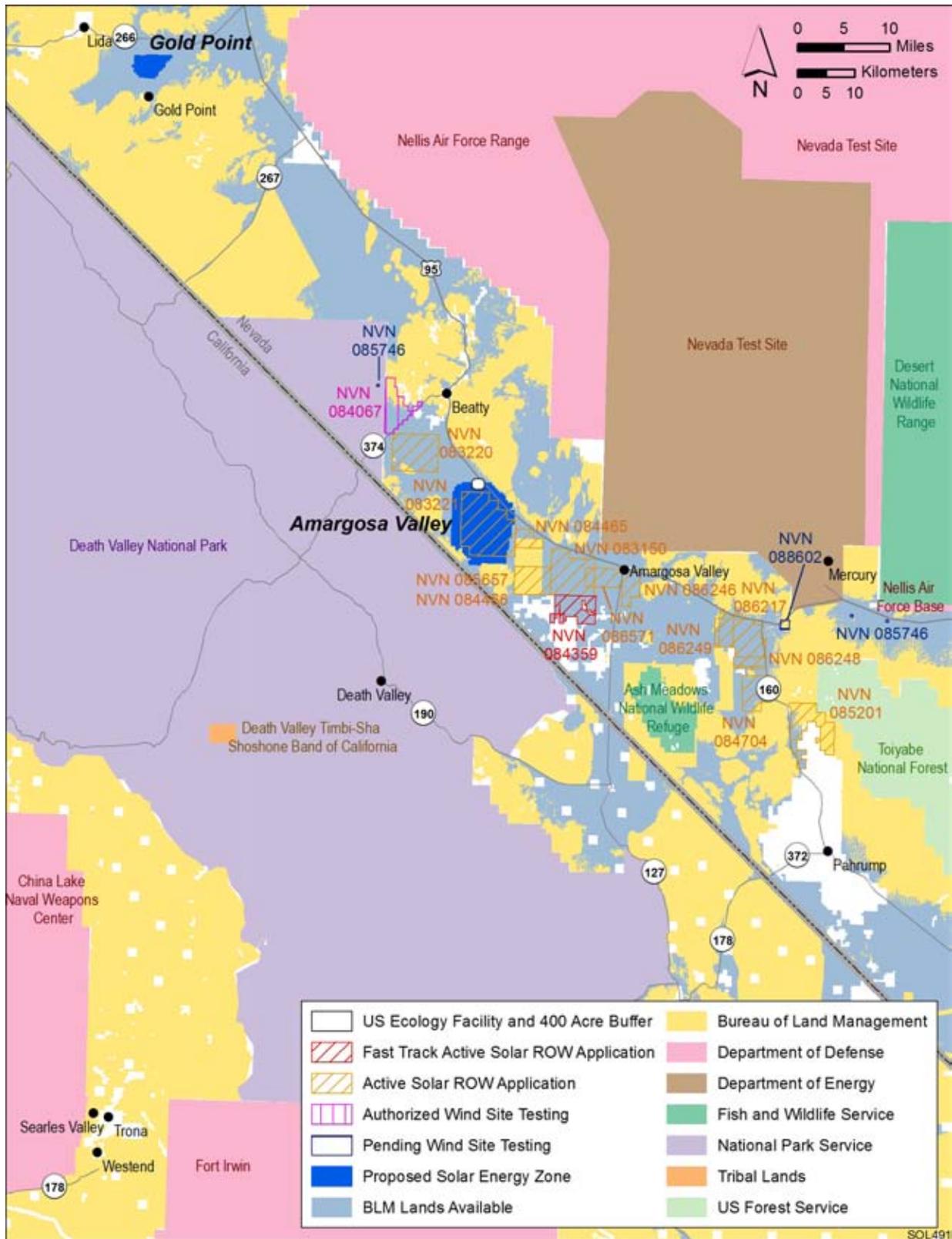
TABLE 11.1.22.2-2 Pending Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Land within 50 mi (80 km) of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Serial Number	Applicant	Application Received	Size (acres)	MW	Technology	Status	Field Office
Solar Applications^a							
NVN 86571	Abengoa Solar, Inc.	Dec. 12, 2008	1,920	250	PV	Pending	Pahrump
NVN 84704	Amargosa Flats Energy, LLC	March 12, 2008	7,040	140	Compact linear Fresnel reflector	Plan of Development received	Pahrump
NVN 86246	Ausra NV I, LLC	Oct. 6, 2008	4,480	140	Parabolic trough	Pending	Pahrump
NVN 86248	Ausra NV I, LLC	Oct. 6, 2008	10,080	420	Parabolic trough	Pending	Pahrump
NVN 86249	Ausra NV I, LLC	Oct. 9, 2008	4,480	– ^b	Parabolic trough	Pending	Pahrump
NVN 83150	Cogentrix Solar Services	Feb. 14, 2007	13,440	1,000	CSP	Pending	Pahrump
NVN 83220	Cogentrix Solar Services	March 5, 2007	12,800	1,400	CSP	Pending	Pahrump
NVN 83221	Cogentrix Solar Services	March 5, 2007	22,400	1,400	CSP	Pending	Pahrump
NVN 85201	Ewindfarm, Inc.	May 14, 2008	10,880	500	PV	Plan of Development received	Pahrump
NVN 86217	Nye County Solar I, LLC	Sept. 29, 2008	14,160	300	Parabolic trough	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 84466	Iberdrola DBA Pacific Solar Investments	Dec. 7, 2007	7,700	500	Parabolic trough	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 85657	Cogentrix Solar Services	July 7, 2008	7,700	720	Parabolic trough	Pending	Pahrump
Wind Applications							
NVN 85746	–	–	–	–	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Pahrump
NVN 88602	–	–	–	–	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Pahrump
NVN 84067	AltaGas Renewable Energy Pacific	Aug. 30, 2007	7,360		Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Pahrump

^a Total solar applications = 117,080 acres.

^b A dash indicates data not available.

Source: BLM (2009d).



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.1.22.2-1 Locations of Renewable Energy Proposals on Public Land within a 50-mi**
 3 **(80-km) Radius of the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ**

1 **11.1.22.2.2 Other Actions**

2
3 The following is a summary of two of the larger projects in the vicinity of the proposed
4 Amargosa Valley SEZ. The projects are also listed in Table 11.1.22.2-3, which describes the
5 projects' status and location and lists natural resources that might be potentially affected by the
6 project and that might also incur cumulative impacts from other actions, including solar
7 development in the SEZ.
8
9

10 **Hazardous Waste Management Facility**

11
12 US Ecology-Nevada operates a hazardous waste management facility 11 mi (18 km)
13 south of Beatty, Nevada, adjacent to the SEZ. The site is 80 acres (0.32 km²) with a 400 acre
14 (1.6 km²) buffer. A portion of the site was opened in 1962 for disposal of low-level radioactive
15 waste (LLRW). LLRW disposal was terminated in 1993. A full range of Resource Conservation
16 and Recovery Act hazardous waste is now accepted for disposal at the site (US Ecology 2009).
17
18

19 **Beatty Water and Sanitation District Water Treatment Plant**

20
21 The Beatty Water and Sanitation District proposes installing a water treatment facility to
22 remove arsenic from the drinking water supply for Beatty. The total disturbed area would be
23 about 8.5 acres (0.034 km²). The facility would include a septic tank leach field, backwash
24 holding tank, and an evaporation/infiltration basin (BLM 2009b).
25
26

27 **Caliente Rail Alignment**

28
29 The DOE proposes to construct and operate a railroad for the shipment of spent nuclear
30 fuel and high-level radioactive waste to the geologic repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The
31
32

TABLE 11.1.22.2-3 Other Major Actions near the Proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
Hazardous Waste Management Facility	In operation since 1962	Soils, terrestrial habitats, noise, air quality	Adjacent to the SEZ
Beatty Water and Sanitation District Water Treatment Plant	EA November 2009	Soils, minor other impacts	10 mi (16 km) north of SEZ
Caliente Rail Realignment	FEIS June 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources	8 mi (13 km) northeast of the SEZ

1 rail line would begin near Caliente, Nevada; extend north; turn in a westerly direction, passing
2 about 8 mi (13 km) northeast of the SEZ, to a location near the northwest corner of the Nevada
3 Test and Training Range; and then continue south–southwest to Yucca Mountain. The rail line
4 would range in length from approximately 328 to 336 mi (528 to 541 km), depending upon the
5 exact location of the alignment, and would be restricted to DOE shipments. Over a 50-year
6 period, 9,500 casks containing spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste, and
7 approximately 29,000 rail cars of other materials, including construction materials, would be
8 shipped to the repository. An average of 17 one-way trains per week would travel along the rail
9 line. Construction of support facilities—interchange yard, staging yard, maintenance-of-way
10 facility, rail equipment maintenance yard, cask maintenance facility, and Nevada Rail Control
11 Center and National Transportation Operation Center—would also be required. Construction
12 would take 4 to 10 years and cost \$2.57 billion. Construction activities would occur inside a
13 1000-ft (300-m) wide ROW for a total footprint of 40,600 acres (164 km²) (DOE 2008).

14 15 16 **Grazing Allotments**

17
18 There are no active grazing allotments in the immediate vicinity of the proposed
19 Amargosa Valley SEZ.

20 21 22 **11.1.22.3 General Trends**

23
24 General trends of population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate
25 change for the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ are presented in this section. Table 11.1.22.3-1
26 lists the relevant impacting factors for the trends.

27 28 29 **11.1.22.3.1 Population Growth**

30
31 Over the period 2000 to 2008, the population grew by 3.9% in Nye County and by
32 4.0% in Clark County, which contain portions the 50-mi (80-km) ROI for the analysis of
33 socioeconomic effects of the Amargosa Valley SEZ (Section 11.1.19.1.5). The population
34 of the ROI in 2006 to 2008 was 55% urban, with all urban areas in the ROI located in Clark
35 County and none in Nye County. The growth rate for the state of Nevada as a whole was 3.4%.
36 Most of the population growth over this period was in North Las Vegas, at a rate of 8.2%.

37 38 39 **11.1.22.3.2 Energy Demand**

40
41 The growth in energy demand is related to population growth through increases in housing,
42 commercial floor space, transportation, manufacturing, and services. Given that population
43 growth is expected in all SEZ areas in Nevada between 2006 and 2016, an increase in energy
44 demand is also expected. However, the EIA projects a decline in per-capita energy use through
45 2030, mainly because of the high cost of oil and improvements in energy efficiency throughout
46 the projection period. Primary energy consumption in the United States between 2007 and 2030

TABLE 11.1.22.3-1 General Trends Relevant to the Proposed SEZs in Nevada

General Trend	Impacting Factors
Population growth	Urbanization Increased use of roads and traffic Land use modification Employment Education and training Increased resource use (e.g., water and energy) Tax revenue
Energy demand	Increased resource use Energy development (including alternative energy sources) Energy transmission and distribution
Water availability	Drought conditions and water loss Conservation practices Changes in water distribution
Climate change	Water cycle changes Increased wildland fires Habitat changes Changes in farming production and costs

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is expected to grow by about 0.5% each year; the fastest growth is projected for the commercial sector (at 1.1% each year). Transportation, residential, and industrial energy consumption are expected to grow by about 0.5, 0.4, and 0.1% each year, respectively (EIA 2009).

11.1.22.3.3 Water Availability

As described in Section 11.1.9.1, the perennial yield for the Amargosa Desert Basin (in combination with five smaller adjacent basins to the north and east) is 24,000 ac-ft/yr (29.6 million m³/yr), with 17,000 ac-ft/yr (20.9 million m³/yr) committed to wildlife purposes as discharge to the system of springs within Ash Meadows NWR (NDWR 2007). The remaining 7,000 ac-ft/yr (8.6 million m³/yr) of the perennial yield is over-allocated, with 25,335 ac-ft/yr (31.2 million m³/yr) committed for beneficial uses (NDWR 2010d), of which 16,380 ac-ft/yr (22.0 million m³/yr) was used in 2009 (NDWR 2010b)..

Groundwater surface elevations have been relatively steady over time in the northern portion of the Amargosa Desert Valley, with significant groundwater drawdown occurring near the irrigated fields of the Amargosa Farms region located approximately 10 to 15 mi (16 to 24 km) southeast of the proposed SEZ. Groundwater surface elevations have fallen at a rate of 0.5 to 1.5 ft/yr (0.2 to 0.5 m/yr) since the late 1980s near Amargosa Farms (USGS 2010b), where groundwater surface elevations had previously declined an approximate 27 ft (8 m) from 1962 to

1 1984 (Nichols and Akers 1985). Groundwater surface elevations at Ash Meadows have been
2 steady over the past two decades (Fenelon and Moreo 2002), with depth to groundwater
3 approximately 20 ft (6 m) below the land surface (USGS 2010b). The Devils Hole seep gauge
4 measures water levels relative to a set datum. Water table elevations in Devils Hole were
5 drastically lower during the 1960s and 1970s as a result of nearby groundwater withdrawals for
6 irrigation, which ceased by the mid-1970s (Riggs and Deacon 2004; Section 11.1.9.1.3). The
7 water table levels reached a low of 3.7 ft (1.2 m) below the datum between 1972 and 1973 and
8 slowly recovered by the late 1980s to about 2 ft (0.6 m) below the datum (USGS 2010b). From
9 1988 to 2004, water table elevations in Devils Hole gradually declined; it is suspected that the
10 cause is regional-scale groundwater withdrawals and changes to groundwater recharge rates
11 (Bedinger and Harrill 2006).

12
13 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Nye County were
14 76,859 ac-ft/yr (94.8 million m³/yr), of which 41% came from surface waters and 59% from
15 groundwater. The largest water use category was irrigation, at 56,583 ac-ft/yr (69.8 million
16 m³/yr), of which 55% came from surface waters and 45% from groundwater. Groundwater
17 supplied the majority of the remaining water uses, with 12,431 ac-ft/yr (15.3 million m³/yr) for
18 domestic supply and 6,580 ac-ft/yr (8.1 million m³/yr) for mining (Kenny et al. 2009).

21 *11.1.22.3.4 Climate Change*

22
23 Governor Jim Gibbons' Nevada Climate Change Advisory Committee (NCCAC)
24 conducted a study of climate change and its effects on Nevada (NCCAC 2008). The report
25 summarized the present scientific understanding of climate change and its potential impacts on
26 Nevada. A report on global climate change in the United States prepared by the U.S. Global
27 Change Research Program (GCRP 2009) documents current temperature and precipitation
28 conditions and historic trends. Excerpts of the conclusions from these reports indicate the
29 following:

- 30
31 • Decreased precipitation, with a greater percentage of that precipitation coming
32 from rain, will result in a greater likelihood of winter and spring flooding and
33 decreased stream flow in the summer.
- 34
35 • The average temperature in the southwest has already increased by about
36 1.5 °F (0.8°C) compared to a 1960 to 1979 baseline, and by the end of the
37 century, the average annual temperature is projected to rise 4°F to 10°F
38 (2°C to 6°C).
- 39
40 • A warming climate and the related reduction in spring snowpack and soil
41 moisture have increased the length of the wildfire season and intensity of
42 forest fires.
- 43
44 • Later snow and less snow coverage in ski resort areas could force ski areas
45 to shut down before the season would otherwise end.
- 46

- 1 • Much of the Southwest has experienced drought conditions since 1999. This
2 represents the most severe drought in the last 110 years. Projections indicate
3 an increasing probability of drought in the region.
4
- 5 • As temperatures rise, the landscape will be altered as species shift their ranges
6 northward and upward to cooler climates.
7
- 8 • Temperature increases, when combined with urban heat island effects for
9 major cities such as Las Vegas, present significant stress to health and
10 electricity and water supplies.
11
- 12 • Increased minimum temperatures and warmer springs extend the range and
13 lifetime of many pests that stress trees and crops, and lead to northward
14 migration of weed species.
15
16

17 **11.1.22.4 Cumulative Impacts on Resources**

18
19 This section addresses potential cumulative impacts in the proposed Amargosa Valley
20 SEZ on the basis of the following assumptions: (1) because of the large size of the proposed
21 SEZ (more than 30,000 acres [121 km²]), up to three projects could be constructed at a time,
22 and (2) maximum total disturbance over 20 years would be about 25,300 acres (102 km²)
23 (80% of the entire proposed SEZ). For purposes of analysis, it is also assumed that no more
24 than 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) would be disturbed per project annually and 250 acres (1.01 km²)
25 monthly on the basis of construction schedules planned in current applications. Since an existing
26 138-kV transmission line runs along the along the northeast border of the SEZ, no analysis of
27 impacts has been conducted for the construction of a new transmission line outside of the SEZ
28 that might be needed to connect solar facilities to the regional grid (see Section 11.1.1.2).
29 Regarding site access, because U.S. 95 also passes along the northeast border of the SEZ, no
30 major road construction activities outside of the SEZ would be needed for development to occur
31 in the SEZ.
32

33 Cumulative impacts that would result from the construction, operation, and
34 decommissioning of solar energy development projects within the proposed SEZ when added
35 to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions described in the previous
36 section in each resource area are discussed below. At this stage of development, because of the
37 uncertainty of the future projects in terms of size, number, location within the proposed SEZ,
38 and the types of technology that would be employed, the impacts are discussed qualitatively or
39 semiquantitatively, with ranges given as appropriate. More detailed analyses of cumulative
40 impacts would be performed in the environmental reviews for the specific projects in relation to
41 all other existing and proposed projects in the geographic areas.
42
43

44 **11.1.22.4.1 Lands and Realty**

45
46 The area covered by the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is largely undeveloped. In
47 general, the areas surrounding the SEZ are rural. Numerous dirt/ranch roads provide access
48 throughout the SEZ.
49

1 Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish a
2 large industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps
3 in perpetuity. Access to such areas by both the general public and much wildlife would be
4 eliminated. Traditional uses of public lands would no longer be allowed. Utility-scale solar
5 energy development would be a new and discordant land use in the area.
6

7 In addition, numerous solar projects and at least one wind energy project are proposed
8 within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. As shown in
9 Table 11.1.22.2-2 and Figure 11.1.22.2-1, a total of 12 solar applications are pending, including
10 one fast-track project, that cover a total of about 117,000 acres (473 km²). Also, one wind
11 application, which covers 7,360 acres (30 km²), is authorized for wind testing and two more are
12 pending such authorization on public land within this distance. The majority of the solar
13 applications within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ lie to the southeast in Nevada, while one lies
14 within the proposed SEZ and one lies about 3 mi (5 km) to the northwest. In addition, the
15 proposed Gold Point SEZ is about 62 mi (100 km) to the northwest. The authorized wind testing
16 application is about 10 mi (16 km) to the northwest. Although not all of these proposed solar and
17 wind projects would likely be built, the number of applications indicates a strong interest in the
18 development of solar energy in particular in the region. In addition, the existing US Ecology
19 hazardous waste facility lies adjacent to the proposed SEZ on 80 acres (0.32 km²) and includes a
20 400 acre (1.6 km²) buffer.
21

22 The development of utility-scale solar projects on public lands in combination with
23 ongoing and foreseeable actions within the geographic extent of effects, nominally 50 mi
24 (80 km), would have small to moderate cumulative effects on land use in the proposed Amargosa
25 Valley SEZ. Most other actions outside of the proposed SEZ are wind energy projects, which
26 would allow many current land uses to continue, including farming. However, the number and
27 size of such projects could result in cumulative effects, especially if the SEZ is fully developed
28 with solar projects.
29
30

31 ***11.1.22.4.2 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics*** 32

33 Seven specially designated areas are near the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ in Nevada
34 and California, the largest being Death Valley NP, within 2 mi (3 km) to the west. Potential
35 exists for cumulative visual impacts on these areas from the construction of utility-scale solar
36 energy facilities within the SEZ and the construction of transmission lines outside the SEZ. The
37 exact nature of cumulative visual impacts on the users of these areas would depend on the
38 specific solar technologies employed in the SEZ and the locations selected within the SEZ for
39 solar facilities and outside the SEZ for transmission lines. Two reasonably foreseeable energy
40 projects were identified within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ: Amargosa Farm Road Solar
41 Energy Project (NVN-084359), located about 8 mi (13 km) to the southeast, and the Amargosa
42 North Solar Project (NVN-084465) adjacent to the eastern boundary of the SEZ; the existing US
43 Ecology-Nevada hazardous waste facility adjacent to the SEZ may also be seen from visually
44 sensitive areas near the SEZ.
45
46

1 **11.1.22.4.3 Rangeland Resources**
2

3 The area in and around the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is currently not used for
4 grazing. If utility-scale solar facilities were constructed on the SEZ, those areas occupied by the
5 solar projects would be excluded from future grazing. The effects of other renewable energy
6 projects within the geographic extent of effects, including the Amargosa Farm Road Solar
7 Energy Project, the Amargosa North Solar Project, and any of the other pending solar
8 applications within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ that are ultimately developed would not likely
9 result in cumulative impacts on grazing because of the low level of grazing in the Amargosa
10 Valley.
11

12 Because the Amargosa Valley SEZ is 5.3 mi (8.5 km) or more from any wild horse and
13 burro HMA managed by BLM and more than 35 mi (56 km) from any wild horse and burro
14 territory administered by the USFS, solar energy development within the SEZ would not directly
15 affect wild horses and burros that are managed by these agencies.
16
17

18 **11.1.22.4.4 Recreation**
19

20 Limited outdoor recreation (e.g., OHV use, photography, and hunting) occurs on or in the
21 immediate vicinity of the SEZ. Construction of utility-scale solar projects on the SEZ would
22 preclude recreational use of the affected lands for the duration of the projects. Access to public
23 land and NPS areas south and west of the SEZ would be made more difficult by development of
24 the SEZ. There would be a potential for visual impacts on recreational users of the Death Valley
25 NP and other sensitive viewing areas near the SEZ. Because the area of the proposed SEZ has
26 low current recreational use and because major foreseeable and potential actions, primarily
27 potential solar projects located to the northwest and southeast, would similarly affect areas of
28 low recreational use, cumulative impacts on recreation within the geographic extent of effects
29 would be small.
30
31

32 **11.1.22.4.5 Military and Civilian Aviation**
33

34 The area around the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is used intensively for flight
35 training by the military. The closest civilian municipal aviation facility is the Nye County
36 Airport at Beatty, 7 mi (11 km) north of the SEZ. Recent information from the DoD indicates
37 that there are concerns about solar development in the SEZ, particularly regarding structures
38 taller than 50 ft (15 m) AGL (Section 11.1.6.2). Thus, solar energy development in the proposed
39 SEZ in combination with other foreseeable or potential projects in the area, including solar and
40 wind facilities, could result in cumulative impacts on military or civilian aviation.
41
42

43 **11.1.22.4.6 Soil Resources**
44

45 Ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling) during the
46 construction phase of a solar project, including the construction of any associated transmission

1 line connections and new roads, would contribute to soil loss due to wind erosion. Road use
2 during construction, operations, and decommissioning of the solar facilities would further
3 contribute to soil loss. Programmatic design features would be employed to minimize erosion
4 and loss. Residual soil losses with mitigations in place would be in addition to losses from
5 construction of other renewable energy facilities, recreational uses, and agriculture. Overall, the
6 cumulative impacts on soil resources would be small, however, because of the small number of
7 currently foreseeable projects within the geographic extent of effects. The number of pending
8 solar applications in this area suggests that future impacts could increase somewhat over those
9 from the firmly foreseeable projects but would be expected to remain small.

10
11 Landscaping of solar energy facility areas could alter drainage patterns and lead to
12 increased siltation of surface water streambeds, in addition to that from other development
13 activities and agriculture. However, with the expected programmatic design features in place,
14 cumulative impacts would be small.

15 16 17 ***11.1.22.4.7 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)***

18
19 As discussed in Section 11.1.8, there is currently a single closed oil and gas lease within
20 the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ, but there are no mining claims or proposals for geothermal
21 energy development pending. Because of the generally low level of mineral production in the
22 proposed SEZ and surrounding area and the expected low impact on mineral accessibility of
23 other foreseeable actions within the geographic extent of effects, cumulative impacts on mineral
24 resources would be small.

25 26 27 ***11.1.22.4.8 Water Resources***

28
29 Section 11.1.9.2 describes the water requirements for various technologies if they were to
30 be employed on the proposed SEZ to develop utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount of
31 water needed during the peak construction year for all evaluated solar technologies would be
32 3,390 to 4,886 ac-ft (4.2 million to 6.0 million m³). During operations, with full development of
33 the SEZ over 80% of its available land area, the amount of water needed for all evaluated solar
34 technologies would range from 144 to 75,971 ac-ft/yr (177,600 to 93.7 million m³). The amount
35 of water needed during decommissioning would be similar to or less than the amount used
36 during construction. As discussed in Section 11.1.22.2.3, water withdrawals in 2005 from surface
37 waters and groundwater in Nye County were 76,859 ac-ft/yr (94.8 million m³/yr), of which 41%
38 came from surface waters and 59% came from groundwater. Therefore, cumulatively the
39 additional water resources needed for solar facilities in the SEZ during operations would
40 constitute a relatively small (0.2%) to a very large (99%) increment (the ratio of the annual
41 operations water requirement to the annual amount withdrawn in Nye County) depending on the
42 solar technology used (PV technology at the low end and the wet-cooled parabolic technology at
43 the high end). However, as discussed in Section 11.1.9.1.3, the current perennial yield for the
44 Amargosa Desert Basin (in combination with five smaller adjacent basins to the north and east)
45 is only an estimated 24,000 ac-ft/yr (29.6 million m³/yr) of which 7,000 ac-ft/yr
46 (8.6 million m³/yr) is transferrable and over-appropriated at 25,335 ac-ft/yr (31.5 million m³/yr)

1 (NDWR 2010d). A large portion of the perennial yield is allocated to the USFWS for wildlife
2 purposes and represents discharge to springs within Ash Meadows NWR and at Devils Hole,
3 leaving roughly 30 percent of the perennial yield available for groundwater development. The
4 current levels of pumping exceed the perennial yield available for groundwater development by
5 roughly two times according to Nevada State Engineer Ruling 5750 (NDWR 2007). Thus,
6 springs are already sensitive to current withdrawal levels. Groundwater surface elevations have
7 been relatively steady in the northern portion of the Amargosa Desert Valley, while significant
8 drawdown is occurring near the irrigated fields of the Amargosa Farms region 10 to 15 mi
9 (16 to 24 km) southeast of the proposed SEZ.

10
11 While solar development of the proposed SEZ with water-intensive wet-cooled
12 technologies would likely be infeasible due to impacts on groundwater supplies and
13 restrictions on water rights, even withdrawals at currently appropriated levels could result in
14 impacts on spring-supported wetlands and sensitive aquatic species in the Amargosa Valley
15 (Section 11.1.9.1.2). Thus, a significant increase in withdrawals from development within the
16 proposed SEZ could result in a major impact on groundwater in the Amargosa Valley, while
17 further cumulative impacts could occur when combined with other future uses in the valley.
18 Other projects that could contribute to incremental increases in the withdrawals from the
19 regional flow system in Nye County include the Amargosa Farm Road Solar Energy Project,
20 the US Ecology-Nevada hazardous waste management facility adjacent to the SEZ, and any
21 potential solar projects in the Amargosa Desert, including, in particular, any of the 12 non-PV
22 proposed solar projects listed in Table 11.1.22.2-2.

23
24 Small quantities of sanitary wastewater would be generated during the construction and
25 operation of the potential utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount generated from solar
26 facilities would be in the range of 28 to 222 ac-ft (34,500 to 273,800 m³) during the peak
27 construction year and between 3 and 71 ac-ft/yr (up to 87,600 m³/yr) during operations. Because
28 of the small quantity, the sanitary wastewater generated by the solar energy facilities would not
29 be expected to put undue strain on available sanitary wastewater treatment facilities in the
30 general area of the SEZ. For technologies that rely on conventional wet-cooling systems, there
31 would also be 799 to 1,437 ac-ft/yr (986,000 to 1.8 million m³/yr) of blowdown water
32 from cooling towers. Blowdown water would need to be either treated on-site or sent to an off-
33 site facility. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure that treatment ponds are
34 effectively lined in order to prevent any groundwater contamination. Thus, blowdown water
35 would not contribute to cumulative effects on treatment systems or on groundwater.

36 37 38 ***11.1.22.4.9 Vegetation*** 39

40 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located within the Amargosa Desert ecoregion,
41 which primarily supports a creosotebush and white bursage community. Many endemic plants
42 also occur in this ecoregion, particularly in Ash Meadows. Lands within the proposed Amargosa
43 Valley SEZ and within a 5 mi (8 km) area outside the SEZ boundary are classified primarily as
44 Sonora–Mojave Creosotebush–White Bursage Desert Scrub. If utility-scale solar energy projects
45 were to be constructed within the SEZ, all vegetation within the footprints of the facilities would
46 likely be removed during land-clearing and land-grading operations. Full development of the

1 SEZ over 80% of its area would result in moderate impacts on Sonora–Mojave Creosotebush–
2 White Bursage Desert Scrub (Section 11.1.10.2.1). There are no known wetlands within the
3 proposed SEZ; however, any wetland or riparian habitats outside of the SEZ supported by
4 groundwater discharge could be affected by hydrologic changes resulting from project activities.
5 The fugitive dust generated during the construction of the solar facilities could increase the dust
6 loading in habitats outside a solar project area, in combination with that from other construction,
7 agriculture, recreation, and transportation. The cumulative dust loading could result in reduced
8 productivity or changes in plant community composition. Similarly, surface runoff from project
9 areas after heavy rains could increase sedimentation and siltation in areas downstream.
10 Programmatic design features would be used to reduce the impacts from solar energy projects
11 and thus reduce the overall cumulative impacts on plant communities and habitats. The primary
12 plant community types within the proposed SEZ generally have a wide distribution within the
13 Amargosa Valley area, and thus other ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions would
14 have a cumulative effect on them. Such effects could be moderate with full build-out of the
15 SEZ, but would likely be small for foreseeable development because of the abundance of the
16 primary species and the relatively small number of foreseeable actions within the geographic
17 extent of effects. Cumulative effects on wetland species could occur from water use, drainage
18 modifications, and stream sedimentation from development in the region. The magnitude of
19 such effects is difficult to predict at the current time.

21 ***11.1.22.4.10 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota***

23
24 Wildlife species that could potentially be affected by the development of utility-scale
25 solar energy facilities in the proposed SEZ include amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals.
26 The construction of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ and any associated transmission
27 lines and roads in or near the SEZ would have an impact on wildlife through habitat disturbance
28 (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration), wildlife disturbance, and wildlife injury or
29 mortality. In general, species with broad distributions and a variety of habitats would be less
30 affected than species with a narrowly defined habitat within a restricted area. The use of
31 programmatic design features would reduce the severity of impacts on wildlife. These
32 programmatic design features may include pre-disturbance biological surveys to identify key
33 habitat areas used by wildlife, followed by avoidance of or minimization of disturbance to
34 those habitats.

35
36 Other ongoing and reasonably foreseeable and potential future actions within 50 mi
37 (80 km) of the proposed SEZ are dominated by solar energy projects (Section 11.1.22.2), the
38 majority of which lie to the southeast, although one lies within the proposed SEZ and one lies
39 about 3 mi (5 km) to the northwest (Figure 11.1.22.2-1). While full build-out over 80% of the
40 proposed SEZ would result in up to moderate impacts on some amphibian, reptile, bird, and
41 mammal species (Section 11.1.11), foreseeable development within the 50-mi (80-km)
42 geographic extent of effects would result in small to moderate impacts. Many of the wildlife
43 species present within the proposed SEZ that could be affected by other actions have extensive
44 available habitat within the region, although only two major new actions, the Amargosa Farm
45 Road Solar Energy Project and the Amargosa North Solar Project, have been firmly identified.

1 Some number of the other 12 pending solar applications in the region could also contribute to
2 cumulative effects.

3
4 No surface water bodies, wetlands, or perennial streams are present within the boundaries
5 of the proposed SEZ. The portion of the intermittent/ephemeral Amargosa River that lies in
6 Nevada, including that which crosses the SEZ, is typically dry and flows only after precipitation.
7 Thus, aquatic habitat and biota are not likely to be present within the SEZ (Section 11.1.11.4).
8 However, potential contributions to cumulative impacts on aquatic biota and habitats resulting
9 from groundwater drawdown or soil transport to surface streams from solar facilities within the
10 SEZ and within the geographic extent of effects are possible. Such effects on the spring-fed
11 Ash Meadows NWR and Devils Hole in Nevada and on perennial reaches of the Amargosa River
12 ACEC in California are of particular concern. The magnitude of cumulative impacts on aquatic
13 species will depend on the extent of eventual solar and other development in the region and on
14 cooling technologies employed by solar facilities.

15
16
17 ***11.1.22.4.11 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive,***
18 ***and Rare Species)***
19

20 On the basis of natural heritage records and the presence of potentially suitable habitat, as
21 many as 52 special status species could occur within the Amargosa Valley SEZ or could be
22 affected by groundwater use there. Seven of these species have been recorded within or near the
23 SEZ: Ash Meadows buckwheat, Big Dune miloderes weevil, an endemic ant (*Neivamyrex*
24 *nyensis*), Giulianis's dune scarab, large aegilian scarab, desert tortoise, and Nelson's bighorn
25 sheep. The desert tortoise is listed as threatened under the ESA, and the Giuliani's dune scarab
26 and large aegilian scarab are under review for listing under the ESA. There are 25 groundwater-
27 dependent species known to occur within the Ash Meadows NWR and other portions of the SEZ
28 region that utilize groundwater from the Amargosa Basin. Numerous additional species that
29 occur on or in the vicinity of the SEZ are listed as threatened or endangered by the states of
30 Nevada and California or listed as a sensitive species by the BLM (Section 11.1.12.1). Design
31 features to be used to reduce or eliminate the potential for effects on these species from the
32 construction and operation of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZs and related
33 developments (e.g., access roads and transmission line connections) outside the SEZ include
34 avoidance of habitat and minimization of erosion, sedimentation, and dust deposition. Ongoing
35 effects on special-status species include those from roads, transmission lines, agriculture, and
36 industrial and recreational activities in the area, while foreseeable and potential actions are
37 dominated by proposed solar projects in the Amargosa Valley. Many of the special status species
38 present on the SEZ are also likely to be present at the locations of these other foreseeable or
39 potential actions where the same habitats exist. Cumulative impacts on protected species within
40 the geographic extent of effects, including within spring-fed wetland areas that could be affected
41 by water use by future solar facilities, would depend on the number, location, and cooling
42 technologies of projects that are actually built. Projects would employ mitigation measures to
43 limit effects.

1 **11.1.22.4.12 Air Quality and Climate**
2

3 While solar energy generates minimal emissions compared with fossil fuels, the site
4 preparation and construction activities associated with solar energy facilities would be
5 responsible for some amount of air pollutants. Most of the emissions would be particulate matter
6 (fugitive dust) and emissions from vehicles and construction equipment. When these emissions
7 are combined with those from other nearby projects outside the proposed SEZ or when they are
8 added to natural dust generation from winds and windstorms, the air quality in the general
9 vicinity of the projects could be temporarily degraded. For example, the maximum 24-hour
10 PM₁₀ concentration at or near the SEZ boundaries could at times exceed the applicable standard
11 of 150 µg/m³. The dust generation from the construction activities can be controlled by
12 implementing aggressive dust control measures, such as increased watering frequency or road
13 paving or treatment.
14

15 Because the area proposed for the SEZ is rural and undeveloped land, there are no
16 significant industrial sources of air emissions in the area. The only type of air pollutant of
17 concern is dust generated by winds. Because the number of other major foreseeable actions
18 that could produce fugitive dust emissions is small (the Amargosa Farm Road Solar Energy
19 Project and the Amargosa North Solar Project) and because potential projects are unlikely to
20 overlap in both time and affected area, cumulative air quality effects due to dust emissions
21 during any overlapping construction periods would be small.
22

23 Over the long term and across the region, the development of solar energy may have
24 beneficial cumulative impacts on the air quality and atmospheric values by offsetting the need
25 for energy production that results in higher levels of emissions, such as coal, oil, and natural
26 gas. As discussed in Section 11.1.13.2.2, air emissions from operating solar energy facilities
27 are relatively minor, while the displacement of criteria air pollutants, VOCs, TAPs, and GHG
28 emissions currently produced from fossil fuels could be significant. For example, if the
29 Amargosa Valley SEZ were fully developed (80% of its acreage) with solar facilities, the
30 quantity of pollutants avoided could be as large as 23% of all emissions from the current
31 electric power systems in Nevada.
32

33
34 **11.1.22.4.13 Visual Resources**
35

36 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ is located within the flat, treeless plain of the
37 Amargosa Desert floor. The SEZ is visible from the Big Dune SRMA and ACEC, about 0.5 mi
38 (0.8 km) and 2 mi (3 km) east of the southern boundary of the SEZ, respectively, and from
39 mountains in the Death Valley NP and WA, 0.7 mi (1.1 km) southwest of the SEZ. More distant
40 views of the SEZ include the Funeral Mountains WA, about 18 mi (29 km) south, and
41 Ash Meadows NWR, about 16.4 mi (26.4 km) southeast of the SEZ. The CDCA is 0.9 mi
42 (1.5 km) southwest of the SEZ. The area is sparsely inhabited, remote, and rural. The Amargosa
43 Valley and nearby Death Valley National Park are noted for their unusually dark night skies.
44
45

1 The VRI values for the SEZ and immediate surroundings are VRI Class IV, indicating
2 low relative visual values. The inventory indicates low scenic quality for the SEZ and its
3 immediate surroundings. Cultural modifications in the vicinity of the SEZ include U.S. 95, a
4 two-lane highway that passes through the northeast portion of the SEZ, existing transmission
5 lines, dirt roads, and areas with visible tracking from OHVs (Section 11.1.14.1).
6

7 Construction of utility-scale solar facilities on the SEZ and associated transmission lines
8 outside the SEZ would significantly alter the natural scenic quality of the area. Because of the
9 large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat, open nature of the
10 proposed SEZ, some lands outside the SEZ would also be subjected to visual impacts related to
11 the construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities. Potential
12 impacts would include night sky pollution, including increased skyglow, light spillage, and glare.
13 Other reasonably foreseeable and potential solar and wind projects would cumulatively affect the
14 visual resources in the area. Additional impacts would result from the construction of related
15 access roads and transmission line connections.
16

17 Visual impacts resulting from solar energy development within the SEZ would be in
18 addition to impacts caused by other potential projects in the area. The Amargosa Farm Road
19 Solar Energy Project, which has an ongoing fast-track solar application, would be located about
20 8 mi (13 km) to the southeast of the SEZ; the Amargosa North Solar Project would be located on
21 the eastern boundary of the SEZ; and the existing US Ecology-Nevada hazardous waste facility
22 lies adjacent to the SEZ. There are also 12 other pending solar applications and 3 wind site
23 testing applications on public lands within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ; these represent additional
24 potential projects (Figure 11.1.22.2-1). While the contribution to cumulative impacts in the area
25 of these potential projects would depend on the number and location of facilities that are actually
26 built, it may be concluded that the general visual character of the landscape within this distance
27 could be altered from what is currently rural desert by the presence of solar facilities and
28 windmills. Because of the topography of the region, solar facilities within the SEZ and wind
29 facilities located in basin flats would be visible at great distances from surrounding mountains,
30 which include sensitive viewsheds. It is possible that two or more facilities might be viewable
31 from a single location. In addition, facilities would be located near major roads and thus would
32 be viewable by motorists, who would also be viewing transmission line corridors, towns, and
33 other infrastructure, as well as the road system itself.
34

35 As additional facilities are added, several projects might become visible from one
36 location, or in succession, as viewers move through the landscape, driving on local roads. In
37 general, the new projects would not be expected to be consistent in terms of their appearance,
38 and depending on the number and type of facilities, the resulting visual disharmony could exceed
39 the visual absorption capability of the landscape and add significantly to the cumulative visual
40 impact. On the basis of all of the above, the overall cumulative visual impacts within the
41 geographic extent of effects from solar, wind, and other projects could be in the range of small
42 to moderate.
43
44
45

1 **11.1.22.4.14 Acoustic Environment**

2
3 The areas around the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ are relatively quiet. The existing
4 noise sources around the SEZ include road traffic, aircraft flyover, agricultural activities,
5 industrial activities, and community activities and events. Other noise sources are associated with
6 current land use around the SEZ, including outdoor recreation and OHV use. The construction of
7 solar energy facilities could increase the noise levels periodically for up to 3 years per facility,
8 but there would be little or minor noise impacts during operation of solar facilities, except from
9 solar dish engine facilities and from parabolic trough or power tower facilities using TES, which
10 could affect nearby residences.

11
12 Other ongoing and reasonably foreseeable and potential future activities in the general
13 vicinity of the SEZs are described in Section 11.1.22.2. Because proposed projects are relatively
14 far from the SEZ with respect to noise impacts and the area is sparsely populated, cumulative
15 noise effects during the construction or operation of solar facilities are unlikely.

16
17
18 **11.1.22.4.15 Paleontological Resources**

19
20 The proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ has low potential for the occurrence of significant
21 fossil material (Section 11.1.16.1). While impacts on significant paleontological resources are
22 unlikely to occur in the SEZ, the specific sites selected for future projects would be investigated
23 to determine whether a paleontological survey is needed. Any paleontological resources
24 encountered would be mitigated to the extent possible. No significant cumulative impacts on
25 paleontological resources are expected.

26
27
28 **11.1.22.4.16 Cultural Resources**

29
30 The Amargosa Valley is rich in cultural history, with settlements dating as far back as
31 12,000 years. The area covered by the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ has the potential to
32 contain significant cultural resources, especially dune areas within the SEZ. At least 17 cultural
33 resource surveys have been conducted in the Amargosa Valley SEZ, and another 53 surveys
34 have been conducted within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ, resulting in the recording of 4 sites within
35 SEZ and at least 60 sites located within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ (Section 11.1.17.1). It is
36 possible, but unlikely, that the development of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ,
37 when added to other potential projects likely to occur in the area, could contribute cumulatively
38 to cultural resource impacts occurring in the region. However, only the existing US Ecology-
39 Nevada hazardous waste facility and the foreseeable Amargosa Farm Road Solar Energy Project
40 and Amargosa North Solar Project applications lie within the 25-mi (40-km) geographic extent
41 of effects. Other potential projects within this distance include 12 other pending solar
42 applications and 3 wind site testing applications. While any future solar projects would disturb
43 large areas, the specific sites selected for future projects would be surveyed; historic properties
44 encountered would be avoided or mitigated to the extent possible. Through ongoing consultation
45 with the Nevada SHPO and appropriate Native American governments, it is likely that most
46 adverse effects on significant resources in the region could be mitigated to some degree. It is

1 unlikely that any sites recorded in the SEZ would be of such individual significance that, if
2 properly mitigated, development would cumulatively cause an irretrievable loss of information
3 about a significant resource type, but this would depend on the results of the future surveys and
4 evaluations.
5

6 7 ***11.1.22.4.17 Native American Concerns*** 8

9 Major Native American concerns in arid portions of the Great Basin include water and
10 water rights, culturally important plant and animal resources, and culturally important
11 landscapes. The development of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the SEZ in
12 combination with the foreseeable development of the adjacent Amargosa North Solar Project and
13 the nearby Amargosa Farm Road Solar Energy Project and any of the 12 other less likely energy
14 projects could cumulatively contribute to effects on these resources. Incrementally increased
15 groundwater drawdown could affect culturally important springs, such as Ash Meadows.
16 Development of the SEZ would result in the elimination of plant species, including some of
17 cultural importance. However, the primary species that would be affected are abundant in the
18 region. Likewise, habitat for important species such as the black-tailed jack rabbit would be
19 reduced; however, extensive habitat is available. The SEZ is bordered by culturally important
20 mountains; the view from these features can be an important part of their cultural integrity. The
21 degree of impact on these resources of development at specific locations must be determined in
22 consultation with the Native American Tribes whose traditional use area includes the SEZ.
23 Government-to-government consultation is underway with federally recognized Native
24 American Tribes with possible traditional ties to the Amargosa Valley area. All federally
25 recognized Tribes with Western Shoshone, Southern Paiute, or Owens Valley Paiute roots have
26 been contacted and provided an opportunity to comment or consult regarding this PEIS. To date,
27 no specific concerns have been raised to the BLM regarding the proposed Amargosa Valley
28 SEZ. However, during scoping of the PEIS, the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley
29 recommended that the BLM preserve undisturbed lands intact and that recently disturbed lands,
30 such as abandoned farm fields, rail yards, mines, and airfields, be given primary consideration
31 for solar energy development. The SEZ is largely undeveloped, suggesting that development
32 there may be viewed negatively by the Tribes. Continued discussions with the area Tribes
33 through government-to-government consultation is necessary to determine the extent to which
34 the cumulative effects of solar development in the Amargosa Valley can be addressed.
35

36 37 ***11.1.22.4.18 Socioeconomics*** 38

39 Solar energy development projects in the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ could
40 cumulatively contribute to socioeconomic effects in the immediate vicinity of the SEZs and in
41 the surrounding ROI. The effects could be positive (e.g., creation of jobs and generation of extra
42 income, increased revenues to local governmental organizations through additional taxes paid by
43 the developers and workers) or negative (e.g., added strain on social institutions such as schools,
44 police protection, and health care facilities). Impacts from solar development would be most
45 intense during facility construction, but of greatest duration during operations. Construction
46 would temporarily increase the number of workers in the area needing housing and services in

1 combination with temporary workers involved in other new projects in the area, including other
2 renewable energy development. The number of workers involved in the construction of solar
3 projects in the peak construction year (including the transmission lines) could range from about
4 260 to 3,500 depending on the technology being employed, with solar PV facilities at the low
5 end and solar trough facilities at the high end. The total number of jobs created in the area could
6 range from approximately 460 (solar PV) to as high as 6,000 (solar trough). Cumulative
7 socioeconomic effects in the ROI from construction of solar facilities would occur to the extent
8 that multiple construction projects of any type were ongoing at the same time. It is a reasonable
9 expectation that this condition would occur within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ
10 occasionally over the 20-yr or more solar development period.

11
12 Annual impacts during the operation of solar facilities would be less, but of 20- to 30-yr
13 duration and could combine with those from other new projects in the area, including the
14 proposed Amargosa Farm Road Solar Energy Project and the Amargosa North Solar Project.
15 The number of workers needed at the solar facilities would be in the range of 55 to 1,100, with
16 approximately 70 to 1,650 total jobs created in the region, assuming full build-out of the SEZ
17 (Section 11.1.19.2.2). Population increases would contribute to general upward trends in the
18 region in recent years. The socioeconomic impacts overall would be positive, through the
19 creation of additional jobs and income. The negative impacts, including some short-term
20 disruption of rural community quality of life, would not likely be considered large enough to
21 require specific mitigation measures.

22 23 24 **11.1.22.4.19 Environmental Justice**

25
26 Any impacts from solar development could have cumulative impacts on minority and
27 low-income populations within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ in combination with other
28 development in the area. Such impacts could be both positive, such as from increased economic
29 activity, and negative, such as from visual impacts, noise, and exposure to fugitive dust. Actual
30 impacts would depend on where low-income populations are located relative to solar and other
31 proposed facilities and on the geographic range of effects. Overall, effects from facilities within
32 the SEZ are expected to be small, while other major foreseeable actions would not likely
33 combine with effects from the SEZ on minority and low-income populations. If needed,
34 mitigation measures can be employed to reduce the impacts on these populations in the vicinity
35 of the SEZ. Thus, it is not expected that the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ would contribute to
36 cumulative impacts on minority and low-income populations.

37 38 39 **11.1.22.4.20 Transportation**

40
41 U.S. 95 runs along the northeast border of the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ. The
42 closest airport is Nye County Airport at Beatty, and the closest railroad access is the UP Railroad
43 stop in Las Vegas. During construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities, there could be up
44 to 1,000 workers commuting to the construction site at the SEZ, which could increase the AADT
45 on these roads by 2,000 vehicle trips, an increase in traffic of about two-thirds in the area of the
46 SEZ (Section 11.1.21.2). This increase in highway traffic from construction workers could have

1 moderate cumulative impacts in combination with existing traffic levels and increases from
2 additional future projects in the area, should construction schedules overlap. Local road
3 improvements may be necessary on portions of U.S. 95 near the proposed SEZ. Any impacts
4 during construction activities would be temporary. The impacts can also be mitigated to some
5 degree by staggered work schedules and ride-sharing programs. Traffic increases during
6 operation would be relatively small because of the low number of workers needed to operate the
7 solar facilities and would have little contribution to cumulative impacts.

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11.1.23 References

Note to Reader: This list of references identifies Web pages and associated URLs where reference data were obtained for the analyses presented in this PEIS. It is likely that at the time of publication of this PEIS, some of these Web pages may no longer be available or their URL addresses may have changed. The original information has been retained and is available through the Public Information Docket for this PEIS.

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1 **11.2 DELAMAR VALLEY**

2
3
4 **11.2.1 Background and Summary of Impacts**

5
6
7 **11.2.1.1 General Information**

8
9 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located in Lincoln County in southeastern Nevada
10 about 21 mi (34 km) south of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (Figure 11.2.1.1-1). The
11 SEZ has a total area of 16,552 acres (67 km²). In 2008, the county population was 4,643, while
12 adjacent Clark County to the south had a population of 1,879,093. The largest nearby town is
13 Alamo, Nevada, about 11 mi (18 km) west in Lincoln County. The town of Panaca is located
14 about 33 mi (53 km) northeast. Las Vegas lies about 90 mi (145 km) to the south.

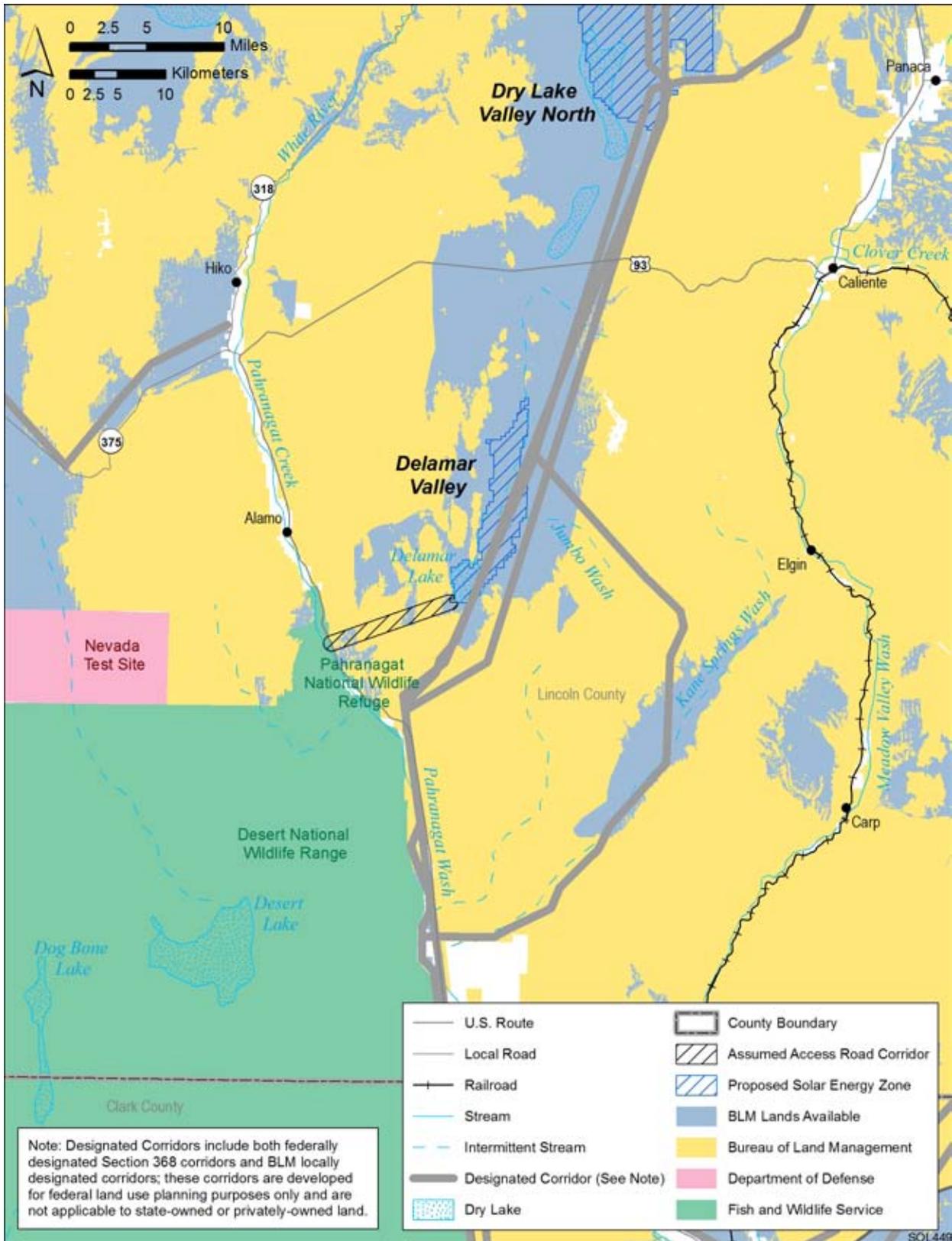
15
16 The nearest major road access to the SEZ is via U.S. 93, which runs north–south,
17 approximately 8 to 14 mi (13 to 23 km) to the west of the Delamar Valley SEZ and also east–
18 west, approximately 8 mi (13 km) to the north of the SEZ. State Route 317 passes from the north
19 to the south approximately 16 to 21 mi (26 to 34 km) east of the SEZ. The nearest railroad stop is
20 in Caliente, 22 mi (35 km) away, while Lincoln County Airport is located 15 mi (24 km) north of
21 Caliente in Panaca.

22
23 A 69-kV transmission line passes through the SEZ. It is assumed that this existing
24 transmission line could potentially provide access from the SEZ to the transmission grid
25 (see Section 11.2.1.1.2).

26
27 As of March 2010, there were two ROW applications for solar projects and one
28 application for a wind project that would be located within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ. These
29 applications are discussed in Section 11.2.22.2.1.

30
31 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is isolated and undeveloped. The SEZ is located
32 in Delamar Valley, a north trending closed basin within the Basin and Range physiographic
33 province immediately south of Dry Lake Valley and lying between the South Pahroc Range
34 to the west and the Delamar Mountains to the east and southeast. Land within the SEZ is
35 undeveloped scrubland characteristic of a high-elevation, semiarid basin.

36
37 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ in Nevada and other relevant information are shown
38 in Figure 11.2.1.1-1. The criteria used to identify the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ as an
39 appropriate location for solar energy development included proximity to existing transmission or
40 designated corridors, proximity to existing roads, a slope of generally less than 2%, and an area
41 of more than 2,500 acres (10 km²). In addition, the area was identified as being relatively free of
42 other types of conflicts, such as USFWS-designated critical habitat for threatened and
43 endangered species, ACECs, SRMAs, and NLCS lands (see Section 2.2.2.2 for the complete list
44 of exclusions). Although these classes of restricted lands were excluded from the proposed SEZ,
45 other restrictions might be appropriate. The analyses in the following sections address the
46 affected environment and potential impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy



1

2 **FIGURE 11.2.1.1-1 Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ**

1 development in the proposed SEZ for important environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic
2 resources.

3
4 As initially announced in the *Federal Register* on June 30, 2009, the proposed Delamar
5 Valley SEZ encompassed 17,932 acres (73 km²). Subsequent to the study area scoping period,
6 the boundaries of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ were altered somewhat to facilitate the
7 BLM's administration of the SEZ area. The revised SEZ is approximately 1,380 acres (6 km²)
8 smaller than the original SEZ as published in June 2009.

9 10 11 **11.2.1.2 Development Assumptions for the Impact Analysis**

12
13 Maximum solar development of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is assumed to be 80%
14 of the SEZ area over a period of 20 years, a maximum of 13,242 acres (54 km²). These values
15 are shown in Table 11.2.1.2-1, along with other development assumptions. Full development
16 of the Delamar Valley SEZ would allow development of facilities with an estimated total of
17 1,471 MW of electrical power capacity if power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies were
18 used, assuming 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required and an estimated 2,648 MW of
19 power if solar trough technologies were used, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land
20 required.

21
22 Availability of transmission from SEZs to load centers will be an important consideration
23 for future development in SEZs. The nearest existing transmission line is a 69-kV line that runs
24 through the SEZ. It is possible that this existing line could be used to provide access from the
25 SEZ to the transmission grid, but the 69-kV capacity of that line would be inadequate for 1,471
26 to 2,648 MW of new capacity (note: a 500 kV line can accommodate approximately the load of
27 one 700 MW facility). At full build-out capacity, it is clear that substantial new transmission
28 and/or upgrades of existing transmission lines would be required to bring electricity from the
29 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ to load centers; however, at this time the location and size of such
30 new transmission facilities are unknown. Generic impacts of transmission and associated
31 infrastructure construction and of line upgrades for various resources are discussed in Chapter 5.
32 Project-specific analyses would need to identify the specific impacts of new transmission
33 construction and line upgrades for any projects proposed within the SEZ.

34
35 For the purposes of analysis in the PEIS, it was assumed that an existing 69-kV
36 transmission line which intersects the SEZ could provide initial access to the transmission grid,
37 and thus no additional acreage disturbance for transmission line access was assessed. Access to
38 the existing 69-kV transmission line was assumed, without additional information on whether
39 this line would be available for connection of future solar facilities. If a connecting transmission
40 line were constructed in the future to connect facilities within the SEZ to a different, offsite, grid
41 location from the one assumed here, site developers would need to determine the impacts from
42 construction and operation of that line. In addition, developers would need to determine the
43 impacts of line upgrades if they are needed.

44
45 An additional 58 acres (0.2 km²) was assumed to be needed for new road access to
46 support solar development in the Delamar Valley SEZ, as summarized in Table 11.2.1.2-1. This

TABLE 11.2.1.2-1 Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ—Assumed Development Acreages, Solar MW Output, Access Roads, and Transmission Line ROWs

Total Acreage and Assumed Developed Acreage (80% of Total)	Assumed Maximum SEZ Output for Various Solar Technologies	Distance to Nearest State, U.S., or Interstate Highway	Distance and Capacity of Nearest Existing Transmission Line	Area of Assumed Transmission Line and Road ROWs	Distance to Nearest Designated Corridor ^e
16,552 acres and 13,242 acres ^a	1,471 MW ^b and 2,648 MW ^c	State Route 93 9 mi ^d	0 mi and 69 kV	0 acres and 58 acres	Adjacent

^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^b Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies, assuming 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required.

^c Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using solar trough technologies, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.

^d To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

^e BLM-designated corridors are developed for federal land use planning purposes only and are not applicable to state-owned or privately owned land.

1
2
3 estimate was based on the assumption that a new 8-mi (13-km) access road to the nearest major
4 road, U.S. 93, would support construction and operation of solar facilities. While there are
5 existing dirt/ranch roads within the SEZ, additional internal road construction may be required to
6 support solar facility construction.
7
8

9 **11.2.1.3 Summary of Major Impacts and SEZ-Specific Design Features**

10
11 In this section, the impacts and SEZ-specific design features assessed in Sections 11.2.2
12 through 11.2.21 for the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are summarized in tabular form.
13 Table 11.2.1.3-1 is a comprehensive list of impacts discussed in these sections; the reader may
14 reference the applicable sections for detailed support of the impact assessment. Section 11.2.22
15 discusses potential cumulative impacts from solar energy development in the proposed SEZ.
16

17 Only those design features specific to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are included in
18 Sections 11.2.2 through 11.2.21 and in the summary table. The programmatic design features for
19 each resource area to be required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program are presented in
20 Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would also be required for
21 development in this and other SEZs.
22
23

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 Summary of Impacts of Solar Energy Development within the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ and SEZ-Specific Design Features^a

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Lands and Realty	<p>Full development of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ could disturb up to 13,242 acres (54 km²). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish a large industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity. Since the SEZ is undeveloped and isolated, utility-scale solar energy development would be a new and discordant land use to the area.</p>	None.
	<p>The locally designated transmission corridor located within the SEZ occupies about 2,919 acres (12 km²) (22%) of the proposed SEZ. The proposed SNWA pipeline ROW would also make additional land in the SEZ unavailable for solar energy development. Both of these ROWs would limit future solar development within the corridor, or alternatively, solar energy development in the SEZ could reduce corridor capacity..</p>	Consideration should be given to relocating the existing transmission corridor and proposed SNWA ROW outside of the SEZ.
	<p>Because of the 14-mi (23-km) length of the SEZ, east–west travel across the valley could be cut-off, requiring extensive detours for public land users.</p>	None.
	<p>A new 8-mi (13-km) access road would be constructed from the northern end of the SEZ to connect to U.S. 93, resulting in the surface disturbance of about 58 acres (0.2 km²) of public land.</p>	Priority consideration should be given to utilizing/improving existing roads to provide construction and operational access to the SEZ.

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Visual impacts of solar energy development would have the potential to affect wilderness characteristics of the Delamar Mountains and South Pahroc WAs.	The design features for visual resources should be adopted to minimize impacts on wilderness characteristics.
	Solar development of the SEZ could adversely affect the quality of the night sky environment in adjacent specially designated areas.	None.
Rangeland Resources: Livestock Grazing	Grazing would be precluded from areas developed for solar energy production. If full solar development would occur in the SEZ, the federal grazing permit for the Buckhorn allotment would be reduced in area by about 18%, and about 606 AUMs would be lost.	None.
Rangeland Resources: Wild Horses and Burros	About 33,140 acres (134.4 km ²) or 17.8% of the Delamar Mountains HA would be in the area of indirect impact for the Delamar Valley SEZ. However, with implementation of design features, indirect impacts on wild horses are expected to be negligible.	None.
Recreation	Recreation use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ that would be developed for solar energy production.	None.
	Because the SEZ sits astride numerous roads and trails, construction of solar energy facilities could cause a major impact on existing recreation travel.	None.
Military and Civilian Aviation	The military has expressed serious concern over construction of solar energy facilities within the SEZ, and Nellis Air Force Base has indicated that any facilities more than 100 ft (30 m) may be incompatible with low-level aircraft use of the MTR. Further, the NTTR has indicated that solar technologies requiring structures higher than 50 ft (15 m) above ground level may present unacceptable electromagnetic compatibility concerns for their test mission.	None.

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Geologic Setting and Soil Resources	Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase. Impacts include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind, soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. These impacts may be impacting factors for other resources (e.g., air quality, water quality, and vegetation). Delamar Lake may not be a suitable location for construction.	None.
Minerals (fluids, solids, and geothermal resources)	None.	None.
Water Resources	<p>Ground disturbance activities (affecting 36% of the total area in the peak construction year) could affect surface water quality due to surface runoff, sediment erosion, and contaminant spills.</p> <p>Construction activities may require up to 2,814 ac-ft (3.5 million m³) of water during the peak construction year.</p> <p>Construction activities would generate as high as 148 ac-ft (182,600 m³) of sanitary wastewater.</p> <p>Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would use the following amounts of water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For parabolic trough facilities (2,648-MW capacity), 1,891 to 4,009 ac-ft/yr (2.3 million to 4.9 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; water requirements for wet-cooled systems exceed the perennial yield of the basin. 	<p>Water resource analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be feasible; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures.</p> <p>Land disturbance activities should avoid impacts to the extent possible in the vicinity of the intermittent streams, ephemeral washes, and the dry lake present on the site.</p> <p>Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid any areas identified as within a 100-year floodplain or jurisdictional waters.</p> <p>Groundwater rights must be obtained from the NDWR (dry-cooling and dish engine technologies may have to negotiate with the SNWA for water rights).</p>

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Water Resources <i>(Cont.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For power tower facilities (1,471-MW capacity), 1,046 to 2,223 ac-ft/yr (1.3 million to 2.7 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; water requirements for wet-cooled systems • For dish engine facilities (1,471-MW capacity), 752 ac-ft/yr (927,600 m³/yr). • For PV facilities (1,471-MW capacity), 76 ac-ft/yr (93,700 m³/yr). <p>Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would generate up to 37 ac-ft/yr (45,600 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater and up to 752 ac-ft/yr (927,600 m³/yr) of blowdown water.</p>	<p>Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.</p> <p>Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in accordance with state standards.</p> <p>Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water quality standards according to <i>Nevada Administrative Code</i>.</p>
Vegetation ^b	<p>Up to 13,242 acres (54 km²) of the SEZ would be cleared of vegetation. Because of the arid conditions, re-establishment of shrub, shrub steppe, or grassland communities in temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult and might require extended periods of time.</p> <p>Noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in widespread habitat degradation.</p>	<p>An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan addressing habitat restoration should be approved and implemented to increase the potential for successful restoration of affected habitats and minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species, such as halogeton or tumbleweed. Invasive species control should focus on biological and mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use of herbicides.</p> <p>Dry washes, Delamar Lake playa, and the nearby marsh should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated.</p> <p>Appropriate engineering controls should be used to</p>

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation ^b (Cont.)	<p>The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition.</p> <p>Vegetation communities associated with Delamar Lake and other playa habitats, Jumbo Wash and the unnamed intermittent stream, greasewood flats communities, riparian habitats, marshes, or other intermittently flooded areas within or downgradient from solar projects or the access road could be affected by ground-disturbing activities.</p> <p>Joshua tree communities within the northern portion of the SEZ and within the assumed access road corridor could be directly or indirectly affected.</p> <p>The use of groundwater within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ for technologies with high water requirements, such as wet-cooling systems, could disrupt the groundwater flow pattern and adversely affect the springs and wetlands within the Pahranaagat NWR, located southwest of the SEZ.</p>	<p>minimize impacts on wetlands within the assumed access road corridor, as well as dry washes, Delamar Lake and other playas, and riparian, marsh, and greasewood flat habitats within the SEZ and corridor, including downstream occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition. All wetland, dry wash, and riparian habitats within the assumed access road corridor should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated. A buffer area should be maintained around wetlands, playas, dry washes, and riparian areas to reduce the potential for impacts. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be determined through agency consultation.</p> <p>Joshua tree communities are protected by the State of Nevada and should be avoided in the northern areas of the SEZ and along the assumed access road corridor. Any Joshua trees in areas of direct impacts should be salvaged.</p> <p>Cactus species, including cholla, or ocotillo should be avoided. Any cacti that cannot be avoided should be salvaged.</p> <p>Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect impacts on springs and wetlands in the vicinity of the SEZ, at Pahranaagat NWR. Potential impacts on springs should be determined through hydrological studies.</p>

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Wildlife: Amphibians and Reptiles ^b	Direct impacts on representative amphibian and reptile species from SEZ development would be small (i.e., loss of $\leq 1\%$ of potentially suitable habitats). With implementation of proposed design features, indirect impacts would be expected to be negligible.	Delamar Lake, Jumbo Wash, and the unnamed wash should be avoided.
Wildlife: Birds ^b	<p>Direct impacts on the killdeer would be moderate (i.e., loss of >1.0 to $\leq 10\%$ of potentially suitable habitats). Impacts on all other representative bird species from SEZ development would be small (i.e., loss of $\leq 1\%$ of potentially suitable habitats).</p> <p>Other impacts on birds could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., buildings and fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with implementation of design features.</p>	<p>The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds will be followed.</p> <p>Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.</p> <p>Delamar Lake, Jumbo Wash, and the unnamed wash should be avoided.</p>
Wildlife: Mammals ^b	Based on land cover analyses direct impacts on mammal species would be small (i.e., loss of $\leq 1\%$ of potentially suitable habitats). However, based on mapped ranges of big game species, direct impacts on pronghorn could be moderate (i.e., loss of >1.0 to $\leq 10\%$ of its mapped range). In addition to habitat loss, other direct impacts on mammals could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., fences). Indirect impacts on mammals could result from surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental spills, collection, and harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with the implementation of design features.	<p>The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free movement of mammals, particularly big game species.</p> <p>Delamar Lake and the unnamed wash should be avoided.</p>

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Aquatic Biota ^b	<p>No permanent water bodies or streams are present within the area of direct or indirect effects associated with the Delamar Valley SEZ. The nearest perennial surface waters are located more than 8 mi (13 km) from the SEZ, and the intermittent streams in the SEZ do not drain into any permanent surface waters. Therefore, no direct impacts on perennial aquatic habitat are expected to result from solar development activities within the SEZ.</p> <p>Ground disturbance related to the presumed new access road terminates at U.S. 93, less than 1 mi (2 km) from Pahranaagat Creek. Therefore, indirect impacts on the creek may result from the deposition of fugitive dust following ground disturbance.</p>	<p>Appropriate engineering controls should be implemented to minimize the amount of contaminants and sediment entering washes and Delamar Lake and Pahranaagat Creek.</p>
Special Status Species ^b	<p>Potentially suitable habitat for 49 special status species occurs in the affected area of the Delamar Valley SEZ. For most of these special status species, less than 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region occurs in the area of direct effects. For one species, up to 4% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region occurs in the area of direct effects.</p> <p>There are 15 groundwater dependent species that occur outside of the areas of direct and indirect effects. Potential impacts on these species could range from small to large depending on the solar energy technology deployed, the scale of development within the SEZ, and the cumulative rate of groundwater withdrawals.</p>	<p>Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the area of direct effects to determine the presence and abundance of special status species. Disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing impacts to occupied habitats is not possible for some species, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy for special status species that used one or more of these options to offset the impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the appropriate federal and state agencies.</p> <p>Consultation with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted to address the potential for impacts on the following five species currently listed as threatened</p>

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Special Status Species ^b (Cont.)		<p>or endangered under the ESA: Hiko White River springfish, Pahrnagat roundtail chub, White River springfish, desert tortoise, and southwestern willow flycatcher. Consultation would identify an appropriate survey protocol, avoidance and minimization measures, and, if appropriate, reasonable and prudent alternatives, reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions for incidental take statements.</p> <p>Coordination with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted to address the potential for impacts on the following four species under review for listing under the ESA that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ: grated tryonia, Hubbs springsnail, Pahrnagat pebblesnail, and northern leopard frog. Coordination would identify an appropriate survey protocol, and mitigation requirements, which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or compensation.</p> <p>Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to riparian, desert wash, playa, cliff, and rock outcrop habitats on the SEZ could reduce or eliminate impacts on 13 special status species.</p> <p>Avoidance or minimization of groundwater withdrawals to serve solar energy development on the SEZ could reduce or eliminate impacts on 15 special status species. In particular, impacts on aquatic and riparian habitat in the Pahrnagat Valley should be avoided.</p>

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Special Status Species ^b (Cont.)		Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the affected area should be avoided or minimized. This can be accomplished by identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.
Air Quality and Climate	<p><i>Construction:</i> Predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ and 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentration levels could temporarily exceed the standard levels at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding areas during the construction of solar facilities; higher concentrations would be limited to the immediate area surrounding the SEZ boundary and would decrease quickly with distance. Modeling indicates that Class I PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearest federal Class I area (Zion NP) would not be expected to be exceeded. Construction emissions from the engine exhaust from heavy equipment and vehicles could cause some short-term impacts on AQRVs (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at the nearest federal Class I areas.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> Positive impact due to avoided emission of air pollutants from combustion-related power generation: 6.8 to 12% of total emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ from electric power systems in the state of Nevada (up to 6,546 tons/yr SO₂, 5,615 tons/yr NO_x, 0.037 tons/yr Hg, and 3,604,000 tons/yr CO₂).</p>	None.

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Visual Resources	<p>The SEZ is in an area of low scenic quality, with cultural disturbances already present. Residents, workers, and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) as they travel area roads. The residents nearest to the SEZ could be subjected to large visual impacts from solar energy development within the SEZ.</p> <p>Solar development could produce large visual impacts on the SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed due to major modification of the character of the existing landscape.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 1.8 mi (2.9 km) from the Delamar Mountains WA. Because of the open views of the SEZ and elevated viewpoints, strong visual contrasts could be observed by WA visitors.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 3.6 mi (5.8 km) from the South Pahroc Range WA. Because of the open views of the SEZ and elevated viewpoints, weak to strong visual contrasts could be observed by WA visitors.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 3.3 mi (5.3 km) from the North Delamar SRMA. Because of the open views of the SEZ and elevated viewpoints, strong visual contrasts could be observed by SRMA visitors.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 2.7 mi (4.4 km) from the Pahrnagat SRMA. Because of the open views of the SEZ and elevated viewpoints, strong visual contrasts could be observed by SRMA visitors.</p>	<p>Within the SEZ, in areas visible from and within 3 mi (4.8 km) of the boundary of the Delamar Mountains WA, visual impacts associated with solar energy project operation should be consistent with VRM Class II management objectives, as experienced from KOPs (to be determined by the BLM) within the WA. In areas visible from between 3 and 5 mi (4.8 and 8 km), visual impacts should be consistent with VRM Class III management objectives. The VRM Class II consistency mitigation would affect approximately 2,080 acres (8.417 km²) within the western portion of the SEZ. The VRM Class III consistency mitigation would affect approximately 5,485 additional acres (22.2 km²).</p> <p>Within the SEZ, in areas visible from between 3 and 5 mi (4.8 and 8 km) of the boundary of the South Pahroc Range WA, visual impacts associated with solar energy project operation should be consistent with VRM Class III management objectives, as experienced from KOPs (to be determined by the BLM) within the WA. The VRM Class III consistency mitigation would affect approximately 4,921 acres (19.9 km²).</p>

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Acoustic Environment	<p><i>Construction.</i> For construction activities occurring near the southern SEZ boundary, estimated noise levels at the nearest residences (about 9 mi [14 km] west of that boundary) would be about 17 dBA, which is well below a typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. In addition, an estimated 40-dBA L_{dn} at these residences (i.e., no contribution from construction activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p><i>Operations</i> Noise levels at the nearest residences from a parabolic trough or power tower facility would be about 23 dBA, which is much lower than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. For 12-hour daytime operation, about 40 dBA L_{dn} (i.e., no contribution from facility operation) would be estimated for the nearest residences, which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. In the case of 6-hour TES, the estimated nighttime noise level at the nearest residences would be 33 dBA, which is a little higher than the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. The day-night average noise level is estimated to be about 41 dBA L_{dn}, which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p>If 80% of the SEZ were developed with dish engine facilities, the estimated noise level at the nearest residences, about 9 mi (14 km) from the SEZ boundary, would be about 34 dBA, which is below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. Assuming 12-hour daytime operation, the estimated 41 dBA L_{dn} at these residences would be well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p>	None.

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Paleontological Resources	<p>Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely to occur in 73% of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of the SEZ is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted. If the geological deposits are determined to be as described above, further assessment of paleontological resources in most of the SEZ is not likely to be necessary. The potential for impacts on significant paleontological resources in the remaining 27% of the SEZ is unknown. A more detailed investigation of the playa deposits is needed prior to project approval. A paleontological survey will likely be needed.</p>	<p>The need for and the nature of any SEZ-specific design features would depend on the results of future paleontological investigations.</p>
Cultural Resources	<p>The Delamar Valley SEZ has a high potential for containing prehistoric sites, especially in the dry lake area at the southern end of the SEZ. The potential for historic sites also exists in the area. Thus, direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ; however, further investigation is needed at the project-specific level. A cultural resource survey of the entire area of potential effect, including consultation with affected Native American Tribes, would first need to be conducted to identify archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and traditional cultural properties, and an evaluation would need to follow to determine whether any are eligible for listing in the NRHP as historic properties.</p> <p>Indirect impacts on cultural resources outside of the SEZ boundary, such as through looting or vandalism, are possible in rock shelter and petroglyph sites immediately west of the SEZ. Visual impacts on areas of traditional cultural importance if identified either in the Pahroc Range or in the Delamar Mountains, would occur.</p>	<p>Avoidance of significant resources clustered in specific areas within the proposed SEZ, especially in the vicinity of the dry lake, is recommended.</p> <p>Other SEZ-specific design features would be determined through consultation with the Nevada SHPO and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations.</p>

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Native American Concerns	<p>While no comments specific to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ have been received from Native American Tribes to date, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah has asked to be kept informed of PEIS developments. When commenting on past projects in the Delamar Valley, the Southern Paiute have expressed concern over adverse effects of other energy projects on a wide range of resources.</p> <p>As consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it is possible that there will be additional Native American concerns expressed over potential visual and other effects on specific resources and any culturally important landscapes within or adjacent to the proposed SEZ.</p>	The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features addressing issues of potential concern would be determined during government-to-government consultation with the affected Tribes
Socioeconomics	<p><i>Livestock grazing:</i> Construction and operation of solar facilities could decrease the amount of land available for livestock grazing in the SEZ, resulting in the loss of four jobs (total) and \$0.1 million (total) in income in the ROI.</p> <p><i>Construction:</i> 457 to 6,048 total jobs; \$27.9 million to \$369.5 million income in ROI.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> 39 to 890 annual total jobs; \$1.4 million to \$33.6 million annual income in the ROI.</p> <p>Construction of new access road: 169 jobs; \$6.7 million income in ROI.</p>	None.

TABLE 11.2.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Delamar SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Environmental Justice	Although impacts are likely to be small, both minority and low-income populations, as defined by CEQ guidelines, occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the boundary of the SEZ; this means that any adverse impacts of solar projects could disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations.	None.
Transportation	The primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day, with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum) or possibly 4,000 vehicle trips per day if two larger projects were developed at the same time. The additional traffic on U.S. 93 west of the SEZ would represent an increase in traffic volume of about 100 or 200% for one or two projects, respectively, should all traffic access the SEZ in that area. Such traffic levels would also represent an increase of about 250% or 500% of the traffic currently encountered on the east–west portion of U.S. 93 north of the SEZ for one or two projects, respectively.	None.

Abbreviations: AQRV = air quality-related value; AUM = animal unit month; BLM = Bureau of Land Management; CEQ = Council on Environmental Quality; CO₂ = carbon dioxide; dBA = A-weighted decibel; DoD = U.S. Department of Defense; EPA = U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; ESA = Endangered Species Act; HA = herd area; Hg = mercury; KOP = key observation point; L_{dn} = day-night average sound level; MTR = military training route; NDOW = Nevada Department of Wildlife; NDWR = Nevada Division of Water Resources; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; NP = National Park; NRHP = *National Register of Historic Places*; NTTR = Nevada Test and Training Range; NWR = National Wildlife Refuge; PEIS = programmatic environmental impact statement; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 μm or less; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 μm or less; PSD = prevention of significant deterioration; PV = photovoltaic; ROI = region of influence; SEZ = solar energy zone; SNWA = Southern Nevada Water Authority; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; SRMA = Special Recreation Management Area; USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; VRM = visual resource management; WA = Wilderness Area.

^a The detailed programmatic design features for each resource area to be required under BLM's Solar Energy Program are presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would be required for development in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ.

^b The scientific names of all plants, wildlife, aquatic biota, and special status species are provided in Sections 11.2.10 through 11.2.12.

1 **11.2.2 Lands and Realty**

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3
4 **11.2.2.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is a large and very well-blocked area of BLM-
7 administered public land. The overall character of the land in and around the SEZ area is isolated
8 and undeveloped. The southwestern portion of the SEZ includes part of a playa lake. U.S. 93
9 provides access to the southern end of the SEZ via a 12-mi (19-km) connecting dirt road that
10 leaves the highway near Alamo, Nevada. Another dirt road connects to U.S. 93 and provides a
11 15-mi (24-km) access to the northern portion of the SEZ. Numerous dirt roads cross the SEZ or
12 access livestock facilities in the area.

13
14 There are two locally designated transmission corridors in the area; one passes north-
15 south through the eastern side of the SEZ, and the other is just outside the eastern boundary
16 of the SEZ (see Figure 11.2.1.12-1). The former corridor is part of the route of a designated
17 Section 368 (of the Energy Policy Act of 2005) energy corridor. Within this corridor, a
18 permitted 500-kV SWIP transmission line has been approved for construction but has not yet
19 been built. A 69-kV transmission line with a service road is located in the local corridor within
20 the SEZ.

21
22 The SNWA has a ROW application for a pipeline that would pass through the middle
23 of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The pipeline has been proposed to convey water from
24 northern Nevada to the Las Vegas area.

25
26 As of February 2010, there were no ROW applications for solar energy facility
27 development within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ.

28
29
30 **11.2.2.2 Impacts**

31
32
33 ***11.2.2.2.1 Construction and Operations***

34
35 Full development of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ could disturb up to 13,242 acres
36 (54 km²) (Table 11.2.1.2-1). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production
37 would establish a large industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the
38 land, perhaps in perpetuity. Since the SEZ is undeveloped and isolated, utility-scale solar energy
39 development would be a new and discordant land use to the area.

40
41 Existing ROW authorizations on the SEZ would not be affected by solar energy
42 development since they are prior rights. Should the proposed SEZ be identified as an SEZ in the
43 ROD for this PEIS, the BLM would still have discretion to authorize additional ROWs in the
44 area until solar energy development was authorized, and then future ROWs would be subject to
45 the rights granted for solar energy development. Because the area currently has so few ROWs
46 present, and because of additional BLM administered lands around the SEZ, it is not anticipated

1 that approval of solar energy development would have a significant impact on future ROW
2 availability in the area.
3

4 The designated local transmission corridor located within the SEZ occupies about
5 2,919 acres (12 km²) (22%) of the proposed SEZ and could limit future solar development
6 within the corridor. The proposed SNWA corridor would also limit future solar development
7 within the SEZ. To avoid technical or operational interference between transmission and pipeline
8 facilities and other solar energy facilities, solar energy facilities cannot be constructed under
9 transmission lines or over pipelines. The transmission corridor and the SNWA ROW could be
10 relocated outside the SEZ to allow full solar development within the SEZ. Alternatively, capacity
11 of the corridor could be restricted to allow maximum solar development within the SEZ.
12 Transmission capacity is becoming a more critical factor, and reducing corridor capacity in this
13 SEZ may have future, but currently unknown, consequences. This is an administrative conflict
14 that the BLM can address through its planning process, but there would be implications for the
15 amount of potential solar energy development that could be accommodated within the SEZ if the
16 existing corridor and SNWA ROW alignments are retained.
17

18 The existing roads and trails in the SEZ would be closed wherever solar energy facilities
19 are developed. Because of the 14-mi (23-km) length of the SEZ, if east–west travel across the
20 SEZ were prevented by solar energy development, a long detour around the site could be
21 required. Additionally, the major road through the Delamar Valley provides access to areas
22 around the SEZ. Any obstruction of existing access routes would adversely affect a wide range
23 of public land users.
24
25

26 ***11.2.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure*** 27

28 An existing 69-kV transmission line runs through the SEZ; this line might be available to
29 transport the power produced in this SEZ. Establishing a connection to the existing line would
30 not involve the construction of a new transmission line outside of the SEZ. If a connecting
31 transmission line were constructed in a different location outside of the SEZ in the future, site
32 developers would need to determine the impacts from construction and operation of that line. In
33 addition, developers would need to determine the impacts of line upgrades if they were needed.
34

35 U.S. 93 is the closest highway to the SEZ, both north and southwest of the SEZ, and it
36 is assumed for analysis purposes that a new 8-mi (13-km) road would be constructed from the
37 highway to the southwest end of the SEZ. This would result in the surface disturbance of about
38 58 acres (0.2 km²) of public land. Alternative or additional access to the SEZ could be provided
39 to the northern end of the SEZ to connect from U.S. 93. Roads and transmission lines would be
40 constructed within the SEZ as part of the development of the area.
41

1 **11.2.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
4 as required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program, would provide mitigation for some identified
5 impacts. The exceptions may be the development of the SEZ would establish a large industrial
6 area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity and,
7 utility-scale solar energy development would be a new and discordant land use to the area.
8

9 Proposed design features specific to the Delamar Valley SEZ include:

- 10
- 11 • Priority consideration should be given to utilizing/improving existing roads to
12 provide construction and operational access to the SEZ.
 - 13
 - 14 • Consideration should be given to relocating the existing transmission corridor
15 and proposed SNWA ROW outside of the SEZ.
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1 **11.2.3 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**

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4 **11.2.3.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 Fifteen specially designated areas occur within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Delamar
7 Valley SEZ that potentially could be affected by solar energy development within the SEZ.
8 These include one ACEC, six designated WAs, three SRMAs, the congressionally designated
9 Silver State Off-Highway Vehicle Trail and Backcountry Byway, the Highway 93 State-
10 designated Scenic Byway, Highway 375—the Extraterrestrial Highway, and two NWRs
11 (see Figure 11.2.3.1-1).

12
13 ***Areas Located between 0 and 5 mi (0 and 8 km) from the SEZ***

14
15 Delamar Mountains WA
16 South Pahroc WA
17 Pahrnagat SRMA
18 North Delamar SRMA

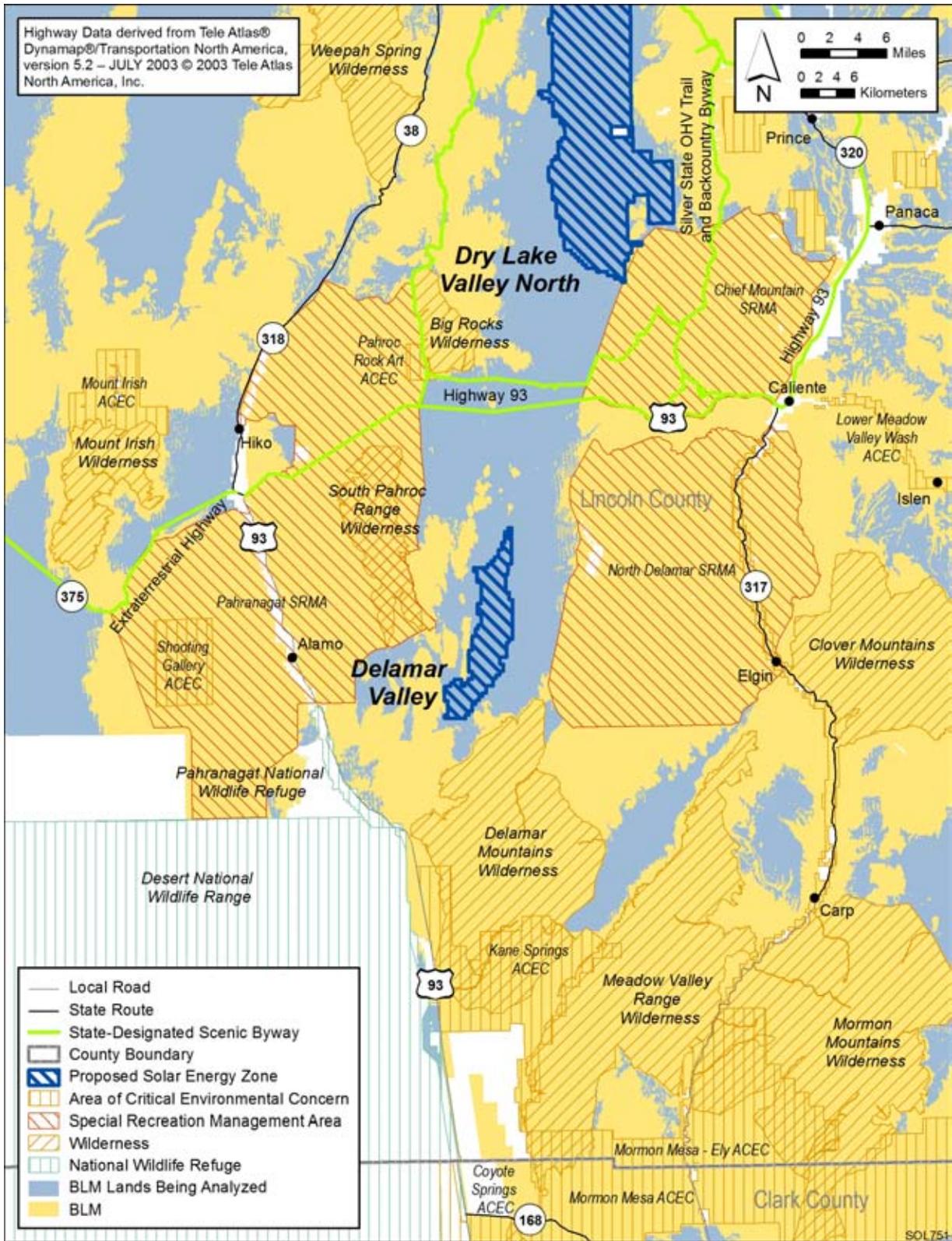
19
20 ***Areas Located between 5 and 15 mi (8 and 24 km) from the SEZ***

21
22 Big Rocks WA
23 Kane Springs ACEC
24 Highway 93 Scenic Byway
25 Silver State Off-Highway Vehicle Trail and Backcountry Byway
26 State Highway 375—the Extraterrestrial Highway
27 Chief Mountain SRMA
28 Pahrnagat NWR
29 Desert National Wildlife Range

30
31 ***Areas Located between 15 and 25 mi (24 and 40 km) from the SEZ***

32
33 Clover Mountains WA
34 Meadow Valley Range WA
35 Mount Irish WA

36
37 Viewshed analysis shows that the Clover Mountains and Meadow Valley Range WAs,
38 State Highway 375—the Extra-Terrestrial Highway, and the Kane Springs ACEC would have
39 no visibility of solar development within the SEZ and therefore would not be affected by
40 development in the SEZ; thus they are not considered further. In addition, because such small
41 portions of the Mount Irish WA and the Pahrnagat NWR have any potential visibility of the
42 SEZ, they are also not considered further. No lands near the SEZ and outside of designated
43 WSAs have been identified by BLM to be managed to protect wilderness characteristics.
44



1

2

3

FIGURE 11.2.3.1-1 Specially Designated Areas in the Vicinity of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

1 **11.2.3.2 Impacts**

2
3
4 **11.2.3.2.1 Construction and Operations**

5
6 The primary potential impacts of solar energy development of the SEZ on the nine
7 remaining specially designated areas near the SEZ would be from visual impacts or from
8 obstruction of access on existing roads that could affect access and scenic, recreational, or
9 wilderness characteristics of the areas. The visual impact on specially designated areas is
10 difficult to determine and would vary by solar technology employed, the specific area being
11 affected, and the perception of individuals viewing the development. Development of the SEZ,
12 especially full development, would be a factor in the viewshed from portions of these specially
13 designated areas, as summarized in Table 11.2.3.2-1. The data provided in the table assume the
14 use of the power tower solar energy technology, which because of the potential height of these
15 facilities, could be visible from the largest amount of land of the technologies being considered
16 in the PEIS. Viewshed analysis for this SEZ has shown that the visual impacts of shorter solar
17 energy facilities would be slightly less than for power tower technology (See Section 11.2.14 for
18 more detail on all viewshed analysis discussed in this section). Assessment of the visual impact
19 of solar energy projects must be conducted on a site-specific and technology-specific basis to
20 accurately identify impacts.

21
22 In general, the closer a viewer is to solar development, the greater the impact on an
23 individual’s perception. From a visual analysis perspective, the most sensitive viewing distances
24 generally are from 0 to 5 mi (0 to 8 km). The viewing height above a solar energy development
25 area, the size of the solar energy development area, and the purpose for which a person is visiting
26 an area are also important. Individuals seeking a wilderness or scenic experience within these
27 areas could be expected to be more adversely affected than those simply traveling along a
28 highway with another destination in mind. In the case of the Delamar Valley SEZ, the low-lying
29 location of the SEZ in relation to some of the surrounding specially designated areas, especially
30 the South Pahroc Range and Delamar Valley WAs, would highlight the industrial-like
31 development in the SEZ. In addition, because of the generally undeveloped nature of the whole
32 area and the potential for a very large area of solar development, impacts on wilderness
33 characteristics may be more significant than in other areas that are less pristine.

34
35 The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could potentially cause large though
36 temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities. The visual contrast levels
37 projected for sensitive visual resource areas that were used to assess potential impacts on
38 specially designated areas do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these
39 effects would be incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be
40 conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects.

41
42 Access to much of the land around the SEZ, including the North Delamar and Pahrangat
43 SRMAs and the South Pahroc Range and Delamar Mountains WAs, is on existing roads through
44 the SEZ. Solar development of the SEZ may result in the closure or rerouting of some access
45 roads that could have impacts on visitors’ ability to reach these areas.

TABLE 11.2.3.2-1 Potentially Affected Specially Designated Areas within a 25-mi (40-km) Viewshed of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, Assuming Power Tower Solar Technology with a Height of 650 ft (198.1 m)

Feature Type	Feature Name (Total Acreage/ Highway Length) ^a	Feature Area or Highway Length ^c		
		Visible within 5 mi	Visible between 5 mi and 15 mi	Visible between 15 mi and 25 mi
WAs	Big Rocks (12,929 acres)	0 acres	2,531 acres (20%)	3 acres (0.2%) ^b
	Delamar Mountains (111,060 acres)	5,179 acres (5%)	663 acres (0.6%)	0 acres
	Mount Irish (28,283 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	198 acres (0.7%)
	South Pahroc Range (25,674 acres)	1,566 acres (6%)	4,846 acres (19%)	36 acres (0.1%)
National Wildlife Range	Desert (1,626,903 acres)	0 acres	4,948 acres (0.3%)	14,463 acres (0.9%)
NWR	Pahranagat (5,540 acres)	0 acres	10 acres (0.2%)	0 acres
SRMAs	Chief Mountain (111,151 acres)	0 acres	222 acres (0.2%)	1,549 acres (1.4%)
	North Delamar (202,839 acres)	9,947 acres (4.9%)	27,700 acres (13.7%)	0 acres
	Pahranagat (298,567 acres)	3,504 acres (1.2%)	35,341 acres (11.9%)	10,270 acres (3.4%)
Scenic Highways	Highway 93 (149 mi)	0 mi	8.8 mi (14.2 km)	0 mi
	Silver State Trail (240 mi)	0 mi	12 mi (5%)	0 mi
	Highway 375 — Extra-Terrestrial Highway (98 mi)	0 mi	0 mi	0 mi

^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047; to convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

^b Percentage of total feature acreage or road length viewable.

1 Because of the lack of development in the immediate region of the proposed Delamar
2 Valley SEZ, the night sky is very dark, and night sky viewing is one of the attractions of
3 camping in the area. Solar development of the SEZ could adversely affect the quality of the night
4 sky environment. The amount of light that could emanate from solar facilities is not known, but
5 it could adversely affect lands adjacent to the SEZ, including nearby WAs.
6
7

8 **Delamar Mountains and South Pahroc Range Wilderness Areas** 9

10 Solar development within the SEZ, especially full development, would be readily
11 visible from portions of these two areas. The northern border of the Delamar Mountains WA
12 boundary at its closest is within 2 mi (1.2 km) of the SEZ. Because of the steep rise of the
13 mountains from the valley floor, it is the northern area of the WA that would be most heavily
14 affected. Wilderness characteristics in the 5,178 acres (21 km²) within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ
15 would be adversely affected. On the basis of visual analysis, a relatively small amount of
16 additional land, mainly scattered higher elevation areas located between 5 and 7 mi (8 and
17 11 km), would also have views of the SEZ if power tower technology were employed in the SEZ
18 and wilderness characteristics there would also be adversely affected. Overall, visual analysis
19 indicates that wilderness characteristics in 5% to 6% of the Delamar Mountains WA would be
20 adversely affected depending upon the solar technology deployed in the SEZ.
21

22 It is largely the southern end and the eastern boundary of the South Pahroc Range WA
23 that would be affected by solar development within the SEZ. Most of the affected acreage within
24 the WA is from 3 to 8 mi (5 to 13 km) from the SEZ, and these areas would have a dominating
25 view of development within the SEZ. Wilderness characteristics within this zone would be
26 adversely affected. As distances from the SEZ increase in the northern portion of the WA,
27 impacts on wilderness characteristics would decrease. Overall, visual analysis indicates that
28 wilderness characteristics in 25% of the South Pahroc Range WA would be adversely affected
29 depending upon the solar technology deployed in the SEZ.
30
31

32 **Big Rocks Wilderness Area** 33

34 The Big Rocks WA is located about 12 mi (19 km) north of the SEZ. Based on visual
35 analysis, about 2,531 acres (10 km²) of the WA would have limited visibility of the SEZ along
36 its narrow axis from a distance of between 12 and 14 mi (19 and 22 km). About 20% of the WA
37 would have long distance views of the SEZ. Because of the distance and limited width of the
38 SEZ as seen from the WA, and the view of U.S. 93, there is expected to be no significant impact
39 on wilderness characteristics in the Big Rocks Wilderness.
40
41

42 **Pahranagat, North Delamar, and Chief Mountain SRMAs** 43

44 These SRMAs are managed for a broad recreation opportunity spectrum to ensure a
45 balance of recreation experiences. A wide range of activities occur within the SRMAs, including
46 backcountry driving, hunting, OHV use, competitive racing, heritage tourism, and hiking as

1 directed in the Ely Resource Management Plan (BLM 2008a). Small portions of both the
2 Pahranaagat and North Delamar SRMAs are within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ, and the SEZ would
3 be visible from portions of all three SRMAs. While scenery is an important component of many
4 recreational uses, the relatively limited near distance views of the SEZ from the SRMAs would
5 limit the potential impact of solar development on the SRMAs. It is anticipated that there would
6 not be a significant impact on these SRMAs from development of the proposed Delamar Valley
7 SEZ.
8
9

10 **Highway 93 State Scenic Byway**

11
12 Viewshed analysis of the scenic byway shows that the views travelers on Highway 93
13 would have of the Delamar Valley SEZ would be from the north and at a distance of about 8 to
14 10 mi (13 to 16 km). The highway is slightly elevated above the level of the SEZ, and travelers
15 would have periodic views of development within the SEZ along about 10 mi (16 km) of the
16 highway. However, because of the distance to the SEZ, the relatively narrow view of the SEZ
17 (only the narrow dimension of the SEZ would be exposed), and the nature of highway travel, it is
18 not anticipated that there would be any adverse impact on the use of the scenic byway.
19
20

21 **Silver State Off-Highway Vehicle Trail and Backcountry Byway**

22
23 The trail/byway is about 10 mi (16 km) north of the SEZ and north of U.S. 93. The route
24 of the trail is largely screened by topography, and views of development of the SEZ are expected
25 to be minimal. It is not anticipated that there would be any impact on the use of the trail/byway.
26
27

28 **Desert National Wildlife Range**

29
30 The Desert National Wildlife Range's primary focus is the management of desert bighorn
31 sheep, but numerous recreation opportunities exist in the area (USFWS 2010a). Although the
32 nearest boundary of the Wildlife Range is about 9 mi (14 km) from the SEZ, intervening
33 topography restricts views of solar energy facilities to power tower facilities, and in that instance,
34 only the tower tops could be seen. Between 9- and 25-mi (14- and 40-km) views of tall solar
35 facilities in the SEZ might be possible from about 20,000 acres (81 km²) of the 1.5 million-acre
36 (6,070-km²) refuge. This amounts to about 1% of the refuge area. It is only at about 17 mi
37 (27 km) that views of ground development within the SEZ would be possible. At this distance,
38 there would be minimal visibility of SEZ facilities, and no adverse impacts on the NWR are
39 anticipated.
40
41

42 ***11.2.3.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***

43
44 Because of the availability of an existing transmission line, no additional construction of
45 transmission facilities was assessed. Should additional transmission lines be required outside of

1 the SEZ, there may be additional impacts to specially designated areas. See Section 11.2.2.2 for a
2 description of the analysis assumptions for transmission facilities.

3
4 Construction of an access road southwest from the SEZ to U.S. 93 would add about
5 58 acres (0.2 km²) of surface disturbance to public land. This disturbance would not likely cause
6 significant additional adverse impacts on specially designated areas.

9 **11.2.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

10
11 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
12 as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would provide some mitigation for some
13 identified impacts. The exceptions may be the adverse impacts that would occur on wilderness
14 characteristics in the South Pahroc and Delamar Mountains WAs and that would not be
15 completely mitigated.

16
17 A proposed design feature specific to the Delamar Valley SEZ includes the following:

- 18
19 • The design features for visual resources included in Section 11.2.14.3 should
20 be adopted to minimize impacts on wilderness characteristics.

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1 **11.2.4 Rangeland Resources**

2
3 Rangeland resources include livestock grazing and wild horses and burros, both of
4 which are managed by the BLM. These resources and possible impacts on them from solar
5 development within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are discussed in Sections 11.2.4.1
6 and 11.2.4.2.

7
8
9 **11.2.4.1 Livestock Grazing**

10
11
12 **11.2.4.1.1 Affected Environment**

13
14 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ contains portions of two perennial grazing allotments;
15 the Buckhorn and Oak Springs allotments. See Table 11.2.4.1-1 for a summary of key
16 information regarding the allotments. There are numerous livestock water facilities located
17 within the area of the proposed SEZ.

18
19
20 **11.2.4.1.2 Impacts**

21
22
23 **Construction and Operations**

24
25 Should utility-scale solar development occur in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ,
26 grazing would be excluded from the areas developed as provided for in the BLM grazing
27
28

TABLE 11.2.4.1-1 Grazing Allotments within the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Allotment	Total Acres ^a	% of Acres in SEZ ^b	Active BLM AUMs	No. of Permittees ^c
Oak Springs	195,049	<1	9,268	1
Buckhorn	82,968	18	3,370	1

^a Includes public, private, and state lands included in the allotment based on the Allotment Master Reports included in the BLM's Rangeland Administration System (BLM 2009a).

^b This is the percentage of the total allotment acreage of public lands located in the SEZ.

^c The same permittee uses both allotments.

1 regulations (43 CFR Part 4100). This would include reimbursement of the permittee for their
2 portion of the value for any range improvements in the area removed from the grazing allotment.
3 The impact of this change in the grazing permits would depend on several factors, including
4 (1) how much of an allotment the permittee might lose to development, (2) how important the
5 specific land lost is to the permittee's overall operation, and (3) the amount of actual forage
6 production that would be lost by the permittee. The public lands in this SEZ include a minimal
7 amount of the Oak Springs allotment, and loss of this portion of the allotment is anticipated to
8 have no impact on the overall operation. No loss of AUMs is anticipated in this allotment.
9 See Table 11.2.4.1-1 for a summary of the key information for the allotments.

10
11 If full solar development would occur in the SEZ, the federal grazing permit for the
12 Buckhorn allotment would be reduced in area by about 18%. Using a simplified assumption that
13 the grazing capacity of the allotment would be reduced by the same percentage as the reduction
14 in acreage, 606 AUMs would be lost. This is considered to be a small impact for the permittee. A
15 quantification of the impact on the grazing allotments and permittees would require a specific
16 analysis involving, at a minimum, the three factors identified at the beginning of this section. The
17 level of impact on the Buckhorn allotment permittee would also be affected by any mitigation of
18 the loss (e.g., through installation of new range improvements) that could be accomplished on
19 the remaining public lands in the allotment.

20
21 For the purposes of this PEIS and assuming a loss of the 606 AUMs as described above,
22 there would be a minimal impact on livestock use within the Caliente Field Office from the
23 designation and development of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. This conclusion was derived
24 from comparing the loss of the 606 AUMs with the total BLM-authorized AUMs in the Caliente
25 Field Office for grazing year 2009, which totaled 43,255 AUMs. This represents a loss of about
26 1.4%.

27 28 **Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**

29
30 Because of the availability of a major transmission line in the SEZ, and assuming that
31 additional project-specific analysis would be done for construction of such infrastructure, no
32 assessment of the impacts of such activities outside of the SEZ was conducted See
33 Section 11.2.2.2 for a description of the analysis assumptions for transmission facilities.

34
35 It is assumed that a new 8-mi (13-km) access road connecting to U.S. 93 to the southwest
36 would be required to provide adequate access to the SEZ. Construction of this road would disturb
37 about 58 acres (0.2 km²) located in the Buckhorn and Lower Lake East allotments. This would
38 not create a significant additional impact on grazing in either of these allotments.

39 40 41 ***11.2.4.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

42
43 No SEZ specific design features were identified. Implementing the programmatic design
44 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
45 Program, would provide some mitigation for identified impacts. The exceptions would be there

1 would be a loss of grazing capacity within the Buckhorn allotment that would not be mitigated
2 and there would be an adverse economic impact on the grazing permittee.
3
4

5 **11.2.4.2 Wild Horses and Burros**

6
7

8 ***11.2.4.2.1 Affected Environment***

9

10 Section 4.4.2 discusses wild horses (*Equus caballus*) and burros (*E. asinus*) that occur
11 within the six-state study area. Nearly 100 wild horse and burro herd management areas (HMAs)
12 occur within Nevada (BLM 2009b). Portions of the Silver King and Eagle HMAs occur within
13 the 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region for the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (Figure 11.2.4.2-1).
14 Neither HMA occurs within the SEZ or indirect impact area of the SEZ.
15

16 In addition to the HMAs managed by the BLM, the USFS has wild horse and burro
17 territories in Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah, and is the lead management
18 agency that administers 37 of the territories (Giffen 2009; USFS 2007). The closest territory to
19 the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is the Quinn Territory located within a portion of the
20 Humboldt National Forest. This territory is located more than 50 mi (80 km) northwest of the
21 SEZ (Figure 11.2.4.2-1).
22
23

24 ***11.2.4.2.2 Impacts***

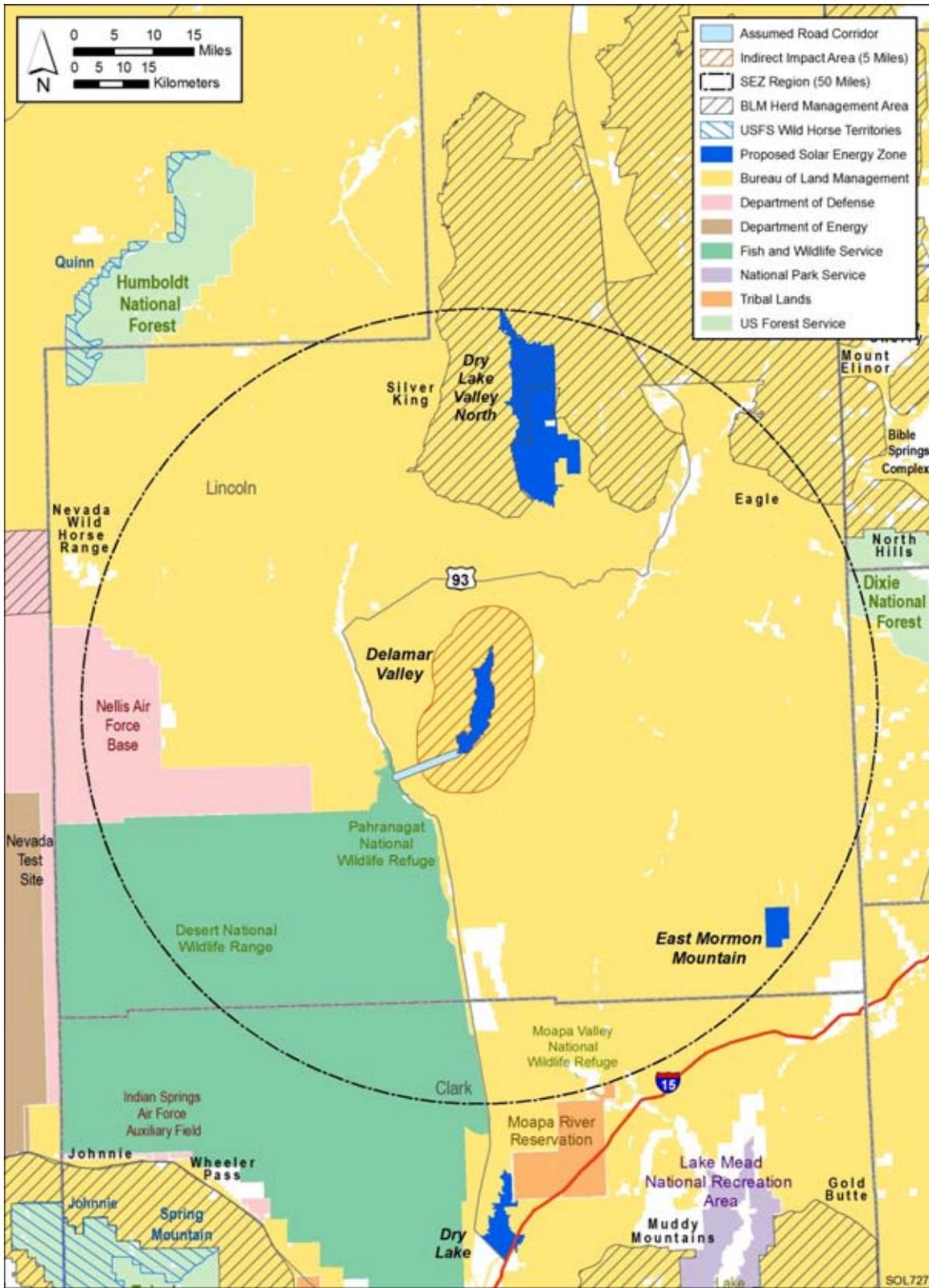
25

26 Because the Delamar Valley SEZ is about 16 mi (26 km) or more from any wild horse
27 and burro HMA managed by the BLM and more than 50 mi (80 km) from any wild horse and
28 burro territory administered by the USFS, solar energy development within the SEZ would not
29 directly affect wild horses and burros that are managed by these agencies.
30
31

32 ***11.2.4.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

33

34 No SEZ-specific design features for solar development within the proposed Delamar
35 Valley SEZ would be necessary to protect or minimize impacts on wild horses and burros.
36
37



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FIGURE 11.2.4.2-1 Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas and Territories within the Analysis Area for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (Sources: BLM 2010a; USFS 2007)

1 **11.2.5 Recreation**

2
3
4 **11.2.5.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The site of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is a remote area that is flat with numerous
7 roads and trails that provide access into and through the area. The main road in the valley passes
8 through the SEZ. Backcountry driving, OHV use, and competitive truck, buggy, and motorcycle
9 races that take place on the roads and trails in the areas surrounding the SEZ are important
10 recreational activities. Camping and hunting opportunities are also available in and around the
11 area. The general area attracts visitors from Las Vegas, about 80 mi (129 km) away. Native
12 American petroglyphs as well as the deserted mining town of Delamar attract visitors to the area.
13 The south end of the SEZ on the dry lakebed is popular for racing, and model rocket launching
14 and for setting off pyrotechnics and is where much of the recreation in the area occurs.
15 Two SRMAs are within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ, and a third SRMA is about 10 mi (16 km)
16 north of the SEZ (see the brief description of the SRMAs in Section 11.2.3.2). OHV use in the
17 SEZ and surrounding area has been designated as “Limited to travel on designated roads and
18 trails” (BLM 2010c).

19
20
21 **11.2.5.2 Impacts**

22
23
24 **Construction and Operations**

25
26 Recreational use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ developed for solar
27 energy production. Although there are no recreational use figures for the general area, it is a
28 common destination for a wide range of recreation visitors, and it is not clear what impact
29 development of the valley bottom for solar energy use would have on the recreational use.
30 Development of the southern end of the SEZ on the playa would curtail most of the use that
31 occurs within the SEZ itself. The area contains numerous roads and trails that access areas
32 around the SEZ, and the potential exists for some of these roads to be closed. In addition, the
33 SEZ is about 15 mi (24 km) long and if east–west travel across the SEZ were prevented by solar
34 energy development, a long detour around the site could be required. This would adversely affect
35 recreation and other public land users. Whether recreational visitors would continue to use any
36 remaining undeveloped portions of the SEZ, or how recreational use of areas surrounding the
37 SEZ would change, is unknown.

38
39 Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes
40 designated open and available for public use. If open OHV routes within the SEZ were identified
41 during project-specific analyses, they would be re-designated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for
42 more details on how routes coinciding with proposed solar facilities would be treated).

1 **Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**

2
3 Because of the availability of an existing transmission line, no additional construction of
4 transmission or road facilities was assessed. See Section 11.2.2.2 for a description of the analysis
5 assumptions for transmission facilities.
6

7 It is assumed that a new 8-mi (13-km) access road connecting to U.S. 93 to the southwest
8 would be required to provide adequate access to the SEZ. Construction of this road would disturb
9 about 58 acres (0.2 km²) but would not have a significant additional impact on recreation use.
10

11
12 **11.2.5.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

13
14 No SEZ specific design features were identified. Implementing the programmatic design
15 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
16 Program, would provide mitigation for some identified impacts. The exceptions would be the
17 loss of recreational use of the area developed for solar energy production that would not be
18 mitigable.
19
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22

1 **11.2.6 Military and Civilian Aviation**

2
3
4 **11.2.6.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The Delamar Valley SEZ is crossed by one MTR with a 100 ft (30 m) AGL operating
7 limit. Supersonic speeds are authorized at and above 5,000 ft AGL (1,524 m) in the NTTR in this
8 area. The area is completely included within the boundary of the NTTR airspace. The closest
9 military installations to the proposed SEZ are the NTTR, which is located about 50 mi (80 km)
10 west of the SEZ, and Nellis Air Force Base, which is located about 70 mi (113 km) south of the
11 area.

12
13 The nearest public airport is the Alamo Landing Field Airport located near the town of
14 Alamo, about 13 mi (21 km) northwest of the closest boundary of the SEZ. The second closest
15 public airport is the Lincoln County Airport, a small local airport about 32 mi (51 km) northeast
16 of the SEZ. The Alamo Landing Field Airport and Lincoln County Airport do not have any
17 scheduled commercial passenger or freight service.

18
19
20 **11.2.6.2 Impacts**

21
22 The military has expressed serious concern over solar energy facilities being constructed
23 within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Nellis Air Force Base has indicated that any facilities
24 higher than 100 ft (30 m) may be incompatible with low-level aircraft use of the MTR.
25 Additionally, the NTTR has indicated that solar technologies requiring structures higher than
26 50 ft (15 m) may present unacceptable electromagnetic compatibility concerns for its test
27 mission. The NTTR maintains that a pristine testing environment is required for the unique
28 national security missions conducted on the NTTR and that solar energy facilities could cause
29 potential electromagnetic interference with those testing activities. Potential for electromagnetic
30 interference, coupled with potential training route obstructions created by taller structures, make
31 it possible that solar facilities could significantly affect military operations.

32
33 The Alamo Landing Field and Lincoln County Airports are located far enough from the
34 SEZ that there would be no effect on their operations.

35
36
37 **11.2.6.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

38
39 No SEZ specific design features were identified. The programmatic design features
40 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, would require early coordination with the DoD to
41 identify and mitigate, if possible, potential impacts on the use of MTRs.

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1 **11.2.7 Geologic Setting and Soil Resources**

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4 **11.2.7.1 Affected Environment**

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7 **11.2.7.1.1 Geologic Setting**

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9
10 **Regional Setting**

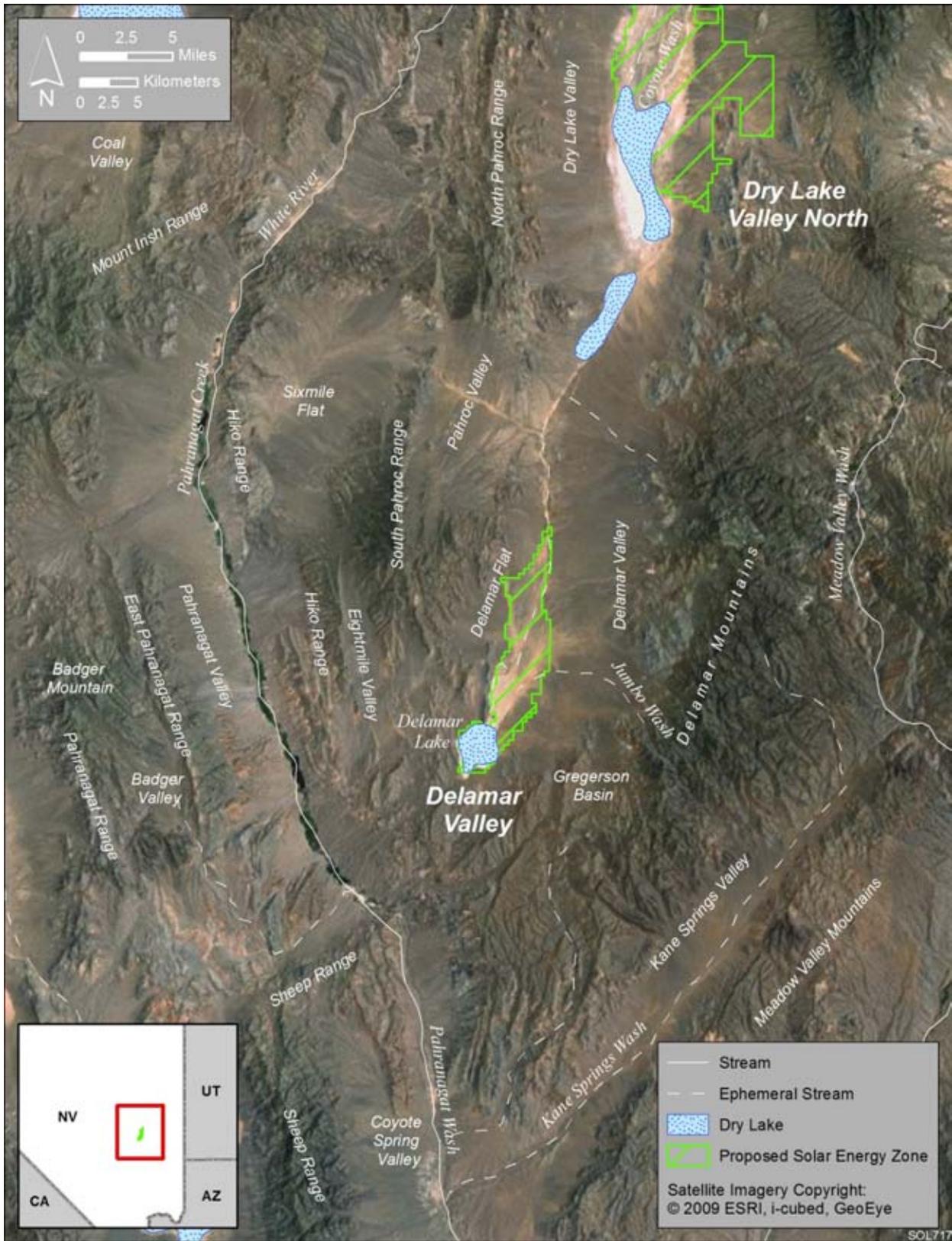
11
12 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located in Delamar Valley, a north-trending closed
13 basin within the Basin and Range physiographic province in southern Nevada. The valley lies
14 immediately south of Dry Lake Valley (north). It is bounded on the west by the South Pahroc
15 Range and on the east and southeast by the Delamar Mountains (Figure 11.2.7.1-1). Delamar
16 Valley is one of many structural basins (grabens) typical of the Basin and Range province.

17
18 Exposed sediments in Delamar Valley consist mainly of modern alluvial and eolian
19 deposits (Figure 11.2.7.1-2). Fan deposits consist of poorly sorted gravel, gravelly sand, and
20 sand. Playa lake sediments at Delamar Lake (Qp) occur in the southern part of the valley and
21 cover about 14% of the SEZ. The surrounding mountains are composed mainly of Late
22 Proterozoic and Cambrian metamorphic rocks overlain by Paleozoic carbonate and shale and
23 capped by late-Tertiary ash-flow tuffs from the Caliente caldera complex, one of a series of
24 Tertiary caldera complexes in the Delamar Mountains to the east (Mankinen et al. 2008;
25 Scott et al. 1992). The oldest rocks exposed in the region are the Late Proterozoic to Cambrian
26 metamorphic rocks (CZq) that occur in the central part of the Delamar Mountains, near the
27 Delamar mining district (Mankinen et al. 2008).

28
29 Semiconsolidated to unconsolidated basin-fill deposits are estimated to be about 0.6 to
30 1.2 mi (1 to 2 km) thick across most of Delamar Valley; estimates of the basin's maximum depth
31 range from 2.5 to 4 mi (4 to 6.5 km) in the area just west of the southern part of the valley
32 (depending on basin fill density assumptions; Scheirer 2005). Shallow basin-fill aquifers occur in
33 the sand and gravel deposits. Most of these aquifers are hydraulically isolated from similar
34 aquifers in adjacent valleys, but some are connected by flow through the underlying carbonate-
35 rock aquifer (Mankinen et al. 2008).

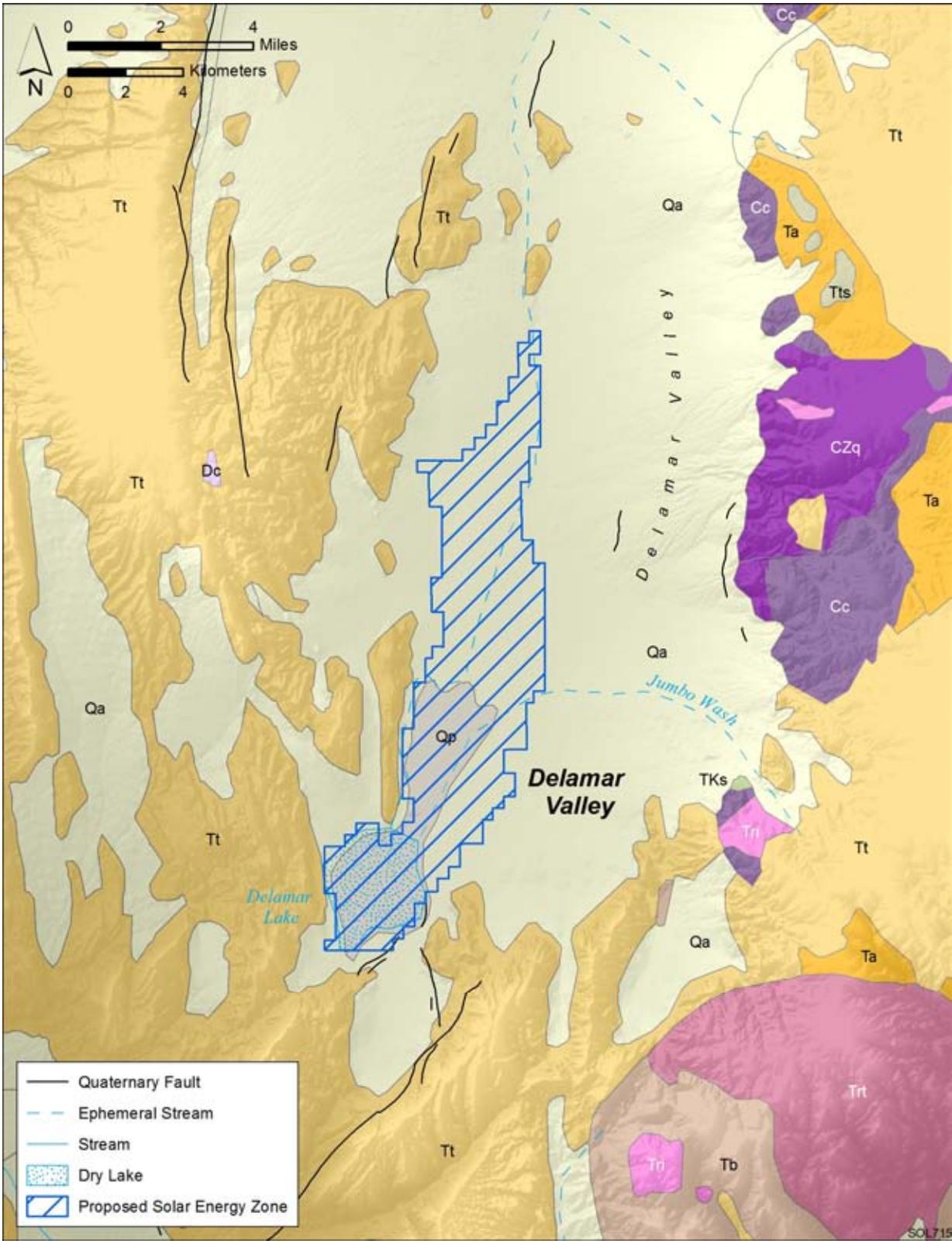
36
37
38 **Topography**

39
40 The Delamar Valley is an elongated basin, about 25 mi (40 km) long and 8 to 12 mi
41 (13 to 19 km) wide. It is south of Dry Lake Valley (south of U.S. 93). Elevations along the valley
42 axis range from about 4,920 ft (1,500 m) at the northern end and along the valley sides to about
43 4,540 ft (1,380 m) at the Delamar Flat Reservoir at the southern end. Coalescing alluvial fans
44 form continuous fan aprons along the mountain fronts on both sides of Delamar Valley; aprons
45 on the east side of the valley are more deeply dissected and younger fans are more deeply inset
46 into older fans (Swadley et al. 1992). The valley is drained by several unnamed ephemeral



1

2 **FIGURE 11.2.7.1-1 Physiographic Features of the Delamar Valley Region**



1

2 **FIGURE 11.2.7.1-2 Geologic Map of the Delamar Valley Region (Ludington et al. 2007;**
 3 **Stewart and Carlson 1978)**

4

Cenozoic (Quaternary, Tertiary)

- Qa** Alluvial deposits; locally includes beach and sand dune deposits
- Qp** Playa, marsh and alluvial-flat deposits, locally eroded
- Trt** Rhyolitic intrusive rocks
- Tt** Welded and nonwelded silic ash-flow tuffs (Tt2 and Tt3)
- Trt** Ash-flow tuffs, rhyolitic flows, and shallow intrusive rocks
- Ta** Andesite and related rocks of intermediate composition (Ta2 and Ta3)
- Tb** Basalt flows
- Tts** Ash-flow tuffs and tuffaceous sedimentary rocks
- TKs** Continental sedimentary rocks

Paleozoic

- Dc** Dolomite, limestone and minor amounts of sandstone and quartzite
- Cc** Dolomite and limestone (mostly Cambrian)
- CZq** Quartzite and minor amounts of conglomerate, phyllitic siltstone, limestone and dolomite (Proterozoic - Cambrian)

1

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2 **FIGURE 11.2.7.1-2 (Cont.)**

3

1 streams that terminate at Delamar Lake, a playa in the southern part of the valley. The main
2 topographic features in the valley are low volcanic hills in the northern part of the valley and the
3 range front alluvial fans.
4

5 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located in the southern part of Delamar Valley,
6 between the South Pahroc Range to the west and the Delamar Mountains to the east. Its terrain
7 slopes gently to the south. Elevations range from about 4,760 ft (1,450 m) in the northwest
8 corner to 4,530 ft (1,380 m) near the SEZ's southwest end at Delamar Lake (Figure 11.2.7.1-3).
9

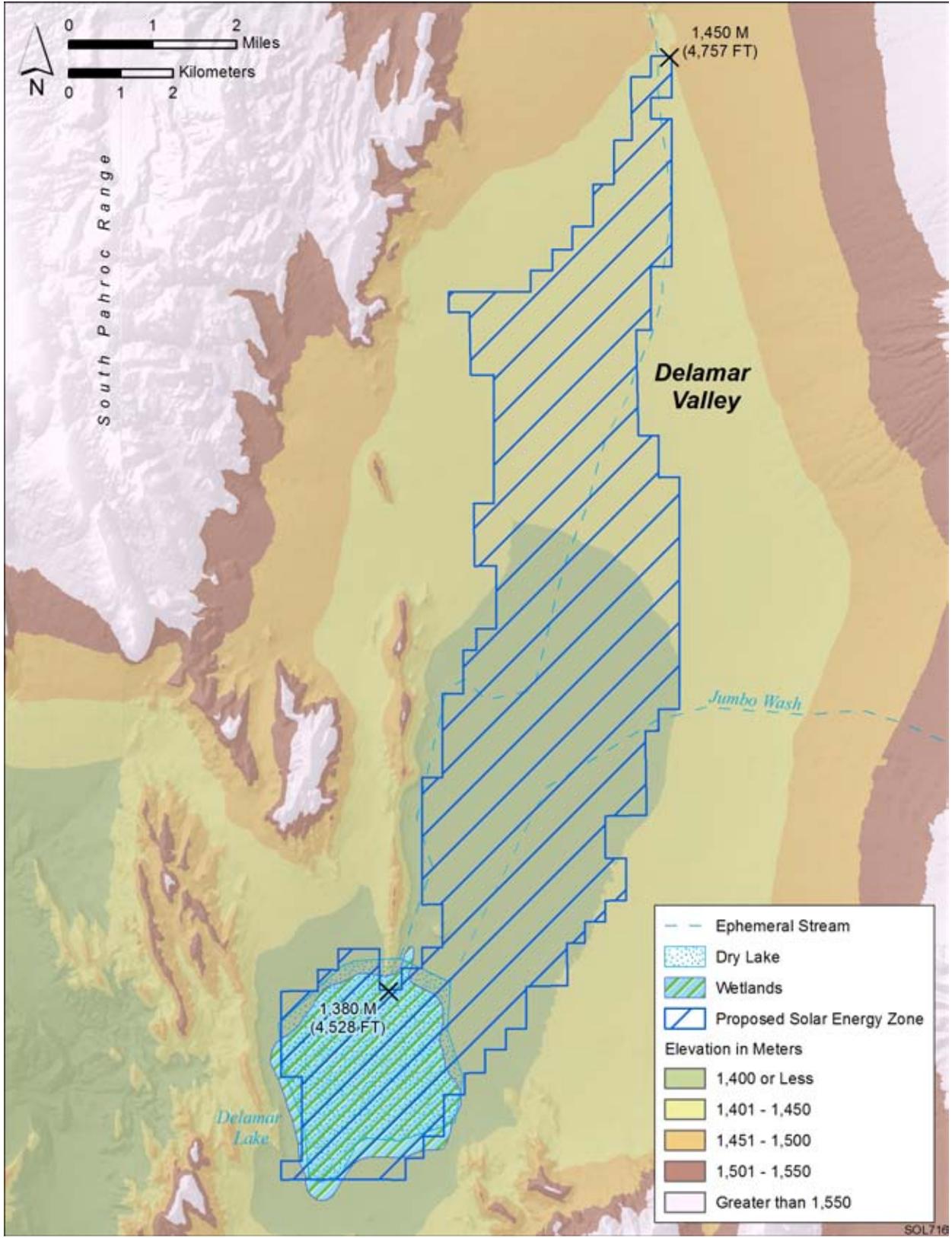
10 **Geologic Hazards**

11
12
13 The types of geologic hazards that could potentially affect solar project sites and their
14 mitigation are discussed in Sections 5.7.3 and 5.7.4. The following sections provide a
15 preliminary assessment of these hazards at the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Solar project
16 developers may need to conduct a geotechnical investigation to identify and assess geologic
17 hazards locally and to better identify facility design criteria and site-specific design features to
18 minimize their risk.
19

20
21 **Seismicity.** Delamar Valley is located within the Southern Nevada Seismic Belt
22 (also called the Pahrangat Shear Zone), a south-southwest trending zone of seismic activity
23 characterized mainly by background earthquakes (i.e., earthquakes not associated with surface
24 expression) (DePolo and DePolo 1999). The seismic zone is not well understood because it does
25 not follow the dominant strike (north-south) of faulting in southern Nevada, but is thought to
26 accommodate strain between an area of extension to the south (Mojave Desert) and the much
27 more rigid area of the central Great Basin to the north (Kreemer et al. 2010). Faults within the
28 Pahrangat Shear Zone are estimated to exhibit as much as 10 to 12 mi (16 to 19 km) of left-
29 lateral movement (Tschanz and Pampeyan 1970). The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ lies to the
30 north of the Maynard Lake fault. The Pahroc and Delamar Valley faults are to the northwest of
31 the SEZ; the Delamar Mountains fault is to the east (Figure 11.2.7.1-4).
32

33 The northeast-trending Maynard Lake fault is located about 3 mi (5 km) south of the
34 Delamar Valley SEZ. The fault extends to the southwest from the Delamar Lake area along
35 bedrock ridges that cross the valley between the Delamar Mountains to the east and the Sheep
36 Range to the southwest. Although the Maynard fault is part of a zone of left-lateral strike-slip
37 faults, Quaternary displacement along it is vertical (normal). With the age of offset sediments
38 (Late Pleistocene), the most recent movement along the fault is estimated at less than
39 130,000 years ago. The slip rate along this fault is estimated to be less than 0.2 mm/yr.
40 Recurrence intervals have not been estimated (Anderson 1999a).
41

42 The Pahroc and Delamar Valley faults together compose a group of discontinuous north-
43 trending normal faults northwest of the Delamar Valley SEZ along the South Pahroc Range
44 (Pahroc faults) and the low volcanic hills in the north part of the valley (Delamar Valley faults).
45 Movement along the Pahroc fault is down to the east; east-facing scarps separate the main part of
46 the South Pahroc Range from the alluvial flats and volcanic hills to the east. The Delamar Valley



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FIGURE 11.2.7.1-3 General Terrain of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

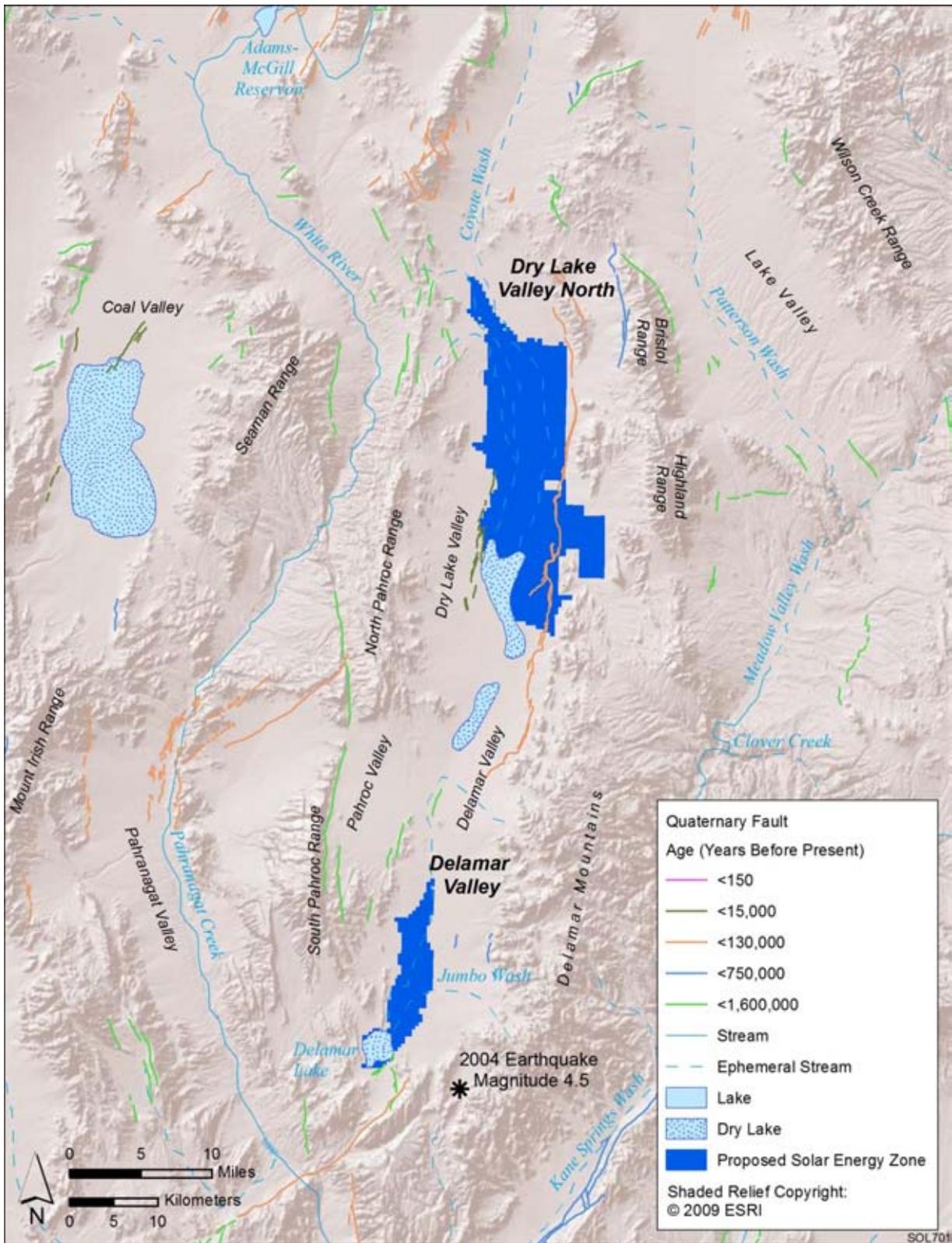


FIGURE 11.2.7.1-4 Quaternary Faults in the Delamar Valley Region (USGS and NBMG 2010; USGS 2010c)

1 fault is marked by west-facing scarps, indicating down-to-the-west movement. With offsets of
2 middle to early Pleistocene sediments, the most recent activity on both these fault systems is
3 estimated at less than 1.6 million years ago. Recurrence and slip rates have not been estimated,
4 but the slip rates are thought to be low since these faults are “post-tectonic” (Anderson 1999b,c;
5 Ertec Western, Inc. 1981).

6
7 The discontinuous group of north-trending normal faults making up the Delamar
8 Mountains fault lies to the east of the Delamar Valley SEZ. These faults are part of a larger fault
9 system of west-facing scarps, marking the boundary between the valley and the western base of
10 the Delamar Mountains. With offsets of Pleistocene to Pliocene sediments, the most recent
11 movement along the fault is estimated at less than 750,000 years ago. The slip rate along this
12 fault is estimated to be less than 0.2 mm/yr. Recurrence intervals have not been estimated
13 (Anderson 1999d).

14
15 From June 1, 2000 to May 31, 2010, 57 earthquakes were recorded within a 61-mi
16 (100-km) radius of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The largest earthquake during that
17 period occurred on May 16, 2004. It was located about 5 mi (8 km) southeast of the SEZ in the
18 Gregerson Basin (near the Delamar Mountains) and registered a Richter scale magnitude (ML¹)
19 of 4.5 (Figure 11.2.7.1-4). During this period, 32 (56%) of the recorded earthquakes within a
20 61-mi (100-km) radius of the SEZ had magnitudes greater than 3.0; none were greater than 4.5
21 (USGS 2010c).

22
23
24 **Liquefaction.** The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ lies within an area where the peak
25 horizontal acceleration with a 10% probability of exceedance in 50 years is between 0.10 and
26 0.15 g. Shaking associated with this level of acceleration is generally perceived as strong;
27 however, potential damage to structures is light (USGS 2008). Given the deep water table (from
28 300 ft [90 m] in the north to 1,000 ft [305 m] below Delamar Lake [Ertec Western, Inc. 1981])
29 and the low intensity of ground shaking estimated for Delamar Valley, the potential for
30 liquefaction in Delamar Valley sediments is likely to be low.

31
32
33 **Volcanic Hazards.** Several calderas in southern Nevada are the sources of voluminous
34 and widespread Tertiary volcanic deposits throughout the region. These include the Indian Peak
35 caldera complex to the northeast of Delamar Valley, between the Highland Range and the
36 Nevada-Utah border; the Caliente caldera complex, also to the east, in the northern Delamar and
37 Clover Mountains and extending into western Utah; the smaller Kane Springs Wash caldera in
38 the southern Delamar Mountains; and the Central Nevada caldera complex to the northwest of
39 Delamar Valley (Scott et al. 1992). Tertiary volcanism overlaps periods of extension in southern
40

¹ Richter scale magnitude (ML) was the original magnitude defined by Richter and Gutenberg for local earthquakes in 1935. It was based on the maximum amplitude recorded on a Wood-Anderson torsion seismograph but is currently calculated for earthquakes with magnitudes ranging from 2 to 6, using modern instruments with adjustments (USGS 2010d).

1 Nevada and occurred as recently as 2.6 million years ago (late Pliocene) (Noble 1972); however,
2 there is no evidence of more recent volcanic activity associated with these complexes.
3

4 Delamar Valley is located about 80 mi (130 km) east–northeast of the southwestern
5 Nevada volcanic field, which consists of volcanic rocks (tuffs and lavas) of the Timber
6 Mountain-Oasis Valley caldera complex and Silent Canyon and Black Mountain calderas
7 (Figure 11.2.7.1-4). The area has been studied extensively because of its proximity to the NTS
8 and Yucca Mountain repository. Two types of fields are present in the region: (1) large-volume,
9 long-lived fields with a range of basalt types associated with more silicic volcanic rocks
10 produced by melting of the lower crust, and (2) small-volume fields formed by scattered basaltic
11 scoria cones during brief cycles of activity, called rift basalts because of their association with
12 extensional structural features. The basalts of the region typically belong to the second group;
13 examples include the basalts of Silent Canyon and Sleeping Butte (Byers et al. 1989;
14 Crowe et al. 1983).
15

16 The oldest basalts in the region were erupted during the waning stages of silicic
17 volcanism in the southern Great Basin in the Late Miocene and are associated with silicic
18 volcanic centers like Dome Mountain (the first group). Rates of basaltic volcanic activity in
19 the region have been relatively constant but generally low. Basaltic eruptions occurred from
20 1.7 million to 700,000 years ago, creating the cinder cones within Crater Flat (Stuckless and
21 O’Leary 2007). The most recent episode of basaltic eruptions occurred at the Lathrop Wells
22 Cone complex about 80,000 years ago (Stuckless and O’Leary 2007). There has been no silicic
23 volcanism in the region in the past 5 million years. Current silicic volcanic activity occurs
24 entirely along the margins of the Great Basin (Crowe et al. 1983).
25

26 Crowe et al. (1983) determined that the annual probability of a volcanic event for the
27 region is very low (3.3×10^{-10} to 4.7×10^{-8}), similar to the probability of 1.7×10^{-8} calculated
28 for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository (Cline et al. 2005). The volcanic risk in the region is
29 associated only with basaltic eruptions; the risk of silicic volcanism is negligible. Perry (2002)
30 cites geologic data that could increase the recurrence rate (and thus the probability of disruption).
31 These include hypothesized episodes of an anomalously high strain rate, the hypothesized
32 presence of a regional mantle hot spot, and new aeromagnetic data that suggest that previously
33 unrecognized volcanoes may be buried in the alluvial basins in the region.
34
35

36 ***Slope Stability and Land Subsidence.*** The incidence of rock falls and slope failures can
37 be moderate to high along mountain fronts and can present a hazard to facilities on the relatively
38 flat terrain of valley floors like the Delamar Valley, if they are located at the base of steep slopes.
39 The risk of rock falls and slope failures decreases toward the flat valley center.
40
41

42 ***Other Hazards.*** Other potential hazards at the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ include
43 those associated with soil compaction (restricted infiltration and increased runoff), expanding
44 clay soils (destabilization of structures), and hydro-compactible or collapsible soil (settlement).
45 Disturbance of soil crusts and desert pavement on soil surfaces may increase the likelihood of
46 soil erosion by wind.

1 Alluvial fan surfaces, such as those found in the Delamar Valley, can be the sites of
2 damaging high-velocity flash floods and debris flows during periods of intense and prolonged
3 rainfall. The nature of the flooding and sedimentation processes (e.g., stream flow versus debris
4 flow) depends on the specific morphology of the fan) (National Research Council 1996).
5 Section 11.2.9.1.1 provides further discussion of flood risks within the Delamar Valley SEZ.
6
7

8 **11.2.7.1.2 Soil Resources**

9

10 Soils within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are sandy loams and silt loams of the
11 Geer, Penoyer, Koyen, Keefa, and Slaw Series, which together make up about 81% of the soil
12 coverage at the site (Figure 11.2.7.1-5). Soil map units within the Delamar Valley SEZ are
13 described in Table 11.2.7.1-1. These level to nearly level soils are derived from alluvium from
14 mixed sources, typical of soils on alluvial fans and fan remnants. They are characterized as very
15 deep and well drained. Most soils on the site have moderate surface runoff potential and
16 moderate to moderately rapid permeability (except for the Slaw silt loam and playa soils which
17 have slow permeability). The natural soil surface is suitable for roads with a slight to moderate
18 erosion hazard when used as roads or trails. The Slaw silt loam along Jumbo wash, north of
19 Delamar Lake, and playa soils within Delamar Lake are not suitable for roads because of high
20 flooding or erosion potential and a severe rutting hazard. Ponding is frequent in playa soils,
21 covering 2,394 ac (10 km²), with a 50% chance of occurrence in any given year. The water
22 erosion potential is low to moderate for most soils. The susceptibility to wind erosion is
23 moderate, with as much as 86 tons (78 metric tons) of soil eroded by wind per acre (4,000 m²)
24 each year (NRCS 2010). Biological soil crusts and desert pavement have not been documented
25 within the SEZ, but may be present.
26

27 Only the playa soils within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are rated as hydric.²
28 Flooding is rare for most soils at the site except for the Slaw silt loam, north of Delamar Lake,
29 which covers about 2,706 ac (11 km²) and has an occasional flood rating, with a 5 to 50%
30 chance in any year. Soils of the Geer-Penoyer association and the Koyen gravelly sandy loam,
31 covering 7,990 ac (32 km²) in the north part of the site, are classified as prime farmland, if
32 irrigated, depending of soil quality and erodibility (NRCS 2010).
33
34

35 **11.2.7.2 Impacts**

36

37 Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities
38 (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase of a solar
39 project. These include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind,
40 soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. Such impacts are
41 common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities in varying degrees and are described in more
42 detail for the four phases of development in Section 5.7 1.
43
44

² A hydric soil is a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding (NRCS 2010).

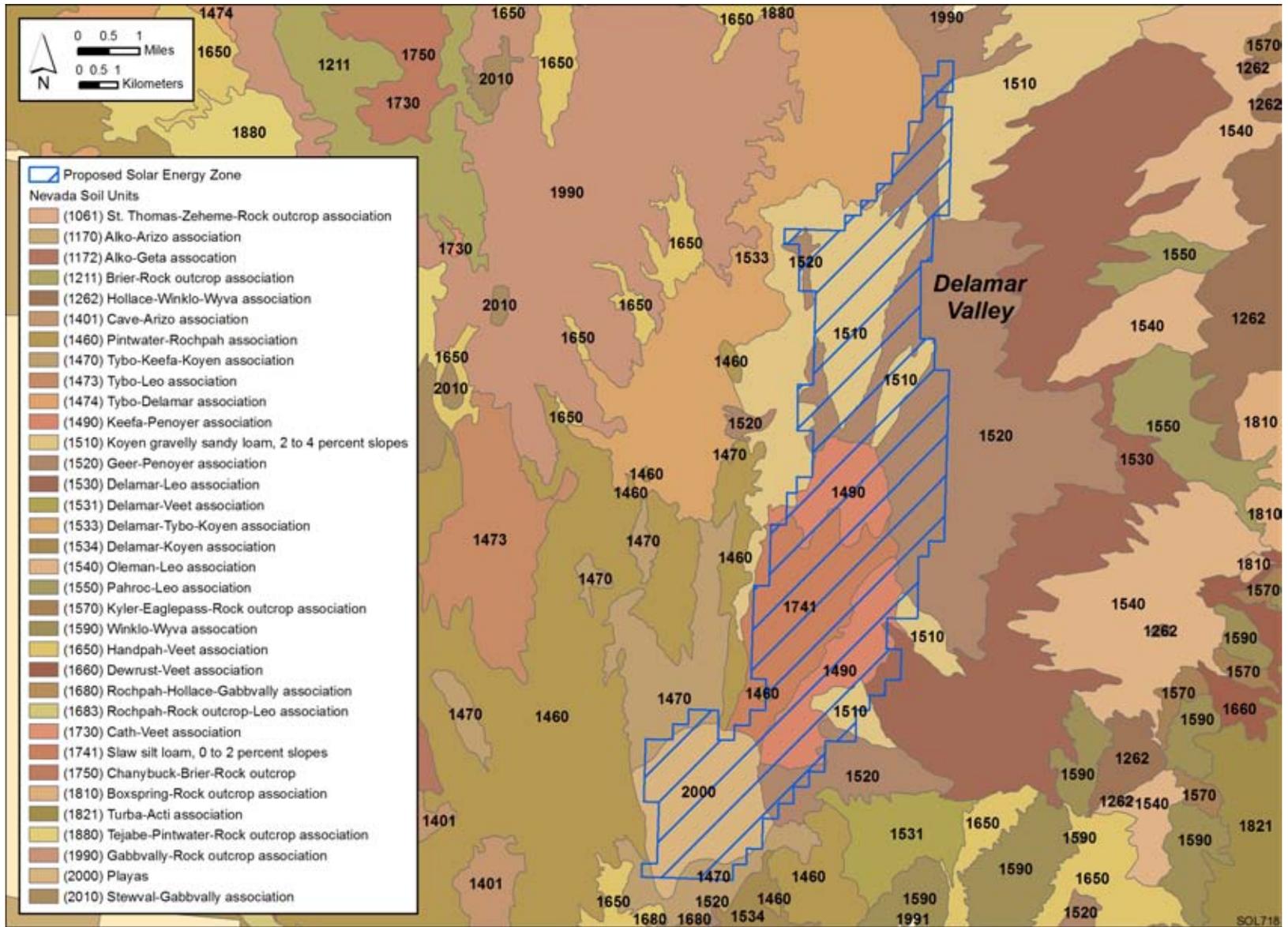


FIGURE 11.2.7.1-5 Soil Map for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (NRCS 2008)

TABLE 11.2.7.1-1 Summary of Soil Map Units within the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area, in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
1520	Geer-Penoyer association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 3) ^d	Consists of about 65% Geer fine sandy loam and 30% Penoyers silt loam. Level to nearly level soils on alluvial fan skirts and alluvial flats. Parent material is alluvium from welded tuff and limestone with a minor component of volcanic ash. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate permeability. Available water capacity is high. Severe rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and cultivated crops (alfalfa, small grains, potatoes, and sugar beets). Prime farmland ^e if irrigated and reclaimed of excess salts and sodium.	4,314 (26)
1510	Koyen gravelly sandy loam (2 to 4% slopes)	Low	Moderate (WEG 4)	Nearly level soils on alluvial fan skirts. Parent material is alluvium from volcanic rock. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for wildlife grazing and wildlife habitat. Prime farmland if irrigated (depending on climate and erodibility).	3,676 (22)
1490	Keefa-Penoyer association	Low	Moderate (WEG 3)	Consists of 70% Keefa sandy loam and 15% Penoyer silt loam. Level to nearly level soils on alluvial fan skirts. Parent material consists of alluvium from mixed sources. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate permeability. Available water capacity is low to high. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing.	2,866 (17)
1741	Slaw silt loam (0 to 2% slopes)	High	Moderate (WEG 4)	Level to nearly level soils on alluvial flats and lacustrine deposits. Parent material consists of alluvium from mixed sources. Very deep and well drained, with high surface runoff potential (slow infiltration rate) and slow permeability. Available water capacity is high. Severe rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and limited irrigated cropland.	2,706 (16)

TABLE 11.2.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area, in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
2000	Playas	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 5)	Level soils formed on playas. Parent material consists of alluvium derived from mixed sources, including limestone and dolomite. Deep and somewhat poorly drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and slow permeability. Moderately to strongly saline. Available water capacity is very low. Severe rutting hazard.	2,394 (14)
1470	Tybo-Keefa-Koyen association	Low	Moderate (WEG 4)	Consists of 30% Tybo gravelly fine sandy loam, 30% Keefa gravelly very fine sandy loam, and 25% Koyen gravelly fine sandy loam. Level to nearly level soils on inset fans, sand sheets, and dunes. Parent material consists of alluvium from mixed sources, including volcanic rock. Deep (Tybo soils shallow to duripan) and well drained, with low surface runoff potential (high infiltration rate) and moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low to low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	334 (2)
1530	Delamar-Leo association	Low	Moderate (WEG 4)	Consists of 60% Delamar gravelly sandy loam and 30% Leo gravelly sandy loam. Nearly level soils on inset fans and alluvial fan remnants. Parent material consists of alluvium from mixed sources. Very deep (Delamar soils moderately deep to an indurated duripan) and well to excessively drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately slow to rapid permeability. Available water capacity is low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and irrigated cropland (alfalfa and small grains).	155 (<1)

TABLE 11.2.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area, in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
1533	Delamar-Tybo-Koyen association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 3)	Consists of 45% Delamar sandy loam, 25% Tybo gravelly fine sandy loam, and 15% Koyen gravelly sandy loam. Nearly level soils on inset fans and fan remnants. Parent material consists of alluvium from mixed sources, including volcanic rocks. Deep (Delamar soils moderately deep to an indurated duripan) and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and rapid to very rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low to low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	97 (<1)

^a Water erosion potential rates based on soil erosion factor K, which indicates the susceptibility of soil to sheet and rill erosion by water. Values range from 0.02 to 0.69 and are provided in parentheses under the general rating; a higher value indicates a higher susceptibility to erosion. Estimates based on the percentage of silt, sand, and organic matter and on soil structure and saturated hydraulic conductivity.

^b Wind erosion potential here is based on the wind erodibility group (WEG) designation: groups 1 and 2, high; groups 3 through 6, moderate; and groups 7 and 8 low (see footnote d for further explanation).

^c To convert from acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d WEG = wind erodibility group. WEGs are based on soil texture, content of organic matter, effervescence of carbonates, content of rock fragments, and mineralogy, and also take into account soil moisture, surface cover, soil surface roughness, wind velocity and direction, and the length of unsheltered distance (USDA 2004). Groups range in value from 1 (most susceptible to wind erosion) to 8 (least susceptible to wind erosion). The NRCS provides a wind erodibility index, expressed as an erosion rate in tons per acre per year, for each of the wind erodibility groups: WEGs 3 and 4, 86 tons (78 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year; and WEG 5, 56 tons (51 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year.

^e Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and that is available for these uses.

Source: NRCS (2010).

1 Because impacts on soil resources result from ground-disturbing activities in the project
2 area, soil impacts would be roughly proportional to the size of a given solar facility, with larger
3 areas of disturbed soil having a greater potential for impacts than smaller areas (Section 5.7.2).
4 The magnitude of impacts would also depend on the types of components built for a given
5 facility since some components would involve greater disturbance and would take place over a
6 longer timeframe.
7

8 Delamar Lake may not be a suitable location for construction, because lakebed sediments
9 are often saturated with shallow groundwater and likely collapsible. The lake sits within the
10 lowest elevation area of Delamar Valley and serves as a sump for drainage in the valley.
11

12 **11.2.7.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

13 No SEZ-specific design features were identified for soil resources at the proposed
14 Delamar Valley SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features described under both Soils
15 and Air Quality in Appendix A, Section A.2.2., as required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program,
16 would reduce the potential for soil impacts during all project phases.
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1 **11.2.8 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)**
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4 **11.2.8.1 Affected Environment**
5

6 There were no locatable mining claims within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ as of
7 July 13, 2010 (BLM and USFS 2010a), and the public land within the SEZ was closed to
8 locatable mineral entry in June 2009, pending the outcome of this solar energy PEIS. There are
9 no active oil and gas leases in the area, but all but a small portion of the area has been leased in
10 the past (BLM and USFS 2010b). The area remains open for discretionary mineral leasing for oil
11 and gas and other leasable minerals, and for disposal of salable minerals. There is no active
12 geothermal leasing or development in or near the SEZ, although a portion of the southwestern
13 corner of the SEZ was previously leased (BLM and USFS 2010b).
14

15
16 **11.2.8.2 Impacts**
17

18 If the area were identified as a solar energy zone, it would continue to be closed to all
19 incompatible forms of mineral development. For the purpose of this analysis, it was assumed that
20 future development of oil and gas resources would continue to be possible, since such
21 development could occur with directional drilling from outside the SEZ. Since the SEZ does not
22 contain existing mining claims, it was also assumed that there would be no future loss of
23 locatable mineral production. The production of common minerals, such as sand and gravel and
24 mineral materials used for road construction or other purposes, might take place in areas not
25 directly developed for solar energy production.
26

27 The SEZ has had no history of development of geothermal resources. For that reason, it is
28 not anticipated that solar development would adversely affect the development of geothermal
29 resources.
30

31
32 **11.2.8.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
33

34 No SEZ specific design features have been identified. Implementing the programmatic
35 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
36 Program, would provide adequate mitigation for mineral resources.
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1 **11.2.9 Water Resources**

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4 **11.2.9.1 Affected Environment**

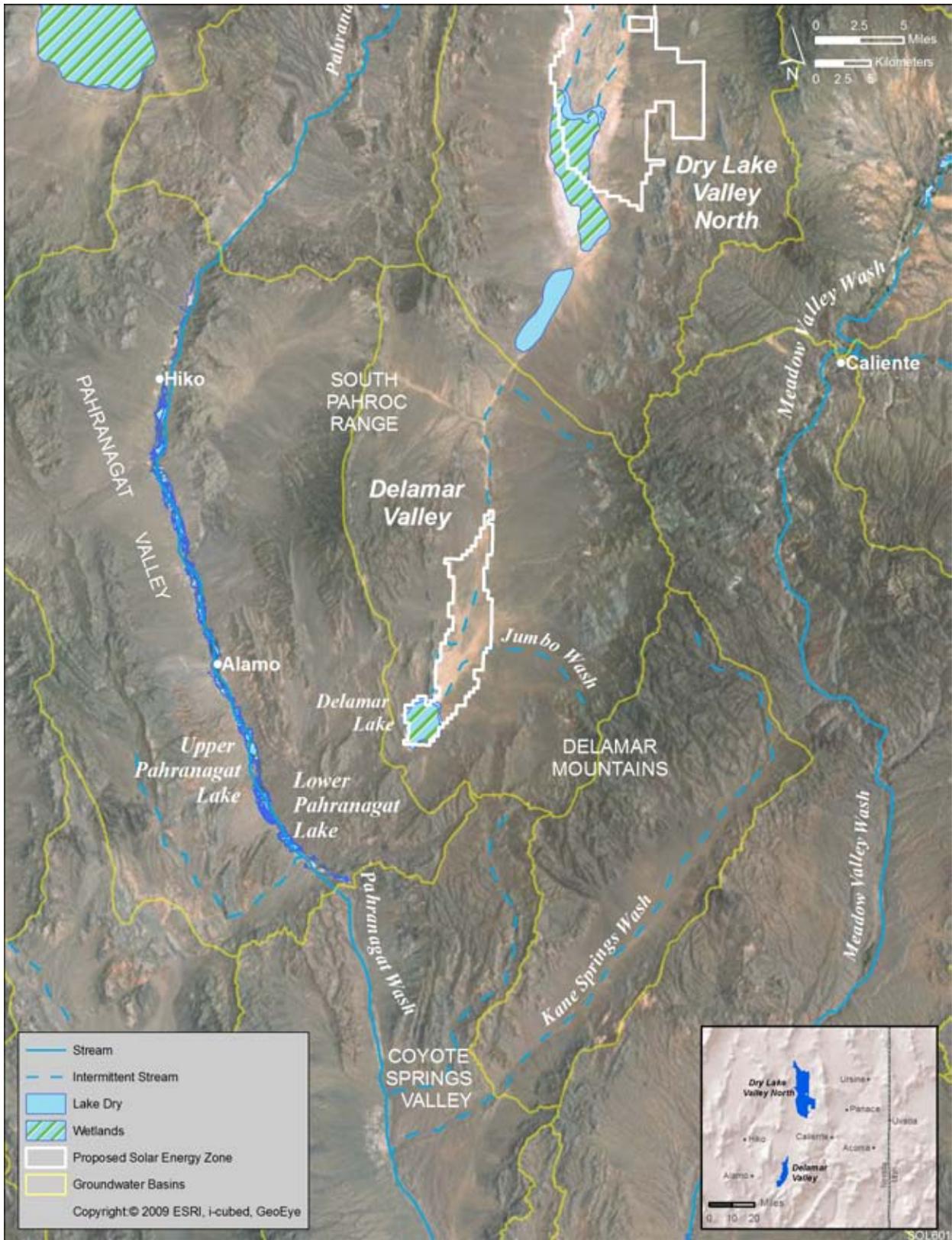
5
6 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located within the Central Nevada Desert Basins
7 subunit of the Great Basin hydrologic region (USGS 2010a) and the Basin and Range
8 physiographic province characterized by intermittent mountain ranges and desert valleys
9 (Planert and Williams 1995). Delamar Valley is a narrow valley oriented north to south between
10 the Delamar Mountains to the east and the South Pahroc Range to the west (Figure 11.2.9.1-1)
11 with an average relief of 18 ft/mi (3.4 m/km) (Eakin 1963). The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ
12 has surface elevations ranging between 4,530 and 4,760 ft (1,380 and 1,450 m); elevations in the
13 surrounding mountains reach higher than 6,500 ft (1981 m). The climate in this region of Nevada
14 is characterized as having low humidity and precipitation, with mild winters and hot summers
15 (Planert and Williams 1995; WRCC 2010a). The average annual precipitation is 6.9 in.
16 (17.5 cm), and the average annual snowfall is 2.7 in. (6.9 cm) in the adjacent Pahrnagat Valley
17 near the town of Hiko (WRCC 2010b). Precipitation and snowfall amounts are greater at higher
18 elevations; the average annual precipitation ranges from 13.5 to 15.7 in. (34 to 40 cm) and
19 snowfalls from 34.7 to 61.6 in. (88 to 156 cm) (WRCC 2010c,d). Pan evaporation rates are
20 estimated to be 80 in./yr (203 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010e). Reference crop
21 evapotranspiration has been estimated at 59 in./yr (150 cm/yr) in nearby Caliente (Huntington
22 and Allen 2010).

23
24
25 ***11.2.9.1.1 Surface Waters (Including Drainages, Floodplains, and Wetlands)***

26
27 There are no perennial surface water features in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ.
28 Delamar Lake is a dry lake that covers 2,600 acres (10.5 km²) in the southern portion of the
29 proposed SEZ. Two intermittent streams that originate out of the Delamar Mountains flow
30 through the proposed SEZ. Both of these intermittent streams, Jumbo Wash and an unnamed
31 wash, flow west out of the mountains and then turn southward towards Delamar Lake
32 (Figure 11.2.9.1-1). Several ephemeral washes are located in the northern and central portions
33 of the proposed SEZ that are oriented from north to south flowing towards Delamar Lake.

34
35 Several ephemeral washes that flow out of the surrounding mountains end prior to
36 reaching the proposed SEZ (not labeled in Figure 11.2.9.1-1 but can be seen as drainage patterns
37 on aerial photo). The most significant of these come out of the Delamar Mountains and include
38 Monkey Wrench Wash, Helene Wash, Delamar Wash, Cedar Wash, and Big Lime Wash (listed
39 by location from north to south); they are all north of Jumbo Wash. A shallow drainage divide
40 separates the Delamar Valley and Dry Lake Valley just to the north. In Dry Lake Valley, peak
41 discharges in the Dry Lake Valley Tributary coming out of the Delamar Mountains are as high
42 as 150 ft³/s (4.2 m³/s) (USGS 2010b; gauge 10245270).

43
44 The White River system (also referred to as Pahrnagat Creek in the Pahrnagat Valley)
45 follows the axis of the adjacent Pahrnagat Valley, approximately 9 mi (14 km) west and south
46 of Delamar Valley (Figure 11.2.9.1-1). The river bed is typically dry, but Upper Pahrnagat Lake



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FIGURE 11.2.9.1-1 Surface Water Features near the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

1 contains water fed by thermal springs, which gets released to the Lower Pahranaagat Lake and
2 riparian areas downstream to maintain conditions in the Pahranaagat National Wildlife Refuge
3 (USFWS 2010d).

4
5 Delamar Lake is classified as a lacustrine wetland with an unconsolidated shore substrate,
6 and the riparian regions of the White River system, Upper Pahranaagat Lake, and Lower
7 Pahranaagat Lake contain a mixture of riverine, palustrine, and lacustrine wetlands according to
8 the National Wetlands Inventory (USFWS 2009a). The hydrologic conditions of the marshes
9 and wetlands in the Pahranaagat National Wildlife Refuge are controlled to encourage habitat
10 conditions, as well as to promote plant decomposition and plant growth at certain times
11 (USFWS 2010b). Further information on wetlands in the region of the proposed Delamar Valley
12 SEZ is presented in Section 11.2.10.1.

13
14 Flood hazards have not been identified (Zone D) for the region surrounding the proposed
15 Delamar Valley SEZ (FEMA 2009). Intermittent flooding may occur, with temporary ponding
16 and erosion along the ephemeral washes, from the hills on the sides of the basin and within the
17 Delamar Lake region.

18 19 20 **11.2.9.1.2 Groundwater**

21
22 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located within the Delamar Valley groundwater
23 basin, which covers an area of 245,120 acres (992 km²) (NDWR 2010a). The Delamar Valley
24 groundwater basin is hydraulically connected to the Dry Lake Valley groundwater basin to the
25 north (see Section 11.4.9.1.2) separated by a shallow surface divide. Groundwater in the Delamar
26 Valley is contained in Quaternary and Tertiary age basin-fill deposits, Tertiary age volcanic
27 rocks, and Paleozoic carbonate-rock aquifers (Burbey 1997). The basin fill deposits consist of
28 interbedded sand, gravel, and clay with a thickness ranging from 1,000 to 4,000 ft (305 to
29 1,219 m) (Burbey 1997; SNWA and BLM 2008). The volcanic rock aquifer is up to 6,000 ft
30 (1,829 m) in thickness (Burbey 1997), and the basin fill and volcanic rock aquifers together
31 average a thickness of 9,800 ft (2,987 m) (Mankinen et al. 2008). The carbonate-rock aquifer can
32 be as much as 10,000 ft (3,048 m) below the surface, except in the southwestern portion of
33 Delamar Valley, where it is located at shallower depths (Burbey 1997).

34
35 The carbonate-rock aquifer beneath Delamar Valley and Dry Lake Valley basins is a part
36 of the White River Groundwater Flow System, a regional-scale carbonate-rock aquifer that flows
37 generally toward the south and terminates at Muddy River Springs and the Virgin River
38 (Eakin 1966). The White River Groundwater Flow System is a part of a large carbonate-rock
39 province that occurs within approximately one-third of Nevada, a large portion of Utah, and parts
40 of Arizona and California (Harrill and Prudic 1998). Connectivity of the carbonate rocks that
41 underlay Dry Lake Valley to the White River Groundwater Flow System is not well understood,
42 and has yet to be studied in detail in this area (Harrill and Prudic 1998; NDWR 2008).

43
44 The water balance on groundwater in the Delamar Valley consists of precipitation
45 recharge, subsurface inflow, and subsurface outflow processes. Evapotranspiration of
46 groundwater is negligible given the considerable depth to groundwater in the Delamar Valley

1 (NDWR 2008). Groundwater recharge from precipitation occurs within the valley and via runoff
2 from higher elevations in the surrounding mountains. Estimates of groundwater recharge vary
3 depending upon the methodology used and range from 1,000 ac-ft/yr (1.2 million m³/yr)
4 (Eakin 1963, 1966) to between 6,400 and 7,760 ac-ft/yr (7.9 million and 9.6 million m³/yr)
5 (Flint et al. 2004; NDWR 2008). Subsurface inflow from the Dry Lake Valley groundwater basin
6 ranges from 5,000 to 7,000 ac-ft/yr (6.2 million to 8.6 million m³/yr), and subsurface discharge
7 to Pahranaagat Valley and Coyote Springs Valley from 6,000 to 9,500 ac-ft/yr (7.4 million to
8 11.7 million m³/yr) (Burbey 1997).

9
10 Several springs are located at higher elevations in the Delamar Mountains according to
11 USGS topographic maps. Only one spring is considered to have a significant water source,
12 Grassy Spring, in the northeastern portion of Delamar Valley and at an elevation of 5,783 ft
13 (1,760 m), which has a discharge ranging from 1.6 to 16.0 ac-ft/yr (1,970 to 19,700 m³/yr)
14 (SNWA and BLM 2008). However, the springs in this region are predominantly recharged by
15 local runoff in the mountains and disconnected from the main groundwater aquifers in Delamar
16 Valley (NDWR 2008).

17
18 In the Delamar Valley, groundwater enters from the Dry Lake Valley to the north and
19 along the basin margins, where infiltration occurs along mountain front areas. The general
20 groundwater flow direction is from north to south. Groundwater surface elevations range from
21 3,840 ft (1,170 m) near the center of the valley to 4,530 ft (1,381 m) at the base of the Delamar
22 Mountains (USGS 2010b; wells 372639114520901 and 33192311451330, respectively). The
23 depth to groundwater is typically on the order of 900 ft (274 m) below the ground surface, and
24 a substantial portion of the groundwater flow is in the basin fill and volcanic rock aquifers
25 (Burbey 1997). Delamar Valley is at higher elevations than Pahranaagat Valley and Coyote
26 Springs Valley located to the west and south, and the relative amount of groundwater discharge
27 to these receiving basins is not fully realized (NDWR 2008). However, it is likely that the
28 groundwater in the basin fill and volcanic rock aquifers of Delamar Valley discharges to the
29 carbonate-rock aquifers of the Pahranaagat Valley and Coyote Springs Valley basins that are a
30 part of the White River Groundwater Flow System, given that the basin fill deposits are not as
31 thick in these receiving basins (Burbey 1997).

32
33 The chemical quality of water in the Delamar Valley basin is varied, as indicated by
34 groundwater sampling conducted by the SNWA. This effort indicated that some groundwater
35 samples exceeded primary drinking water MCL standards for arsenic and fluoride, as well as
36 secondary MCL standards for aluminum and iron. TDS concentrations ranged between 210 and
37 481 mg/L (SNWA and BLM 2008).

38 39 40 ***11.2.9.1.3 Water Use and Water Rights Management***

41
42 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Lincoln County
43 were 57,100 ac-ft/yr (70 million m³/yr), of which 11% came from surface waters and 89%
44 came from groundwater. The largest water use category was irrigation, at 55,100 ac-ft/yr
45 (68 million m³/yr). Public supply/domestic water uses accounted for 1,300 ac-ft/yr (1.6 million
46 m³/yr), and livestock and mining water uses on the order of 230 ac-ft/yr (280,000 m³/yr) and

1 450 ac-ft/yr (560,000 m³/yr), respectively (Kenny et al. 2009). However, within Delamar Valley
2 there has been very little groundwater development, with less than 100 ac-ft/yr (123,000 m³/yr)
3 withdrawn for stock ponds (Eakin 1963).
4

5 All waters in Nevada are the property of the public in the state of Nevada and subject
6 to the laws described in Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapters 532 through 538 (available at
7 <http://leg.state.nv.us/nrs>). The NDWR, led by the Office of the State Engineer, is the agency
8 responsible for managing both surface water and groundwater resources, and this responsibility
9 includes overseeing water right applications, appropriations, and interbasin transfers
10 (NDWR 2010b). The two principal ideas behind water rights in Nevada are the prior
11 appropriations doctrine and the concept of beneficial use. A water right establishes an
12 appropriation amount and date such that more senior water rights have priority over newer
13 water rights. Additionally, water rights are treated as both real and personal property, such that
14 water rights can be transferred without affecting the land ownership (NDWR 2010b). Water
15 rights applications (new or transfer of existing) are approved if the water is available to be
16 appropriated, if existing water rights will not be affected, and if the proposed use is not deemed
17 to be harmful to the public interest. If these conditions are satisfied according to the Office of the
18 State Engineer, a proof of beneficial use of the approved water must be provided within a certain
19 time period, and following that a certificate of appropriation is issued (BLM 2001).
20

21 Delamar Valley is not a designated groundwater basin; thus, there are no specified
22 beneficial uses set by the NDWR (NDWR 1974). The NDWR estimates the perennial yield for
23 each groundwater basin as the amount of water that can be economically withdrawn for an
24 indefinite period without depleting the source (NDWR 1999). The perennial yield of the Delamar
25 Valley groundwater basin is set at 2,550 ac-ft/yr (3.1 million m³/yr), representing one-half of the
26 natural recharge estimate used by the Office of the State Engineer in Ruling 5875 (NDWR
27 2008). Of the available 2,550 ac-ft/yr (3.1 million m³/yr) in water rights, 7 ac-ft/yr (8,600 m³/yr)
28 is allocated for stock water and 2,493 ac-ft/yr (3.1 million m³/yr) for municipal use (NDWR
29 2010a). The municipal water right allocation was granted to the SNWA by the Office of the State
30 Engineer through Ruling 5875, with the remaining 50 ac-ft/yr (61,700 m³/yr) of unallocated
31 water rights in Delamar Valley being set aside for future water development (NDWR 2008). The
32 SNWA is developing a project that would convey water to Las Vegas with a small portion of this
33 water set for use in Lincoln County (SNWA 2008). However, in October 2009, the Seventh
34 Judicial District Court of Nevada (Lincoln County) ordered the NDWR Ruling 5875 be
35 remanded, and in November 2009, the SNWA filed an appeal to the Nevada Supreme Court to
36 fight this decision (BLM 2010b). In June 2010, the Nevada Supreme Court issued a ruling
37 related to SNWA water rights applications in Dry Lake Valley; the NDWR has been ordered to
38 reconsider the SNWA water rights applications and reopen the protest period related to the
39 applications (*Great Basin Water Network v. State Engineer* 2010).
40

41 42 **11.2.9.2 Impacts** 43

44 Potential impacts on water resources related to utility-scale solar energy development
45 include direct and indirect impacts on surface waters and groundwater. Direct impacts occur at
46 the place of origin and at the time of the proposed activity, while indirect impacts occur away

1 from the place of origin or later in time. Impacts on water resources considered in this analysis
2 are the result of land disturbance activities (construction, final developed site plan, as well as
3 off-site activities such as road and transmission line construction) and water use requirements for
4 solar energy technologies that take place during the four project phases: site characterization,
5 construction, operations, and decommissioning/reclamation. Both land disturbance and
6 consumptive water use activities can affect groundwater and surface water flows, cause
7 drawdown of groundwater surface elevations, modify natural drainage pathways, obstruct
8 natural recharge zones, and alter surface water-wetland-groundwater connectivity. Water
9 quality can also be degraded through the generation of wastewater, chemical spills, increased
10 erosion and sedimentation, and increased salinity (e.g., by the excessive withdrawal from
11 aquifers).

14 ***11.2.9.2.1 Land Disturbance Impacts on Water Resources***

16 Impacts related to land disturbance activities are common to all utility-scale solar
17 energy development and are described in more detail for the four phases of development in
18 Section 5.9.1; these impacts will be minimized through the implementation of programmatic
19 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Land disturbance activities should be
20 avoided to the extent possible within the two intermittent streams, Jumbo Wash and unnamed
21 wash, in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Additionally, minimizing landscape alterations to
22 the many ephemeral washes and Delamar Lake would reduce impacts associated with erosion,
23 sedimentation, and habitat disturbances within the washes, as well as the clogging of
24 groundwater recharge at Delamar Lake.

27 ***11.2.9.2.2 Water Use Requirements for Solar Energy Technologies***

30 **Analysis Assumptions**

32 A detailed description of the water use assumptions for the four utility-scale solar energy
33 technologies (parabolic trough, power tower, dish engine, and PV systems) is presented in
34 Appendix M. Assumptions regarding water use calculations specific to the proposed Delamar
35 Valley SEZ include the following:

- 37 • On the basis of a total area of 16,552 acres (67 km²), it is assumed that
38 two solar projects would be constructed during the peak construction year;
- 39 • Water needed for making concrete would come from an off-site source;
- 40 • The maximum land disturbance for an individual solar facility during the peak
41 construction year is 3,000 acres (12 km²);
- 42 • Assumptions on individual facility size and land requirements (Appendix M),
43 along with the assumed number of projects and maximum allowable land
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1 disturbance, result in the potential to disturb up to 36% of the SEZ total area
2 during the peak construction year; and

- 3
4 • Water use requirements for hybrid cooling systems are assumed to be on the
5 same order of magnitude as those using dry cooling (see Section 5.9.2.1).
6

7 8 **Site Characterization**

9
10 During site characterization, water would be used mainly for the workforce potable water
11 supply and fugitive dust control. Impacts on water resources during this phase of development
12 are expected to be negligible, because activities would be limited in area, extent, and duration;
13 water needs could be met by trucking water in from an off-site source.
14

15 16 **Construction**

17
18 During construction, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust and for
19 providing the workforce potable water supply. Because there are no significant surface water
20 bodies on the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, the water requirements for construction activities
21 could be met either by trucking water to the sites or by using on-site groundwater resources. The
22 variable quality of groundwater in the Delamar Valley basin could potentially be an issue for the
23 potable water supply. Elevated concentrations of arsenic and fluoride have been reported in the
24 basin that exceed drinking water standards. If the groundwater supply used for a project does not
25 meet drinking water standards, then treatment or off-site sources would need to be considered.
26

27 Water requirements for dust suppression and potable water supply during construction
28 are shown in Table 11.2.9.2-1 and could be as high as 2,814 ac-ft (3.5 million m³). The
29 assumptions underlying these estimates for each solar energy technology are described in
30 Appendix M. Groundwater wells would have to yield an estimated 1,220 to 1,740 gpm (4,620 to
31 6,590 L/min) to meet the estimated construction water requirements. These groundwater
32 withdrawal rates are similar in magnitude to those of large municipal and irrigation production
33 wells (Harter 2003), so multiple wells may be needed in order to obtain the water requirements.
34 The total water requirements during the peak construction year are similar to quantities used on
35 small to medium-size farms in Nevada (USDA 2009c). The availability of groundwater and the
36 potential impacts of groundwater withdrawal would need to be assessed during the site
37 characterization phase. In addition, up to 148 ac-ft (182,600 m³) of sanitary wastewater would
38 need to be treated either on-site or sent to an off-site facility.
39

40 41 **Operations**

42
43 During operations, water would be required for mirror/panel washing, the workforce
44 potable water supply, and cooling (parabolic trough and power tower only) (Table 11.2.9.2-2).
45 Water needs for cooling are a function of the type of cooling used (dry, hybrid, wet). Further
46 refinements to water requirements for cooling would result from the percentage of time that the

TABLE 11.2.9.2-1 Estimated Water Requirements during the Peak Construction Year for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Water use requirements ^a				
Fugitive dust control (ac-ft) ^{b,c}	1,816	2,724	2,724	2,724
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft)	148	90	37	19
Total water use requirements (ac-ft)	1,964	2,814	2,761	2,743
Wastewater generated				
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft)	148	90	37	19

^a Assumptions of water use for fugitive dust control, potable supply for workforce, and wastewater generation are presented in Appendix M.

^b Fugitive dust control estimation assumes a local pan evaporation rate of 80 in./yr (203 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010e).

^c To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

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option was employed (30 to 60% range assumed) and the power of the system. The differences between the water requirements reported in Table 11.2.9.2-2 for the parabolic trough and power tower technologies are attributable to the assumptions of acreage per megawatt. As a result, the water usage for the more energy-dense parabolic trough technology is estimated to be almost twice as large as that for the power tower technology.

At full build-out capacity, water needs for mirror/panel washing are estimated to range from 74 to 1,324 ac-ft/yr (91,300 to 1.6 million m³/yr) and the workforce potable water supply from 2 to 37 ac-ft/yr (2,500 to 45,600 m³/yr). The maximum total water usage during normal operation at full build-out capacity would be greatest for technologies using the wet-cooling option and is estimated to be as high as 39,762 ac-ft/yr (49.0 million m³/yr). Water usage for dry-cooling systems would be as high as 4,009 ac-ft/yr (4.9 million m³/yr), approximately a factor of 10 times less than that for the wet-cooling option. Non-cooled technologies require substantially less water at full build-out capacity: 752 ac-ft/yr (927,600 m³/yr) for dish engine and 76 ac-ft/yr (93,700 million m³/yr) for PV systems (Table 11.2.9.2-2). Operations would produce up to 37 ac-ft/yr (45,600 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater. In addition, for wet-cooled technologies, 418 to 752 ac-ft/yr (515,600 to 927,600 m³/yr) of cooling system blowdown water would need to be treated either on- or off-site. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure that treatment ponds are effectively lined in order to prevent groundwater contamination.

Groundwater is the primary water resource available for solar energy development at the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The NDWR has set the perennial yield of the Delamar Valley groundwater basin at 2,550 ac-ft/yr (3.1 million m³/yr), which is only 6% to 35% of the water needed for technologies using wet-cooling. The water requirement estimates for technologies using dry-cooling are on the order of the perennial yield of the basin depending upon operation

TABLE 11.2.9.2-2 Estimated Water Requirements during Operations at the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Full build-out capacity (MW) ^{a,b}	2,648	1,471	1,471	1,471
Water use requirements				
Mirror/panel washing (ac-ft/yr) ^{c,d}	1,324	736	736	74
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft/yr)	37	16	16	2
Dry cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	530–2,648	294–1,471	NA ^f	NA
Wet cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	11,917–38,401	6,621–21,334	NA	NA
Total water use requirements				
Non-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	NA	NA	752	76
Dry-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	1,891–4,009	1,046–2,223	NA	NA
Wet-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	13,278–39,762	7,373–22,086	NA	NA
Wastewater generated				
Blowdown (ac-ft/yr) ^g	752	418	NA	NA
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft/yr)	37	16	16	2

^a Land area for parabolic trough was estimated at 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW); land area for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies was estimated at 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW).

^b Water needs are linearly related to power. Water usage for any other size project can be estimated by using the multipliers provided in Table M.9-2 (Appendix M).

^c Value assumes a usage rate of 0.5 ac-ft/yr/MW for mirror washing for parabolic trough, power tower, and dish engine technologies and a rate of 0.05 ac-ft/yr/MW for panel washing for PV systems.

^d To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

^e Dry-cooling value assumes 0.2 to 1.0 ac-ft/yr/MW and wet-cooling value assumes 4.5 to 14.5 ac-ft/yr/MW (range in these values represents 30 and 60% operating times) (DOE 2009).

^f NA = not applicable.

^g Value scaled from 250-MW Beacon Solar project with an annual discharge of 44 gpm (167 L/min) (AECOM 2009). Blowdown estimates are relevant to wet cooling only.

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3 conditions. Obtaining water rights within the Delamar Valley groundwater basin is potentially
4 limited by the municipal water rights of the SNWA totaling 2,493 ac-ft/yr (3.1 million m³/yr),
5 which are currently under review by the Office of the State Engineer (see Section 11.2.9.1.3).
6 Under current conditions of available water rights in the Delamar Valley, only 50 ac-ft/yr
7 (61,700 m³/yr) is unallocated, which is on the order of water requirements needed for PV
8 systems. Given the available water resources within the Delamar Valley basin, PV systems
9 would be the preferred technology for the full build-out scenario. Solar development projects
10 using dry-cooling and dish engine technologies would likely have to negotiate water rights with
11 the SNWA and the NDWR. Technologies using wet cooling are unfeasible for the proposed
12 Delamar Valley SEZ, because their water use requirements are well above the available
13 groundwater in the basin.

1 **Decommissioning/Reclamation**
2

3 During decommissioning/reclamation, all surface structures associated with the solar
4 project would be dismantled, and the site reclaimed to its preconstruction state. Activities and
5 water needs during this phase would be similar to those during the construction phase (dust
6 suppression and potable supply for workers) and might also include water to establish vegetation
7 in some areas. However, the total volume of water needed is expected to be less. Because
8 quantities of water needed during the decommissioning/reclamation phase would be less than
9 those for construction, impacts on surface and groundwater resources also would be less.
10

11
12 ***11.2.9.2.3 Off-Site Impacts: Roads and Transmission Lines***
13

14 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located approximately 8 mi (13 km) east of
15 U.S. 93, and an existing 69-kV transmission line runs through the proposed SEZ, as described
16 in Section 11.2.1.2. Impacts associated with the construction of roads and transmission lines
17 primarily deal with water use demands for construction, water quality concerns relating to
18 potential chemical spills, and land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology. Water needed
19 for road modification and transmission line construction activities (e.g., for soil compaction,
20 dust suppression, and potable supply for workers) could be trucked to the construction area
21 from an off-site source. As a result, water use impacts would be negligible. Impacts on surface
22 water and groundwater quality resulting from spills would be minimized by implementing the
23 mitigation measures described in Section 5.9.3 (e.g., cleaning up spills as soon as they occur).
24 Ground-disturbing activities that have the potential to increase sediment and dissolved solid
25 loads in downstream waters would be conducted following the mitigation measures outlined in
26 Section 5.9.3 to minimize impacts associated with alterations to natural drainage pathways and
27 hydrologic processes.
28

29
30 ***11.2.9.2.4 Summary of Impacts on Water Resources***
31

32 The impacts on water resources from solar energy development at the proposed Delamar
33 Valley SEZ are associated with land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology, water quality
34 concerns, and water use requirements for the various solar energy technologies. Land disturbance
35 activities can cause localized erosion and sedimentation, as well as alter groundwater recharge
36 and discharge processes. Two intermittent streams, several ephemeral washes, and a dry lake are
37 located within the proposed SEZ. Alterations to the natural drainage patterns of these surface
38 features should be avoided to the extent possible in order to minimize erosion and sedimentation
39 impacts, as well as the disruption of wildlife habitat and clogging of groundwater recharge areas.
40

41 Impacts relating to water use requirements vary depending on the type of solar
42 technology built and, for technologies using cooling systems, the type of cooling (wet, dry, or
43 hybrid) used. Groundwater in the Delamar Valley is a part of White River Groundwater Flow
44 System, which is a regional-scale system of carbonate-rock aquifers. Subsurface inflow from
45 Dry Lake Valley to the north moves southward through Delamar Valley, primarily in the basin-
46 fill aquifer, and discharges to Pahranaagat Valley and Coyote Springs Valley. Delamar Valley and

1 Dry Lake Valley are at higher elevations than the receiving Pahranaagat Valley and Coyote
2 Springs Valley that have thin basin-fill deposits, so it is likely that subsurface discharge from
3 Delamar Valley contributes to the carbonate-rock aquifers of the White River Groundwater Flow
4 System. Excessive groundwater withdrawals at the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ could disrupt
5 this groundwater flow pattern and adversely affect the White River Groundwater Flow System,
6 as well as the springs and wetlands within the Pahranaagat National Wildlife Refuge that support
7 critical wildlife habitat.
8

9 Groundwater is the primary water resource available to solar energy facilities in the
10 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The perennial yield of the Delamar Valley basin is set at
11 2,550 ac-ft/yr (3.1 million m³/yr), and currently only 50 ac-ft/yr (61,700 m³/yr) is unallocated.
12 Wet-cooling technologies would not be feasible in Delamar Valley, because their water use
13 requirements far exceed available groundwater resources in the basin. Dry-cooled parabolic
14 trough facilities would have to modify operations and employ water conservation measures in
15 order to reduce needed water quantities to that of the perennial yield of the basin. Additionally,
16 dry-cooling and dish engine technologies would have to negotiate with the SNWA and the
17 NDWR to obtain water rights to meet project demands. PV systems are the preferred technology
18 for the full build-out scenario, because their water use requirements are of similar magnitude to
19 the unallocated water rights within the Delamar Valley groundwater basin.
20

21 **11.2.9.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

22
23
24 The program for solar energy development on BLM-administered lands will require the
25 programmatic design features presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, to be implemented, thus
26 mitigating some impacts on water resources. Programmatic design features would focus on
27 coordinating with federal, state, and local agencies that regulate the use of water resources to
28 meet the requirements of permits and approvals needed to obtain water for development, and on
29 conducting hydrological studies to characterize the aquifer from which groundwater would be
30 obtained (including drawdown effects, if a new point of diversion is created). The greatest
31 consideration for mitigating water impacts would be in the selection of solar technologies. The
32 mitigation of impacts would be best achieved by selecting technologies with low water demands.
33

34 Design features specific to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ include the following:

- 35
36 • Water resource analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be
37 feasible; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures;
38
- 39 • Land disturbance activities should avoid impacts to the extent possible in the
40 vicinity of the intermittent streams, ephemeral washes, and the dry lake
41 present on the site;
42
- 43 • Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid any areas
44 identified as within a 100-year floodplain or jurisdictional waters;
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- Groundwater rights must be obtained from the NDWR (dry-cooling and dish engine technologies may have to negotiate with the SNWA for water rights);
- Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP 2010);
- Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in accordance with state standards (NDWR 2006); and
- Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water quality standards according to Nevada Administrative Code (445A.453-445A.455).

1 **11.2.10 Vegetation**
2

3 This section addresses vegetation that could occur or is known to occur within the
4 potentially affected area of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The affected area considered in
5 this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect effects. The area of direct effects was
6 defined as the area that would be physically modified during project development (i.e., where
7 ground-disturbing activities would occur) and included the SEZ and a 60-ft (18-m) wide portion
8 of an assumed access road corridor. No new transmission projects are expected to be needed to
9 serve development on the SEZ because of the proximity of existing infrastructure (refer to
10 Section 11.2.1.2 for development assumptions). The area of indirect effects was defined as the
11 area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide assumed access
12 road corridor, where ground-disturbing activities would not occur but that could be indirectly
13 affected by activities in the area of direct effects.
14

15 Indirect effects considered in the assessment included effects from surface runoff, dust,
16 and accidental spills from the SEZ, but did not include ground-disturbing activities because these
17 would not take place outside of the SEZ. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease
18 with increasing distance from the SEZ. This area of indirect effects was identified on the basis of
19 professional judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area that would
20 potentially be subject to indirect effects. The affected area is the area bounded by the areas of
21 direct and indirect effects. These areas are defined and the impact assessment approach is
22 described in Appendix M.
23
24

25 **11.2.10.1 Affected Environment**
26

27 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located within the Tonopah Basin Level IV
28 ecoregion, which primarily supports sparse shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) communities on
29 broad valleys, hills, bajadas, and alluvial fans (Bryce et al. 2003). Additional commonly
30 occurring shrubs include bud sagebrush (*Picrothamnus desertorum*), spiny hopsage (*Grayia*
31 *spinosa*), seepweed (*Suaeda* sp.), fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), spiny menodora
32 (*Menodora spinescens*), Nevada ephedra (*Ephedra nevadensis*), littleleaf horsebrush (*Tetradymia*
33 *glabrata*), Douglas rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), and winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia*
34 *lanata*), which, along with shadscale, often codominate in highly diverse mosaics. Warm season
35 grasses, such as Indian rice grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) and galleta grass (*Pleuraphis*
36 *jamesii*), occur in the understory. Stands of inland saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*) and alkali sacaton
37 (*Sporobolus airoides*) also occur. Warm desert species, such as blackbrush (*Coleogyne*
38 *ramosissima*), Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), banana yucca (*Yucca baccata*), and cholla
39 (*Cylindropuntia* sp.), are found in this ecoregion. Black greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*)
40 occurs in saline bottoms. Springs and sporadic precipitation in foothills provide surface water
41 sources. Annual precipitation in the vicinity of the SEZ is very low, averaging 6.2 in. (15.7 cm)
42 at the Pahrangat NWR (see Section 11.2.13).
43

44 The Tonopah Basin lies within the Central Basin and Range Level III ecoregion,
45 described in Appendix I, and is part of the Great Basin desertscrub biome; however, the

1 Delamar Valley SEZ is located in a transition zone between the Great Basin and Mojave Deserts,
2 with Mojave desertscrub communities and endemic species in the SEZ and adjacent areas.
3

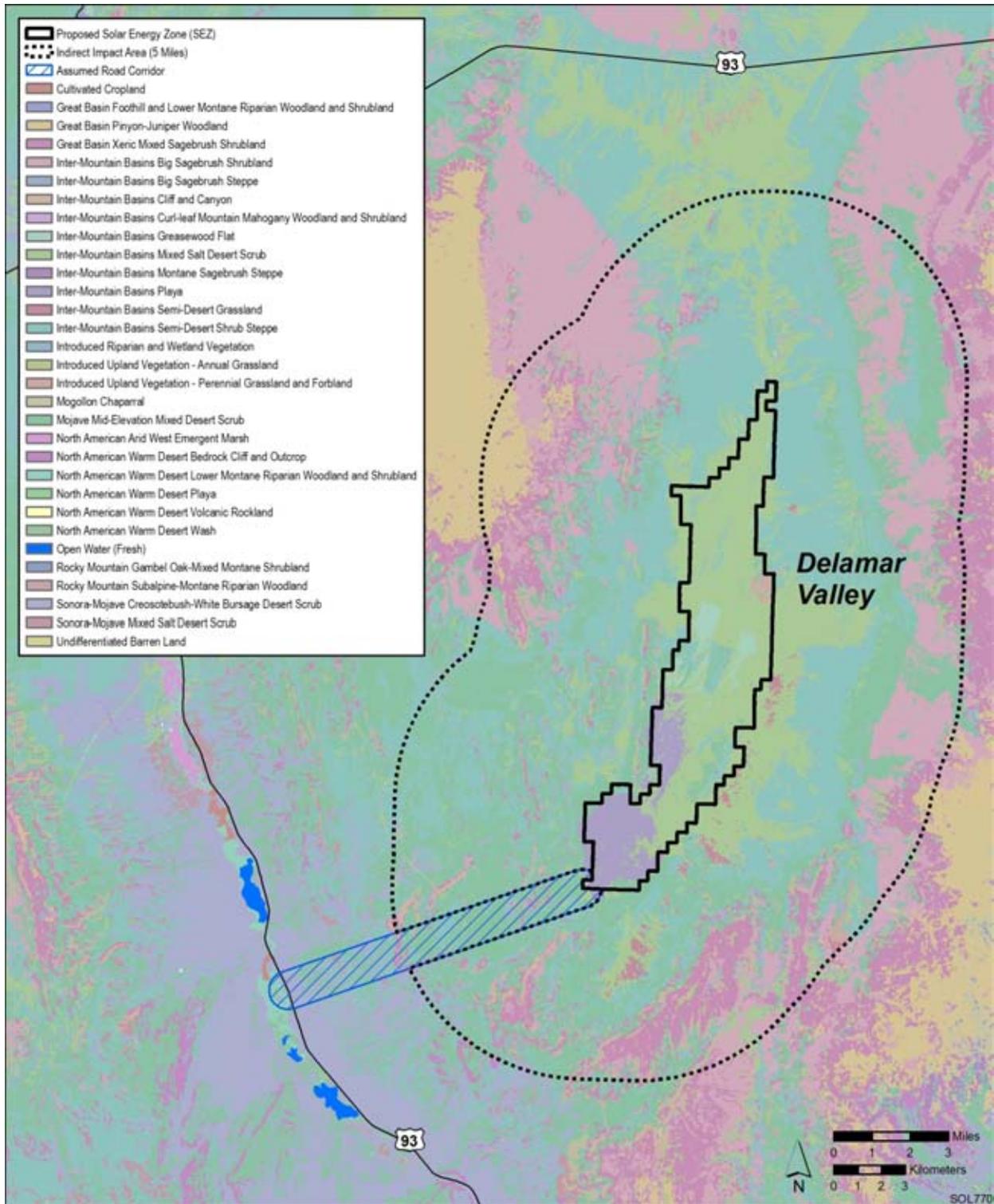
4 The area surrounding the SEZ is a mosaic of five Level IV ecoregions: (1) the Tonopah
5 Basin; (2) the Tonopah Sagebrush Foothills ecoregion, which supports black sagebrush
6 (*Artemisia nova*) and Mojave species such as blackbrush, Joshua tree, and cholla on rocky
7 substrates; (3) Tonopah Uplands, which includes woodlands, such as pinyon (*Pinus*
8 *monophylla*)-juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*), and shrublands on hills and mountains; (4) the
9 Woodland and Shrub Covered Low Mountains to the east, which includes open groves of juniper
10 and pinyon with mountain brush communities at higher elevations; and (5) the Arid Footslopes
11 ecoregion to the southeast, part of the Mojave Basin and Range, which supports a sparse mixture
12 of Mojave desert species, such as creosotebush (*Larrea tridentata*), white bursage (*Ambrosia*
13 *dumosa*), cacti, and *Yucca* species, including Joshua tree, on alluvial fans, basalt flows, hills, and
14 low mountains, and blackbrush at higher elevations.
15

16 Land cover types described and mapped under the SWReGAP (USGS 2005a) were used
17 to evaluate plant communities in and near the SEZ. Each cover type encompasses a range of
18 similar plant communities. Land cover types occurring within the potentially affected area of
19 the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are shown in Figure 11.2.10.1-1. Table 11.2.10.1-1
20 provides the surface area of each cover type within the potentially affected area.
21

22 Lands within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are classified primarily as Inter-
23 Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. Additional cover types within the SEZ are given
24 in Table 11.2.10.1-1. The southern portion of the SEZ includes a large playa, bordered by a
25 salt scrub community of fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) and shadscale (*Atriplex*
26 *confertifolia*). Dominant species in the low scrub communities observed in other portions of
27 the SEZ in August 2009 included winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), shadscale, buckwheat
28 (*Eriogonum* sp.), halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*), broom snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*),
29 tumbleweed (*Sisymbrium loeselii*), and rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus* sp.). The northern portion
30 of the SEZ supports a Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) forest community with ephedra (*Ephedra*
31 sp.), spiny hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*), rabbitbrush, Cholla (*Cylindropuntia* sp.), and Indian rice
32 grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*). Because of its location in a narrow transition zone between the
33 Great Basin and Mojave Deserts, the plant assemblage of the SEZ is not likely found anywhere
34 else. Sensitive habitats on the SEZ include desert dry washes, playas, wetlands, and Joshua tree
35 communities. The area has had a long history of livestock grazing, and the plant communities
36 present within the SEZ have likely been affected by grazing.
37

38 The area of indirect effects, including the area surrounding the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km),
39 includes 22 cover types, which are listed in Table 11.2.10.1-1. The predominant cover types
40 are Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe, Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert
41 Scrub, Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland, and Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed
42 Salt Desert Scrub.
43

44 One wetland mapped by the NWI is located within the southern portion of the SEZ
45 (USFWS 2009a) (Figure 11.2.10.1-2). This large sparsely vegetated lacustrine wetland, Delamar
46 Lake, is mapped primarily as Inter-Mountain Basins Playa, with small areas of Inter-Mountain



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FIGURE 11.2.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ
 (Source: USGS 2004)

TABLE 11.2.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Potentially Affected Area of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ and Potential Impacts

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub: Generally consists of open shrublands that include at least one species of <i>Atriplex</i> , along with other shrubs. Perennial grasses dominate a sparse to moderately dense herbaceous layer.	10,269 acres ^g (2.6%, 2.7%)	2 acres (<0.1%)	21,848 acres (5.6%)	Moderate
Inter-Mountain Basins Playa: Playa habitats are intermittently flooded and generally barren or sparsely vegetated. Depressions may contain small patches of grass, and sparse shrubs may occur around playa margins.	3,088 acres (18.3%, 18.5%)	1 acre (<0.1%)	526 acres (3.1%)	Large
Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe: Generally consists of perennial grasses with an open shrub and dwarf shrub layer.	1,072 acres (0.2%, 0.3%)	13 acres (<0.1%)	46,797 acres (10.1%)	Small
Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub: The vegetation composition is quite variable. Dominant species include shrubs forbs, and grasses and may include <i>Yucca</i> spp.	977 acres (0.1%, 0.1%)	31 acres (<0.1%)	40,770 acres (4.3%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat: Dominated or codominated by greasewood (<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>) and generally occurring in areas with saline soils, a shallow water table, and intermittent flooding, although remaining dry for most growing seasons. This community type generally occurs near drainages or around playas. These areas may include, or may be codominated by, other shrubs and may include a graminoid herbaceous layer.	964 acres (5.5%, 7.0%)	<1 acres (<0.1%)	163 acres (0.9%)	Moderate

TABLE 11.2.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Introduced Upland Vegetation – Perennial Grassland and Forbland: Dominated by non-native perennial grass and forb species.	171 acres (5.3%, 6.2%)	0 acres	375 acres (11.7%)	Moderate
Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Grassland: Consists of perennial bunchgrasses as dominants or codominants. Scattered shrubs or dwarf shrubs may also be present.	10 acres (0.1%, 0.2%)	0 acres	885 acres (12.4%)	Small
North American Arid West Emergent Marsh: Occurs in natural depressions, such as ponds, or bordering lakes, or slow-moving streams or rivers. Alkalinity is highly variable. The plant community is characterized by herbaceous emergent, submergent, and floating leaved species.	1 acre (<0.1%, 0.3%)	0 acres	1 acre (<0.1%)	Small
Sonora–Mojave Creosotebush–White Bursage Desert Scrub: Occurs in broad valleys, lower bajadas, plains, and low hills in the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts. Shrubs form a sparse to moderately dense cover (2 to 50%), although the ground surface may be mostly barren. The dominant species are typically creosotebush (<i>Larrea tridentata</i>) and white bursage (<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>). Other shrubs, dwarf-shrubs, and cacti may also be dominant or form sparse understories. Herbaceous species are typically sparse, but may be seasonally abundant.	0 acres	12 acres (<0.1%)	3,540 acres (0.4%)	Small
North American Warm Desert Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland: Occurs along perennial and seasonally intermittent streams in mountain canyons and valleys. Consists of a mix of woodlands and shrublands.	0 acres	1 acre (<0.1%)	125 acres (2.0%)	Small

TABLE 11.2.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Great Basin Xeric Mixed Sagebrush Shrubland: Generally occurs on level plains, slopes, and ridges. The dominant shrub species are black sagebrush (<i>Artemisia nova</i>) or, at higher elevations, little sagebrush (<i>Artemisia arbuscula</i>), and codominants may be Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata</i> ssp. <i>wyomingensis</i>) or yellow rabbitbrush (<i>Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus</i>). Other shrub species, as well as sparse perennial bunchgrasses, may also be present.	0 acres	1 acre (<0.1%)	12,382 acres (2.8%)	Small
North American Warm Desert Bedrock Cliff and Outcrop: Occurs on subalpine to foothill steep cliff faces, narrow canyons, rock outcrops, and unstable scree and talus slopes. Consists of barren and sparsely vegetated areas (generally <10% plant cover) with desert species, especially succulents. Lichens are predominant in some areas.	0 acres	1 acre (<0.1%)	160 acres (0.1%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland: Dominated by basin big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata tridentata</i>), Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis</i>), or both. Other shrubs may be present. Perennial herbaceous plants are present but not abundant.	0 acres	1 acre (<0.1%)	23,226 acres 3.8 %)	Small
Sonora-Mojave Mixed Salt Desert Scrub: Extensive open-canopied shrublands in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts, usually occurring around playas and in valley bottoms or basins with saline soils. Vegetation is typically composed of one or more <i>Atriplex</i> species; other salt-tolerant plants are often present or even codominant. Grasses occur at varying densities.	0 acres	1 acre (<0.1%)	193 acres (1.2%)	Small

TABLE 11.2.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Inter-Mountain Basins Cliff and Canyon: Includes barren and sparsely vegetated (generally <10% plant cover) steep cliff faces, narrow canyons, small rock outcrops, and scree and talus slopes. Composed of widely scattered coniferous trees and a variety of shrubs.	0 acres	<1 acre (<0.1%)	1,546 acres (6.7%)	Small
North American Warm Desert Wash: Consists of intermittently flooded linear or braided strips within desert scrub or grassland landscapes on bajadas, mesas, plains, and basin floors. Although often dry, washes are associated with rapid sheet and gully flow. The vegetation varies from sparse and patchy to moderately dense and typically occurs along the banks, but may occur within the channel. Shrubs and small trees are typically intermittent to open. Common upland shrubs often occur along the edges.	0 acres	<1 acre (<0.1%)	27 acres (0.2%)	Small
Introduced Riparian and Wetland Vegetation: Dominated by non-native riparian and wetland plant species.	0 acres	<1 acre (<0.1%)	5 acres (0.3%)	Small
Great Basin Pinyon-Juniper Woodland: Occurs on low-elevation slopes and ridges. Singleleaf pinyon (<i>Pinus monophylla</i>), Utah juniper (<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i>), or both are the dominant species, generally associating with curl-leaf mountain mahogany (<i>Cercocarpus ledifolius</i>). Understory species include shrubs and grasses.	0 acres	0 acres	2,920 acres (0.4%)	Small
Introduced Upland Vegetation – Annual Grassland: Dominated by non-native annual grass species.	0 acres	0 acres	408 acres (15.3%)	Small

TABLE 11.2.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Inter-Mountain Basins Montane Sagebrush Steppe: Occurs on flats, ridges, level ridgetops, and mountain slopes. Mountain big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata vaseyana</i>) and related taxa such as big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata spiciformis</i>) are typically the dominant species. Perennial herbaceous species, especially grasses, are usually abundant, although shrublands are also present.	0 acres	0 acres	16 acres (0.1%)	Small
Great Basin Foothill and Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland: Composed of a mosaic of multiple tree-dominated communities with diverse shrubs. Sedges, rushes, perennial grasses; mesic forbs are the dominant herbaceous species. Disturbed areas often include non-native grasses.	0 acres	0 acres	6 acres (<0.1%)	Small
Undifferentiated Barren Land: Includes a variety of barren areas, generally with less than 15% cover of vegetation.	0 acres	0 acres	2 acres (1.6%)	Small

^a Land cover descriptions are from USGS (2005a). Full descriptions of land cover types, including plant species, can be found in Appendix I.

^b Area in acres, determined from USGS (2004).

^c Includes the area of the cover type within the SEZ, the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region (i.e., a 50-mi [80-km] radius from the center of the SEZ), and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type on BLM lands within the SEZ region.

^d For access road development, direct effects were estimated within an 8-mi (13-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest state highway. Direct impacts within this area were determined from the proportion of the cover type within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide road corridor. Impacts are for the area of the cover type within the assumed ROW, and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.2.10.1-1 (Cont.)

- ^e Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide assumed access road corridor, where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, and other factors from project facilities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. Includes the area of the cover type within the indirect effects area and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and were (1) *small*: a relatively small proportion ($\leq 1\%$) of the cover type within the SEZ region would be lost; (2) *moderate*: an intermediate proportion (>1 but $\leq 10\%$) of a cover type would be lost; and (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a cover type would be lost.
- ^g To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

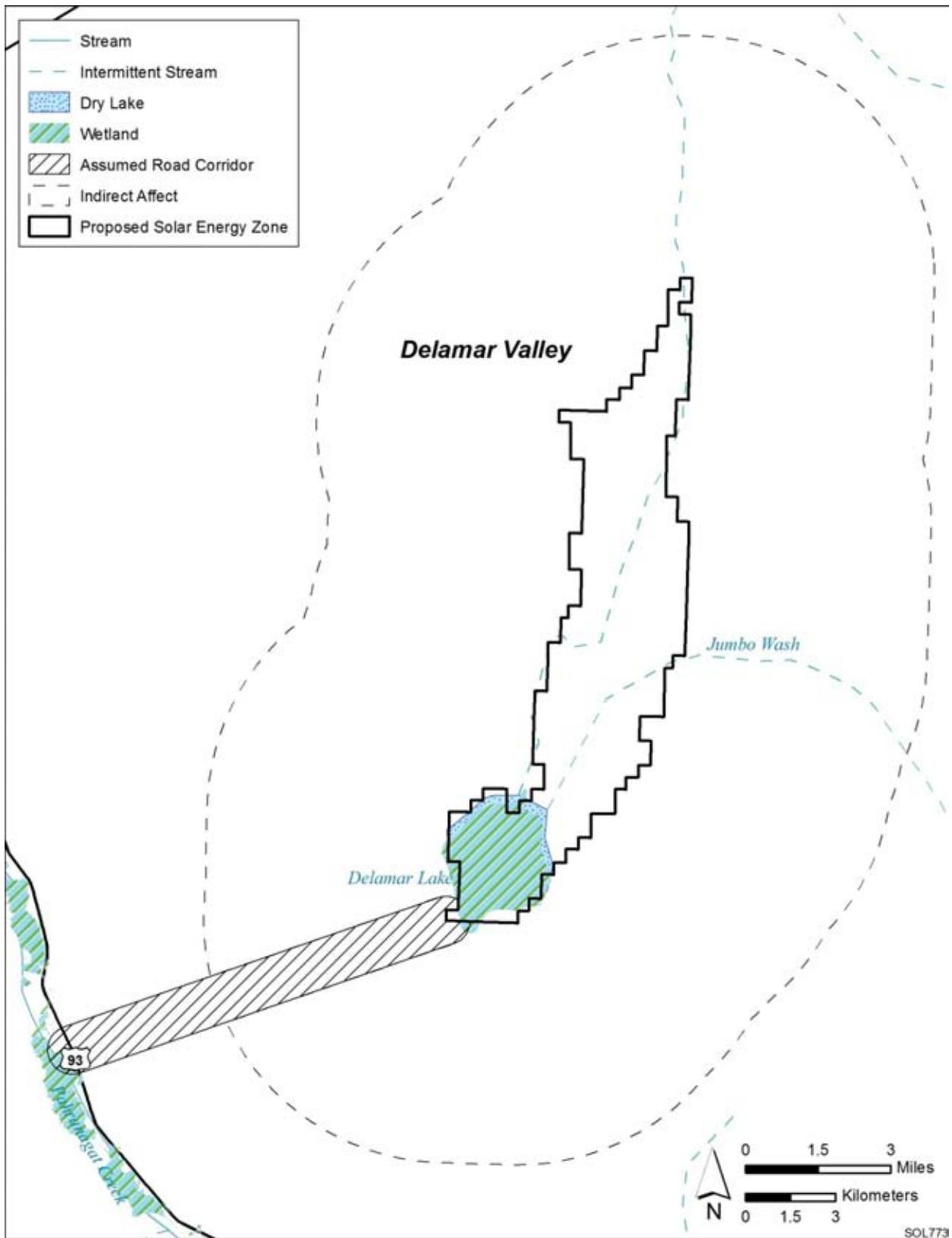


FIGURE 11.2.10.1-2 Wetlands within the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (Source USFWS 2009a)

Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. Approximately 2,364 acres (9.6 km²) of this 2,648.8-acre (10.7-km²) wetland is located within the SEZ. The remaining portion is located entirely within the indirect effects area. Smaller playa areas not mapped by the NWI occur north of Delamar Lake. A 1-acre (0.004-km²) area mapped as Northern American Arid West Emergent Marsh is located within the SEZ, south of Delamar Lake playa. Numerous dry washes occur within the SEZ, generally flowing to the south and terminating in the large playa. These washes typically do not support wetland or riparian habitats. Jumbo Wash is an intermittent stream and, along with an unnamed intermittent stream, is a major surface drainage on the SEZ. The dry washes and playas typically contain water for short periods during or following precipitation events. Springs occur in the vicinity of the SEZ, but are disconnected from the main groundwater flow system (see Section 11.2.9).

Approximately 133 acres (0.5 km²) of wetlands, including a large wetland complex and several smaller wetlands, occurs along and near Pahrangat Creek, a riverine wetland, within the southwestern end of the assumed access road corridor. A portion of these wetlands is supported by springs and is part of the Pahrangat NWR. These wetlands are predominantly palustrine wetlands with emergent plant communities, ranging from temporarily flooded to saturated, seasonally flooded, and semipermanently flooded. Small areas of permanently flooded palustrine wetlands with sparse plant communities and saturated and seasonally flooded palustrine forested wetlands also occur. All except 2.4 acres (0.01 km²) of wetland occur to the west of U.S. 93. The wetlands are mapped as North American Warm Desert Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland, North American Warm Desert Wash, Introduced Riparian and Wetland Vegetation, Sonora-Mojave Creosotebush-White Bursage Desert Scrub, and small areas of Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub. An additional 29.3 acres (0.1 km²) of wetland within the corridor occurs adjacent to the SEZ and is associated with Delamar Lake.

The State of Nevada maintains an official list of weed species designated as noxious species. Table 11.2.10.1-2 provides a summary of the noxious weed species regulated in Nevada that are known to occur in Lincoln County (USDA 2010; Creech et al. 2010), which includes the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Sahara mustard is known to occur in the southern portion of the SEZ. Halogeton and tumbleweed, invasive species not regulated by Nevada, were observed on the SEZ in August 2009.

The Nevada Department of Agriculture classifies noxious weeds into one of three categories (NDA 2010):

- “Category A: Weeds not found or limited in distribution throughout the state; actively excluded from the state and actively eradicated wherever found; actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; control required by the state in all infestations.”
- “Category B: Weeds established in scattered populations in some counties of the state; actively excluded where possible, actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; control required by the state in areas where populations are not well established or previously unknown to occur.”

TABLE 11.2.10.1-2 Designated Noxious Weeds of Nevada Occurring in Lincoln County

Common Name	Scientific Name	Category
Black henbane ^a	<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i>	A
Dalmatian toadflax ^{a,b}	<i>Linaria dalmatica</i>	A
Diffuse knapweed ^a	<i>Centaurea diffusa</i>	B
Hoary cress ^b	<i>Cardaria draba</i>	C
Johnsongrass ^a	<i>Sorghum halepense</i>	C
Mayweed chamomile ^b	<i>Anthemis cotula</i>	A
Malta star thistle ^a	<i>Centaurea melitensis</i>	A
Puncture vine ^b	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	C
Sahara/African mustard ^a	<i>Brassica tournefortii</i>	B
Saltcedar ^b	<i>Tamarix</i> spp.	C
Spotted knapweed ^{a,b}	<i>Centaurea maculosa</i>	A
Water hemlock ^a	<i>Cicuta maculata</i>	C

^a Creech et al. (2010).

^b USDA (2010).

- “Category C: Weeds currently established and generally widespread in many counties of the state; actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; abatement at the discretion of the state quarantine officer.”

11.2.10.2 Impacts

The construction of solar energy facilities within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ would result in direct impacts on plant communities due to the removal of vegetation within the facility footprint during land-clearing and land-grading operations. Approximately 80% of the SEZ (13,242 acres [53.6 km²]) would be expected to be cleared with full development of the SEZ. The plant communities affected would depend on facility locations and could include any of the communities occurring on the SEZ. Therefore, for this analysis, all the area of each cover type within the SEZ is considered to be directly affected by removal with full development of the SEZ.

Indirect effects (caused, for example, by surface runoff or dust from the SEZ) have the potential to degrade affected plant communities and may reduce biodiversity by promoting the decline or elimination of species sensitive to disturbance. Indirect effects can also cause an increase in disturbance-tolerant species or invasive species. High impact levels could result in the elimination of a community or the replacement of one community type by another. The proper implementation of programmatic design features, however, would reduce indirect effects to a minor or small level of impact.

Possible impacts from solar energy facilities on vegetation within the SEZ are described in more detail in Section 5.10.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and from any additional mitigation applied. Section 11.2.10.2.3, below, identifies design features of particular relevance to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ.

11.2.10.2.1 Impacts on Native Species

The impacts of construction, operation, and decommissioning were considered small if they affected a relatively small proportion (<1%) of the cover type in the SEZ region (within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ); moderate impacts (>1 but <10%) could affect an intermediate proportion of cover type; and large impacts could affect greater than 10% of a cover type.

Solar facility construction and operation in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ would primarily affect communities of the Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub cover type. Additional cover types that would be affected within the SEZ include Inter-Mountain Basins Playa, Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe, Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub, Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat, Introduced Upland Vegetation – Perennial Grassland and Forbland, Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Grassland, and North American Arid West Emergent Marsh. Additional cover types that would be affected only by the assumed access road include Sonora–Mojave Creosotebush–White Bursage Desert Scrub, North American Warm Desert Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland, Great Basin Xeric Mixed Sagebrush Shrubland, North American Warm Desert Bedrock Cliff and Outcrop, Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland, Sonora-Mojave Mixed Salt Desert Scrub, Inter-Mountain Basins Cliff and Canyon, North American Warm Desert Wash, and Introduced Riparian and Wetland Vegetation. The Introduced Upland Vegetation – Perennial Grassland and Forbland and Introduced Riparian and Wetland Vegetation cover types would likely have relatively minor populations of native species. Table 11.2.10.1-1 summarizes the potential impacts on land cover types resulting from solar energy facilities in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Most of these cover types are relatively common in the SEZ region; however, several cover types are relatively uncommon, representing 1% or less of the land area within the SEZ region: Inter-Mountain Basins Cliff and Canyon (0.5%), Inter-Mountain Basins Playa (0.3%), Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat (0.3%), North American Warm Desert Wash (0.3%), Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Grassland (0.1%), North American Arid West Emergent Marsh (0.08%), Introduced Upland Vegetation – Perennial Grassland and Forbland (0.06%), and Introduced Riparian and Wetland Vegetation (0.03%). Desert dry washes, playas, wetlands, and Joshua tree communities are sensitive habitats on the SEZ.

The construction, operation, and decommissioning of solar projects within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ would result in large impacts on the Inter-Mountain Basins Playa cover type. Solar project development within the SEZ would result in moderate impacts on Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub, Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat, and Introduced Upland Vegetation – Perennial Grassland and Forbland cover types, and small impacts on all other cover types within the affected area.

Solar project development within the northern portion of the SEZ could result in direct and indirect impacts on the Joshua tree forest community that occurs within the Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub and Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe cover types. Joshua tree communities within the assumed access road corridor could also be directly and indirectly affected.

Because of the arid conditions, reestablishment of shrub, shrub steppe, or grassland communities in temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult and might require extended periods of time. It is unlikely that winterfat communities on the SEZ would be effectively restored. In addition, noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in widespread habitat degradation. Cryptogamic soil crusts occur in many of the shrubland communities in the region. Damage to these crusts, by the operation of heavy equipment or other vehicles, can alter important soil characteristics, such as nutrient cycling and availability, and affect plant community characteristics (Lovich and Bainbridge 1999).

The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition. Fugitive dust deposition could affect plant communities of each of the cover types occurring within the indirect effects area identified in Table 11.2.10.1-1.

Communities associated with Delamar Lake and other playa habitats, Jumbo Wash and the unnamed intermittent stream, greasewood flats communities, riparian habitats, marsh, or other intermittently flooded areas within or downgradient from solar projects or access road could be affected by ground-disturbing activities. Site-clearing and -grading could disrupt surface water flow patterns, resulting in changes in the frequency, duration, depth, or extent of inundation or soil saturation, and could potentially alter playa, riparian, marsh, or greasewood flats plant communities, including occurrences outside the SEZ, and affect community function. Increases in surface runoff from a solar energy project site or access road could also affect hydrologic characteristics of these communities. The introduction of contaminants into these habitats could result from spills of fuels or other materials used on a project site. Soil disturbance could result in sedimentation in these areas, which could degrade or eliminate sensitive plant communities. Grading could also affect dry wash habitats within the SEZ or access road footprint. Alteration of surface drainage patterns or hydrology could adversely affect downstream dry wash communities. Vegetation within these communities could be lost by erosion or desiccation.

Potential impacts on wetlands as a result of solar energy facility development are described in Section 5.6.1. Approximately 2,364 acres (9.6 km²) of wetland habitat has been identified within the SEZ, associated with the Delamar Lake playa, and could be affected by project development. In addition, a 1-acre (0.004-km²) area mapped as North American Arid West Emergent Marsh could be affected in the southern portion of the SEZ. Direct impacts on the wetland would occur if fill material were placed within the playa or marsh for solar facility construction. Indirect impacts, as described above, could occur with project construction near or upgradient from Delamar Lake.

The construction of access roads within the assumed road corridor could potentially result in direct impacts on wetlands that may occur in or near the roadway if fill material were placed within wetland areas or could result in indirect impacts. Approximately 162 acres (0.7 km²) of wetland habitat within the assumed access road corridor could be affected by construction. Grading could result in direct impacts on the wetlands within the access road corridor. Approximately 132.8 acres (0.5 km²) occurs near the western end of the corridor, near U.S. 93, with the remaining wetland area associated with Delamar Lake. However, all except 2.4 acres (0.01 km²) of wetland near U.S. 93 occurs to the west of the highway and would be unlikely to be directly affected. Grading near wetlands in or near the corridor could disrupt surface water or groundwater flow characteristics, resulting in changes in the frequency, duration, depth, or extent of inundation or soil saturation, and could potentially alter wetland plant communities and wetland function. Increases in surface runoff from an access road could also affect wetland hydrologic characteristics. The introduction of contaminants into wetlands in or near the corridor could result from spills of fuels or other materials. Soil disturbance could result in sedimentation in wetland areas, which could degrade or eliminate wetland plant communities. Sedimentation effects or hydrologic changes could extend to wetlands outside of the corridor.

The use of groundwater within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ for technologies with high water requirements, such as wet-cooling systems, could disrupt the groundwater flow pattern and adversely affect the springs and wetlands within the Pahranaagat NWR, southwest of the SEZ (see Section 11.2.9). Subsequent reductions in groundwater discharges at the springs could result in degradation of these habitats. The potential for impacts on springs would need to be evaluated through project-specific hydrological studies.

11.2.10.2.2 Impacts from Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plant Species

Executive Order (E.O.) 13112, “Invasive Species,” directs federal agencies to prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts of invasive species (*Federal Register*, Volume 64, page 61836, Feb. 8, 1999). Potential effects of noxious weeds and invasive plant species that could result from solar energy facilities are described in Section 5.10.1. Noxious weeds and invasive species could inadvertently be brought to a project site by equipment previously used in infested areas, or they may be present on or near a project site. Despite required programmatic design features to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, project disturbance could potentially increase the prevalence of noxious weeds and invasive species in the affected area of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, and increase the probability that weeds could be transported into areas that were previously relatively weed-free. This could result in reduced restoration success and possible widespread habitat degradation.

Invasive species, including halogeton and tumbleweed, occur on the SEZ. Additional species designated as noxious weeds in Nevada, and known to occur in Lincoln County, are given in Table 11.2.10.1-2. Approximately 171 acres (0.7 km²) of Introduced Upland Vegetation – Perennial Grassland and Forbland occurs within the SEZ and 375 acres (1.5 km²) in the indirect effects area; <1 acre (0.004 km²) of Introduced Riparian and Wetland Vegetation occurs in the assumed access road corridor and 5 acres (0.02 km²) in the indirect effects area;

approximately 171 acres (0.7 km²) of Introduced Upland Vegetation – Annual Grassland occurs within the indirect effects area. Disturbance associated with solar project development may promote the establishment and spread of invasive species associated with these cover types. Past or present land uses, such as grazing or OHV activity, may affect the susceptibility of plant communities to the establishment of noxious weeds and invasive species. Disturbance associated with existing roads and transmission lines within the SEZ area of potential impacts also likely contributes to the susceptibility of plant communities to the establishment and spread of noxious weeds and invasive species.

11.2.10.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness

In addition to the programmatic design features, SEZ-specific design features would reduce the potential for impacts on plant communities. While specific practices are best established when project details are being considered, some SEZ-specific design features can be identified at this time, as follows:

- An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan addressing habitat restoration should be approved and implemented to increase the potential for successful restoration of affected habitats and minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species, such as halogeton or tumbleweed. Invasive species control should focus on biological and mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use of herbicides.
- Dry washes, Delamar Lake playa, and the nearby marsh should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated. Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on wetlands within the assumed access road corridor, as well as dry washes, Delamar Lake and other playas, and riparian, marsh, and greasewood flat habitats within the SEZ and corridor, including downstream occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition. All wetland, dry wash, and riparian habitats within the assumed access road corridor should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated. A buffer area should be maintained around wetlands, playas, dry washes, and riparian areas to reduce the potential for impacts. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be determined through agency consultation.
- Joshua tree communities are protected by the State of Nevada and should be avoided in the northern areas of the SEZ and along the assumed access road corridor. Any Joshua trees in areas of direct impacts should be salvaged.
- Cactus species, including cholla, or ocotillo should be avoided. Any cacti that cannot be avoided should be salvaged.

- Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect impacts on springs and wetlands in the vicinity of the SEZ, at Pahranaagat NWR. Potential impacts on springs should be determined through hydrological studies.

If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to other programmatic design features, it is anticipated that a high potential for impacts from invasive species and impacts on Joshua tree communities, dry washes, playas, springs, riparian habitats, greasewood flats, and wetlands would be reduced to a minimal potential for impacts.

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11.2.11 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota

This section addresses wildlife (amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals) and aquatic biota that could occur within the potentially affected area of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Wildlife known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). The amount of aquatic habitat within the SEZ region was determined by estimating the length of linear perennial stream features and the area of standing water body features (i.e., ponds, lakes, and reservoirs) within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ using available GIS surface water datasets.

The affected area considered in this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur) and included the SEZ and a 60-ft (18-m) wide portion of an assumed 8-mi (13-km) long access road corridor. The maximum developed area within the SEZ would be 13,242 acres (53.6 km²).

The area of indirect effects was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within a 1.0-mi (1.6-km) access road corridor where ground-disturbing activities would not occur, but that could be indirectly affected by activities in the area of direct effects (e.g., surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and accidental spills in the SEZ or road construction area). Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 13,242 acres (53.6 km²) of direct effects was also included as part of the area of indirect effects. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ. The area of indirect effects was identified on the basis of professional judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be subject to indirect effects. These areas of direct and indirect effects are defined and the impact assessment approach is described in Appendix M.

The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub (see Section 11.2.10). Temporary aquatic habitats that occur in the SEZ and the area of indirect effects include Delamar Lake (a dry lake), Jumbo Wash, and an unnamed dry wash (see Figure 11.2.9.1-1).

11.2.11.1 Amphibians and Reptiles

11.2.11.1.1 Affected Environment

This section addresses amphibian and reptile species that are known to occur, or for which potentially suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The list of amphibian and reptile species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined from species lists available from the NNHP (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available from the SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover

1 types suitable for each species were determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007).
2 See Appendix M for additional information on the approach used.

3
4 Based on species distributions within the area of the SEZ and habitat preferences of the
5 amphibian species, the Great Basin spadefoot (*Spea intermontana*) and red-spotted toad (*Bufo*
6 *punctatus*) would be expected to occur within the SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). They
7 would most likely occur in the portions of the SEZ that overlap the dry lake and wash habitats.

8
9 More than 25 reptile species occur within the area that encompasses the proposed
10 Delamar Valley SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) is a
11 federal and state-listed threatened species and is discussed in Section 11.2.12. Lizard species
12 expected to occur within the SEZ include the desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*),
13 Great Basin collared lizard (*Crotaphytus bicinctores*), long-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia*
14 *wislizenii*), side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus*
15 *occidentalis*), western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris*), and zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus*
16 *draconoides*). Snake species expected to occur within the SEZ are the coachwhip (*Masticophis*
17 *flagellum*), glossy snake (*Arizona elegans*), gophersnake (*Pituophis catenifer*), groundsnake
18 (*Sonora semiannulata*), and nightsnake (*Hypsiglena torquata*). The sidewinder (*Crotalus*
19 *cerastes*) would be the most common poisonous snake species expected to occur on the SEZ.

20
21 Table 11.2.11.1-1 provides habitat information for representative amphibian and reptile
22 species that could occur within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Special status amphibian and
23 reptile species are addressed in Section 11.2.12.

24 25 26 **11.2.11.1.2 Impacts**

27
28 The types of impacts that amphibians and reptiles could incur from construction,
29 operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in
30 Section 5.10.2.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
31 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any
32 additional mitigation applied. Section 11.2.11.1.3, below, identifies SEZ-specific design features
33 of particular relevance to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ.

34
35 The assessment of impacts on amphibian and reptile species is based on available
36 information on the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.2.11.1.1
37 following the analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and
38 coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific
39 impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional
40 required actions to avoid or mitigate impacts on amphibians and reptiles
41 (see Section 11.2.11.1.3).

42
43 In general, impacts on amphibians and reptiles would result from habitat disturbance
44 (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration) and from disturbance, injury, or mortality
45 to individual amphibians and reptiles. On the basis of the magnitude of impacts on amphibians
46 and reptiles summarized in Table 11.2.11.1-1, direct impacts on representative amphibian and

TABLE 11.2.11.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Amphibian and Reptile Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Amphibians					
Great Basin spadefoot (<i>Spea intermontana</i>)	Sagebrush flats, semidesert shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and spruce-fir forests. Breeds in temporary and permanent waters including rain pools, pools in intermittent streams, and flooded areas along streams. About 2,199,200 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	10,269 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	60,070 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	3.5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.0002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 306.5 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid Delamar Lake and wash habitats.
Red-spotted toad (<i>Bufo punctatus</i>)	Dry, rocky areas at lower elevations near desert springs and persistent pools along rocky arroyos, desert streams and oases, open grassland, scrubland oaks, and dry woodlands. About 3,069,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	11,427 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	66,999 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	45 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 3,941 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid Delamar Lake and wash habitats.
Lizards					
Desert horned lizard (<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>)	Deserts dominated by sagebrush, creosotebush, greasewood, or cactus. Occurs on sandy flats, alluvial fans, washes, and edge of dunes. Burrows in soil during periods of inactivity. About 4,068,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	147,352 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	64 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,534 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Lizards (Cont.)					
Great Basin collared lizard (<i>Crotaphytus bicinctores</i>)	Usually inhabits alluvia, lava flows, mountain slopes, canyons, buttes, rock outcrops, washes, and rocky plains. Limiting factors are the presence of large boulders and open/sparse vegetation. About 3,410,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,318 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	121,938 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	61 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,327 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Long-nosed leopard lizard (<i>Gambelia wislizenii</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas with scattered shrubs. Prefers sandy or gravelly flats and plains. Also prefers areas with abundant rodent burrows that they occupy when inactive. About 3,390,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	11,246 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,859 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,102 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Side-blotched lizard (<i>Uta stansburiana</i>)	Low to moderate elevations in washes, arroyos, boulder-strewn ravines, rocky cliff bases, and flat shrubby areas in canyon bottoms. Often along sandy washes. Usually in areas with a lot of bare ground. About 2,714,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	987 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.04% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	45,951 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	45 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 3,598 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats.

TABLE 11.2.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Lizards (Cont.)					
Western fence lizard (<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>)	Disturbed areas, roadsides, gravel beds, rock quarries, lava flows, outcrops, talus slopes, shrublands, riparian areas, and coniferous woodlands. About 3,975,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	11,341 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	110,016 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	32 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,749 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Western whiptail (<i>Cnemidophorus tigris</i>)	Arid and semiarid habitats with sparse plant cover. About 3,997,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,221 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	61 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,285 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Zebra-tailed lizard (<i>Callisaurus draconoides</i>)	Open, warm-desert habitats, especially dry washes and canyons with fine gravel and sand. About 2,820,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	11,246 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	74,686 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,075 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Snakes					
Coachwhip (<i>Masticophis flagellum</i>)	Creosotebush desert, shortgrass prairie, shrub-covered flats and hills. Sandy to rocky substrates. Avoids dense vegetation. About 3,320,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	2,046 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.06% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	89,206 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	28 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,430 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.
Glossy snake (<i>Arizona elegans</i>)	Light shrubby to barren deserts, sagebrush flats, grasslands, and chaparral-covered slopes and woodlands. Prefers sandy grasslands, shrublands and woodlands. About 2,041,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	4,170 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	72,721 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	26 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,298 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.
Gophersnake (<i>Pituophis catenifer</i>)	Plains grasslands, sandhills, riparian areas, marshes, edges of ponds and lakes, rocky canyons, semidesert and mountain shrublands, montane woodlands, rural and suburban areas, and agricultural areas. Likely inhabits pocket gopher burrows in winter. About 3,938,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,075 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	80,418 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	48 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,179 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.2.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Snakes (Cont.)					
Groundsnake (<i>Sonora semiannulata</i>)	Arid and semiarid regions with rocky to sandy soils. River bottoms, desert flats, sand hummocks, and rocky hillsides. About 4,077,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	2,059 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.05% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	125,481 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	59 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,166 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.
Nightsnake (<i>Hypsiglena torquata</i>)	Arid and semiarid desert flats, plains, and woodlands; areas with rocky and sandy soils are preferred. During cold periods of the year, it seeks refuge underground, in crevices, or under rocks. About 2,733,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	76,936 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	29 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,484 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Sidewinder (<i>Crotalus cerastes</i>)	Windblown sand habitats near rodent burrows. Most common in areas of sand hummocks topped with creosote, mesquite, or other desert plants. About 1,825,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	977 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.05% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	40,561 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	45 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 3,874 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.2.11.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 13,242 acres of direct effects within the SEZ was assumed.
- c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 13,242 acres of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within an 8-mi (13-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide access road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest existing highway. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide access road corridor to the existing highway, less the assumed area of direct effects.
- f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- h To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.
- i To convert ft to m, multiply by 0.3048.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (201); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 reptile species would be small, ranging from 0.05% for the side-blotched lizard to 0.5% for the
2 nightsnake (Table 11.2.11.1-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitats for the amphibian
3 and reptile species occur within the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 3.6% of available
4 habitat for the desert horned lizard, Great Basin collared lizard, and glossy snake). Indirect
5 impacts on amphibians and reptiles could result from surface water and sediment runoff from
6 disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental spills, collection, and
7 harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with implementation of
8 programmatic design features.

9
10 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
11 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
12 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
13 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
14 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
15 particular importance for amphibian and reptile species would be the restoration of original
16 ground surface contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with desert scrub, playa,
17 and wash habitats.

18 19 20 ***11.2.11.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

21
22 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
23 Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on amphibians and reptiles, especially for
24 those species that utilize habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., washes and playas). Indirect
25 impacts could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those
26 engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While
27 SEZ-specific design features are best established when project details are being considered, one
28 design feature can be identified at this time:

- 29
30 • Delamar Lake, Jumbo Wash, and the unnamed wash should be avoided.

31
32 If this SEZ-specific design feature is implemented in addition to the programmatic design
33 features, impacts on amphibian and reptile species could be reduced. However, as potentially
34 suitable habitats for a number of the amphibian and reptile species occur throughout much of the
35 SEZ, additional species-specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult
36 or infeasible.

1 **11.2.11.2 Birds**

2
3
4 **11.2.11.2.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section addresses bird species that
7 are known to occur, or for which potentially
8 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the
9 potentially affected area of the proposed
10 Delamar Valley SEZ. The list of bird species
11 potentially present in the SEZ area was
12 determined from the NNHP (NDCNR 2002)
13 and range maps and habitat information
14 available from the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CDFG 2008) and
15 SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from
16 SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See Appendix M for additional information on the
17 approach used.

Desert Focal Bird Species

Bird species whose requirements define spatial attributes, habitat characteristics, and management regimes representative of a healthy desert system (Chase and Geupel 2005).

18
19 Eight bird species that could occur on or in the affected area of the SEZ are considered
20 focal species in the *Desert Bird Conservation Plan* (CalPIF 2009): ash-throated flycatcher
21 (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), black-throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*), burrowing owl (*Athene*
22 *cunicularia*), common raven (*Corvus corax*), Costa’s hummingbird (*Calypte costae*), ladder-
23 backed woodpecker (*Picoides scalaris*), Le Conte’s thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*), and verdin
24 (*Auriparus flaviceps*). Habitats for most of these species are described in Table 11.2.11.2-1. Due
25 to its special species status, the burrowing owl is discussed in Section 11.2.12.

26
27
28 **Waterfowl, Wading Birds, and Shorebirds**

29
30 As discussed in Section 4.10.2.2.2, waterfowl (ducks, geese, and swans), wading birds
31 (herons and cranes), and shorebirds (avocets, gulls, plovers, rails, sandpipers, stilts, and terns) are
32 among the most abundant groups of birds in the six-state solar study area. However, within the
33 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebird species would be mostly
34 absent to uncommon. Playa and wash habitats within the SEZ may attract shorebird species, but
35 the perennial streams within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ would provide more viable habitat for
36 this group of birds. The killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) is the shorebird species most likely to
37 occur within the SEZ.

38
39
40 **Neotropical Migrants**

41
42 As discussed in Section 4.10.2.2.3, neotropical migrants represent the most diverse
43 category of birds within the six-state solar energy study area. Species expected to occur within
44 the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ include the ash-throated flycatcher, Bewick’s wren
45 (*Thryomanes bewickii*), black-throated sparrow, cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus*
46 *brunneicapillus*), common poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), common raven, Costa’s

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Bird Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Shorebirds					
Killdeer (<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>)	Open areas such as fields, meadows, lawns, mudflats, and shores. Nests on ground in open dry or gravelly locations. About 51,700 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,089 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (6.0% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	457 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	1 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 71 acres in area of indirect effects	Moderate overall impact. Avoid Delamar Lake and wash habitats. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Neotropical Migrants					
Ash-throated flycatcher (<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>)	Common in scrub and woodland habitats, including desert riparian and desert washes. Requires hole/cavity for nesting. Uses shrubs or small trees for foraging perches. About 4,306,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,210 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	100,946 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	49 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,254 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>					
Bewick's wren (<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>)	Generally associated with dense, brushy habitats. It is a permanent resident of lowland deserts and pinyon-juniper forests of southern Utah. Breeding occurs in brushy areas of open woodlands and other open habitats. It is a cavity nester with nests constructed in small enclosed areas such as tree cavities, nesting boxes, rock crevices, or the center of a brush pile. About 3,511,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	5,124 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	88,783 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	31 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,657 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Black-throated sparrow (<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>)	Chaparral and desert-scrub habitats with sparse to open stands of shrubs. Often in areas with scattered Joshua trees. Nests in thorny shrubs or cactus. About 2,655,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	977 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.04% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	43,481 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	43 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 3,750 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Cactus wren (<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>)	Desert (especially areas with cholla cactus or yucca), mesquite, arid scrub, coastal sage scrub, and trees in towns in arid regions. Nests in <i>Opuntia</i> spp.; twiggy, thorny trees and shrubs; and sometimes in buildings. Nests may be used as winter roost. About 1,211,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	977 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	38,118 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	34 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,964 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Common poorwill (<i>Phalaenoptilus nuttallii</i>)	Scrubby and brushy areas, prairie, desert, rocky canyons, open woodlands, and broken forests. Mostly in arid and semiarid habitats. Nests in open areas on a bare site. About 3,491,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	11,233 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	63,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	17 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.0005% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 1,475 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Common raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	Occurs in most habitats. Trees and cliffs provide cover. Roosts primarily in trees. Nests on cliffs, bluffs, tall trees, or man-made structures. Forages in sparse, open terrain. About 4,836,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	150,024 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	62 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,400 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Costa's hummingbird (<i>Calypte costae</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas, arid brushy foothills, and chaparral. Main habitats are desert washes, edges of desert riparian and valley foothill riparian areas, coastal shrub, desert scrub, desert succulent shrub, lower-elevation chaparral, and palm oasis. Also in mountains, meadows, and gardens during migration and winter. Most common in canyons and washes when nesting. Nests are located in trees, shrubs, vines, or cacti. About 1,966,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	977 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.05% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	40,709 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	45 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 3,947 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Greater roadrunner (<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>)	Desert scrub, chaparral, edges of cultivated lands, and arid open areas with scattered brush. Fairly common in all desert habitats. Requires thickets, large bushes, or small trees for shade, refuge, and roosting. Usually nests low in trees, shrubs, or clumps of cactus. Rarely nests on ground. About 4,449,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	11,246 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	102,364 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	49 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,250 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Horned lark (<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>)	Common to abundant resident in a variety of open habitats. Breeds in grasslands, sagebrush, semidesert shrublands, and alpine tundra. During migration and winter, inhabits the same habitats other than tundra, and occurs in agricultural areas. Usually occurs where plant density is low and there are exposed soils. About 3,932,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	148,184 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	61 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,304 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Ladder-backed woodpecker (<i>Picoides scalaris</i>)	Fairly common in Mojave and Colorado Deserts. Variety of habitats, including deserts, arid scrub, riparian woodlands, mesquite, scrub oak, pinyon-juniper woodlands. Digs nest hole in rotted stub or dead or dying branches of various trees. Also nests in saguaro, agave, yucca, fence posts, and utility poles. Nests on ledges; branches of trees, shrubs, and cactus; and holes in trees or walls. About 3,254,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	11,246 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	66,841 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	48 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,134 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Le Conte's thrasher (<i>Toxostoma lecontei</i>)	Open desert wash, alkali desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats. Prefers to nest and forage in arroyos and washes lined with dense stands of creosotebush and salt bush. About 2,223,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	11,246 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	62,263 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	45 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 3,922 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Lesser nighthawk (<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>)	Open country, desert regions, scrub, savanna, and cultivated areas. Usually near water, including open marshes, salt ponds, large rivers, rice paddies, and beaches. Roosts on low perches or the ground. Nests in the open on bare sites. About 3,646,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	11,246 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,940 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	48 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,208 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Loggerhead shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	Open country with scattered trees and shrubs, savanna, desert scrub, desert riparian, Joshua tree, and occasionally open woodland habitats. Perches on poles, wires, or fence posts (suitable hunting perches are important aspect of habitat). Nests in shrubs and small trees. About 4,837,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	149,068 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	62 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,432 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Northern mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	Parkland, cultivated lands, second-growth habitats, desert scrub, and riparian areas at low elevations. Forages on ground in short, grassy to nearly barren substrates. About 4,983,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	152,695 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	64 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,577 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Rock wren (<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>)	Arid and semiarid habitats. Breeds in areas with talus slopes, scrublands, or dry washes. Nests, constructed of plant materials, are located in rock crevices and the nest entrance is paved with small rocks and stones. About 4,856,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	152,547 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	64 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,531 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Sage sparrow (<i>Amphispiza belli</i>)	Prefers shrubland, grassland, and desert habitats. The nest, constructed of twigs and grasses, is located either low in a shrub or on the ground. About 3,005,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,315 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	108,451 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	18 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.0006% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 1,525 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>					
Say's phoebe (<i>Sayornis saya</i>)	Arid open country, deserts, sagebrush plains, dry barren foothills, canyons, cliffs, ranches, and rural homes. Nests in cliff crevices, holes in banks, sheltered ledges, tree cavities, under bridges and roofs, and in mines. About 3,205,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	1,941 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.06% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	77,919 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,079 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Scott's oriole (<i>Icterus parisorum</i>)	Desert-facing slopes of mountains or semiarid plains between mountain ranges. Nests in trees or yuccas. About 1,811,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	977 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.05% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	40,957 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	31 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,734 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid Mojave mid-elevation mixed desert scrub habitat. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Verdin (<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>)	Desert riparian, desert wash, desert scrub, and alkali desert scrub areas with large shrubs and small trees. Nests in shrubs, small trees, or cactus. About 1,842,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	977 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.05% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	40,561 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	45 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.0002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 3,901 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid Mojave mid-elevation mixed desert scrub habitat. Also avoid Delamar Lake and wash habitats. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Western kingbird (<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>)	Occurs in a variety of habitats, including riparian forests and woodlands, savannahs, shrublands, agricultural lands, deserts, and urban areas. Nesting occurs in trees, bushes, and other raised areas, such as buildings. It migrates to Central America or the southeastern United States for the winter. About 3,946,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,318 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	144,904 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	62 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,353 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Birds of Prey					
American kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius</i>)	Occurs in most open habitats, in various shrub and early successional forest habitats, forest openings, and various ecotones. Perches on trees, snags, rocks, utility poles and wires, and fence posts. Uses cavities in trees, snags, rock areas, banks, and buildings for nesting and cover. About 4,844,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	149,149 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	63 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,479 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)					
Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)	Grasslands, shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine forests. Occasionally in most other habitats, especially during migration and winter. Nests on cliffs and sometimes trees in rugged areas, with breeding birds ranging widely over surrounding areas. About 4,994,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	149,149 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	63 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,506 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
Great horned owl (<i>Bubo virginianus</i>)	Needs large abandoned bird nest or large cavity for nesting. Usually lives on forest edges and hunts in open areas. In desert areas, requires wooded cliff areas for nesting. About 5,026,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	153,651 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	64 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,582 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)					
Long-eared owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)	Nests and roosts in dense vegetation and hunts in open areas (e.g., creosotebush-bursage flats, desert scrub, grasslands, and agricultural fields). About 4,634,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	147,410 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	61 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,317 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Red-tailed hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	Wide variety of habitats from deserts, mountains, and populated valleys. Open areas with scattered, elevated perch sites such as scrub desert, plains and montane grassland, agricultural fields, pastures urban parklands, broken coniferous forests, and deciduous woodland. Nests on cliff ledges or in tall trees. About 2,581,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,328 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,116 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	48 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,150 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Turkey vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>)	Occurs in open stages of most habitats that provide adequate cliffs or large trees for nesting, roosting, and resting. Migrates and forages over most open habitats. Will roost communally in trees, exposed boulders, and occasionally transmission line support towers. About 3,237,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	11,246 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	66,922 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	48 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,192 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Upland Game Birds					
Chukar (<i>Alectoris chukar</i>)	Steep, semiarid slopes with rocky outcrops and shrubs with a grass and forb understory. Sources of water are required during hot, dry periods, with most birds found within 0.25 mi (0.4 km) of water during the brooding period. About 4,781,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,328 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	147,761 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	62 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,356 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Gambel's quail (<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>)	Deserts, especially in areas with brushy or thorny growth, and adjacent cultivated areas. Usually occurs near water. Nests on the ground under cover of small trees, shrubs, and grass tufts. About 3,819,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,023 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,461 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	62 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,365 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid Delamar Lake and wash habitats.
Mourning dove (<i>Zenaida macroura</i>)	Habitat generalist, occurring in grasslands, shrublands, croplands, lowland and foothill riparian forests, ponderosa pine forests, deserts, and urban and suburban areas. Rarely in aspen and other forests, coniferous woodlands, and alpine tundra. Nests on ground or in trees. Winters mostly in lowland riparian forests adjacent to cropland. About 4,415,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	139,241 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	62 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,352 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Upland Game Birds (Cont.)					
White-winged dove (<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>)	Nests in low to medium height trees with dense foliage and fairly open ground cover. Feeds on wild seeds, grains, and fruit. About 1,959,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	977 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.05% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	40,709 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	44 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 3,827 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid Mojave mid-elevation mixed desert scrub habitat.
Wild turkey (<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>)	Lowland riparian forests, foothill shrubs, pinyon-juniper woodlands, foothill riparian forests, and agricultural areas. About 2,497,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	4,170 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	86,902 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	18 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 1,556 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 13,242 acres of direct effects within the SEZ was assumed.

^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.

^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 13,242 acres of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.2.11.2-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within an 8-mi (13-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide access road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest existing highway. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide access road corridor to the existing highway, less the assumed area of direct effects.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 hummingbird, greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*),
2 ladder-backed woodpecker, Le Conte's thrasher, lesser nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*),
3 loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), rock wren
4 (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*), Say's phoebe (*Sayornis saya*),
5 Scott's oriole (*Icterus parisorum*), verdin, and western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)
6 (USGS 2007).

9 **Birds of Prey**

10
11 Section 4.10.2.2.4 provided an overview of the birds of prey (raptors, owls, and vultures)
12 within the six-state solar study area. Raptor species that could occur within the proposed
13 Delamar Valley SEZ include the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), golden eagle (*Aquila*
14 *chrysaetos*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), red-tailed hawk
15 (*Buteo jamaicensis*), and turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*) (USGS 2007). Several other special
16 status birds of prey are discussed in Section 11.2.12. These include the ferruginous hawk (*Buteo*
17 *regalis*), northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), and burrowing
18 owl.

21 **Upland Game Birds**

22
23 Section 4.10.2.2.5 provided an overview of the upland game birds (primarily pheasants,
24 grouse, quail, and doves) that occur within the six-state solar study area. Upland game species
25 that could occur within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ include the chukar (*Alectoris chukar*),
26 Gambel's quail (*Callipepla gambelii*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), white-winged dove
27 (*Zenaida asiatica*), and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) (USGS 2007).

28
29 Table 11.2.11.2-1 provides habitat information for representative bird species that could
30 occur within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Special status bird species are discussed in
31 Section 11.2.12.

34 **11.2.11.2.2 Impacts**

35
36 The types of impacts that birds could incur from construction, operation, and
37 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
38 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
39 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2 and through the application of any additional
40 mitigation measures. Section 11.2.11.2.3, below, identifies design features of particular
41 relevance to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ.

42
43 The assessment of impacts on bird species is based on available information on the
44 presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.2.11.2.1 following the analysis
45 approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination with federal
46 or state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts more

1 thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions to
2 avoid or mitigate impacts on birds (see Section 11.2.11.2.3).

3
4 In general, impacts on birds would result from habitat disturbance (i.e., habitat reduction,
5 fragmentation, and alteration), and from disturbance, injury, or mortality to individual birds.
6 Table 11.2.11.2-1 summarizes the magnitude of potential impacts on representative bird species
7 resulting from solar energy development in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. On the basis of
8 the impacts on birds summarized in Table 11.2.11.2-1, direct impacts on representative bird
9 species would be moderate for the killdeer (loss of 6.0% of potentially suitable habitat) and small
10 for all other bird species (ranging from 0.04% for the black-throated sparrow to 0.5% for
11 Le Conte's thrasher (Table 11.2.11.2-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitats for the bird
12 species occur within the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 5.1% of available habitat for
13 the red-tailed hawk). Indirect impacts on birds could result from surface water and sediment
14 runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental spills,
15 collection, and harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with
16 implementation of programmatic design features.

17
18 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
19 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
20 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
21 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
22 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
23 particular importance for bird species would be the restoration of original ground surface
24 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with desert scrub, playa, and wash
25 habitats.

26 27 28 ***11.2.11.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

29
30 The successful implementation of programmatic design features presented in
31 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on birds, especially for those
32 species that depend on habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., wash and playa habitats). Indirect
33 impacts could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those
34 engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While
35 SEZ-specific design features important for reducing impacts on birds are best established when
36 considering specific project details, some design features can be identified at this time:

- 37
38
- 39 • For solar energy facilities within the SEZ, the requirements contained within
40 the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and USFWS to
41 promote the conservation of migratory birds will be followed.
 - 42 • Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation
43 regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the
44 USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and
45 Golden Eagle Protection Act.
- 46

- Delamar Lake, Jumbo Wash, and the unnamed wash should be avoided.

If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to the programmatic design features, impacts on bird species could be reduced. However, as potentially suitable habitats for a number of the bird species occur throughout much of the SEZ, additional species-specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.

11.2.11.3 Mammals

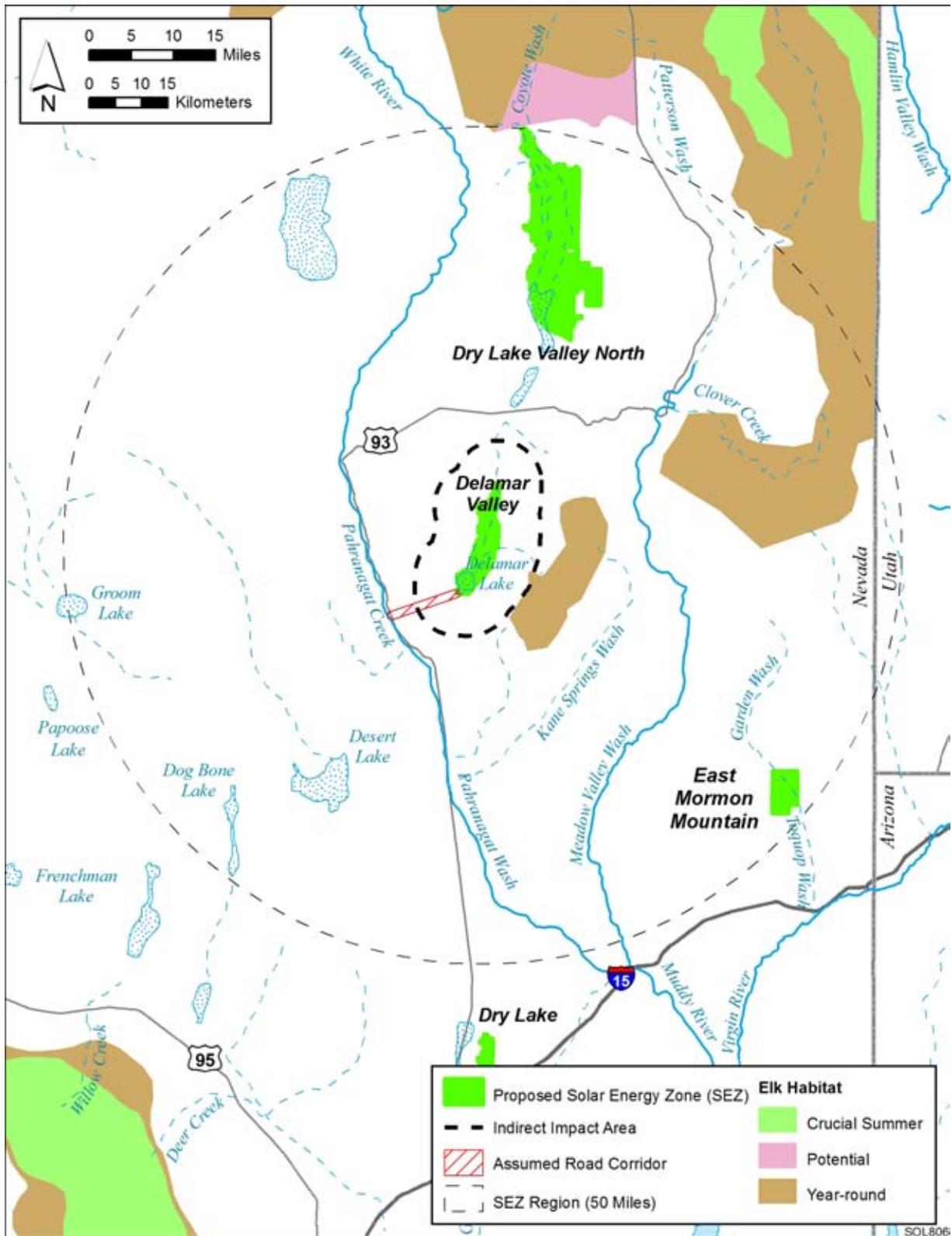
11.2.11.3.1 Affected Environment

This section addresses mammal species that are known to occur, or for which potentially suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The list of mammal species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined from the NNHP (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available from the SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See Appendix M for additional information on the approach used.

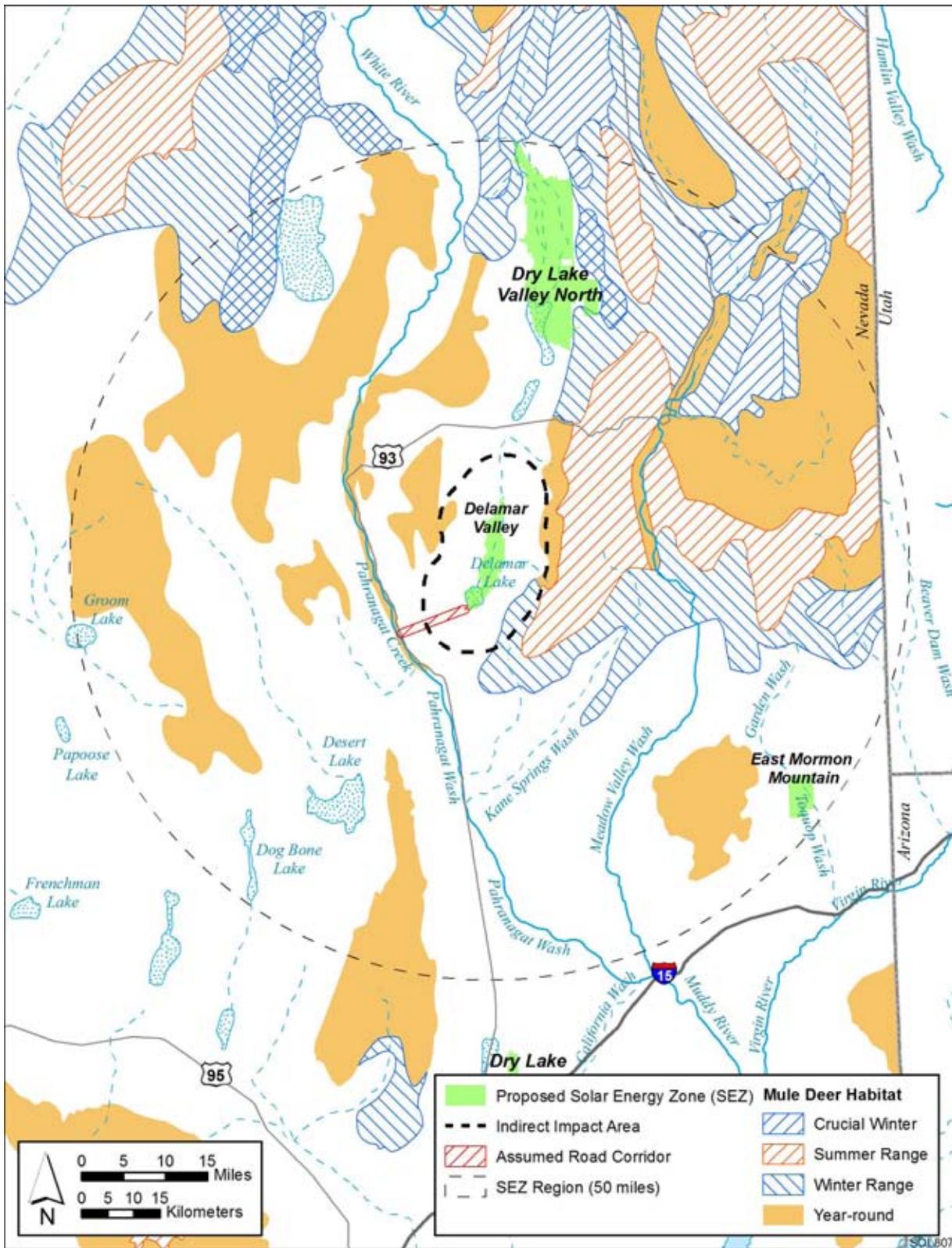
Over 55 species of mammals have ranges that encompass the area of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007); however, suitable habitats for a number of these species are limited or nonexistent within the SEZ (USGS 2007). Similar to the overview of mammals provided for the six-state solar energy study area (Section 4.10.2.3), the following discussion for the SEZ emphasizes big game and other mammal species that (1) have key habitats within or near the SEZ, (2) are important to humans (e.g., big game, small game, and furbearer species), and/or (3) are representative of other species that share important habitats.

Big Game

The big game species that could occur within the vicinity of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ include cougar (*Puma concolor*), elk (*Cervis canadensis*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), Nelson's bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*), and pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) (USGS 2007). Due to its special species status, the Nelson's bighorn sheep is addressed in Section 11.2.12. Among the other big game species, potentially suitable habitats for the cougar, mule deer, and pronghorn occur within the SEZ. No potentially suitable habitat for elk occurs within the SEZ, while only limited potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs within the area of indirect effects. Figure 11.2.11.3-1 shows the location of the SEZ relative to mapped elk habitat; Figure 11.2.11.3-2 shows the location of the SEZ relative to the mapped range of mule deer habitat; and Figure 11.2.11.3-3 shows the location of the SEZ relative to mapped pronghorn habitat.

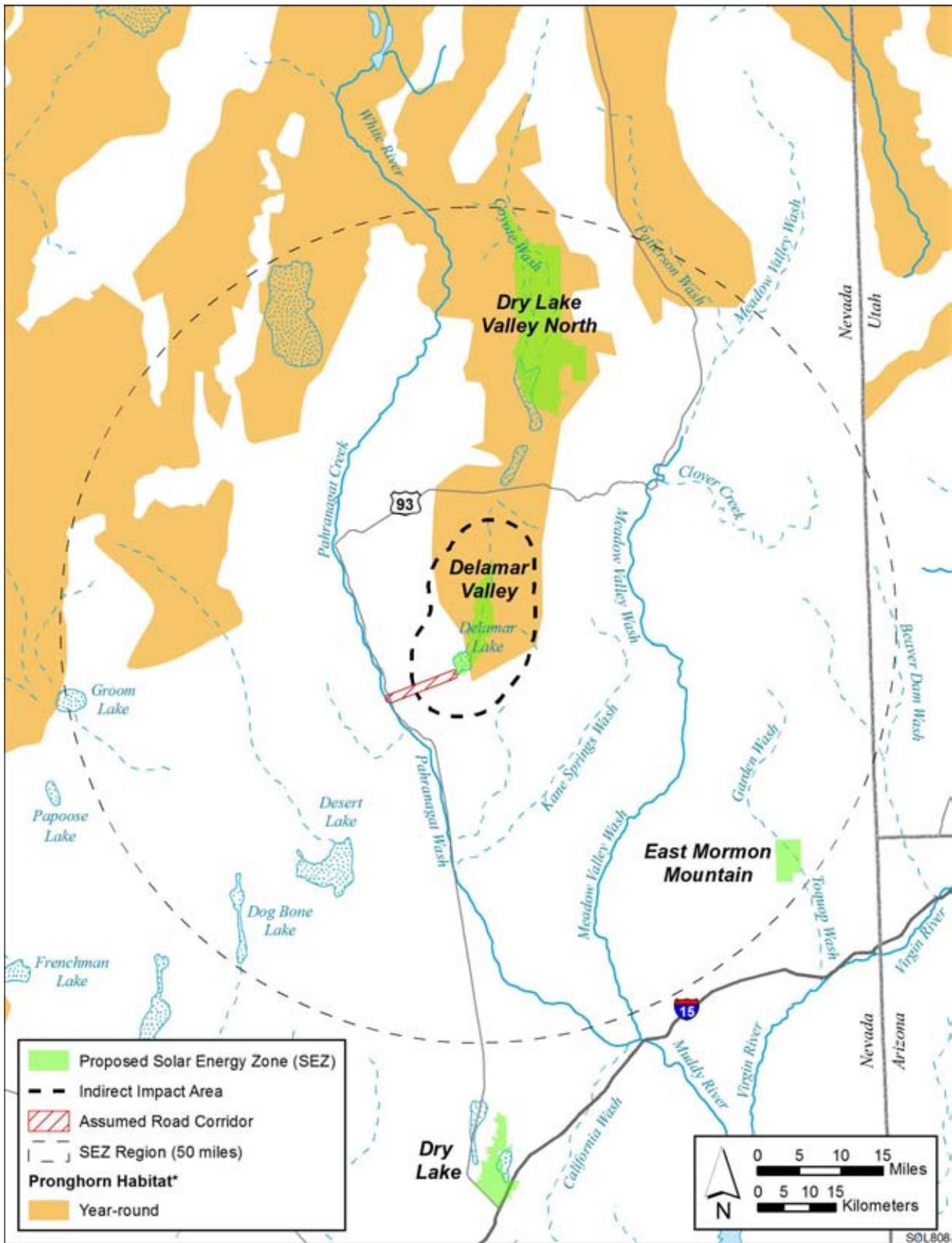


1
 2 **FIGURE 11.2.11.3-1 Location of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ Relative to the Mapped**
 3 **Range of Elk (Source: NDOW 2010)**



1

2 **FIGURE 11.2.11.3-2 Location of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ Relative to the Mapped**
 3 **Range of Mule Deer (Source: NDOW 2010)**



1

2

3

FIGURE 11.2.11.3-3 Location of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ Relative to the Mapped Range of Pronghorn (Source: NDOW 2010)

1 **Other Mammals**
2

3 A number of small game and furbearer species occur within the area of the proposed
4 Delamar Valley SEZ. Species that could occur within the area of the SEZ would include the
5 American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), bobcat (*Lynx*
6 *rufus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*, common), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), gray fox
7 (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*), and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)
8 (USGS 2007).
9

10 The nongame (small) mammals include rodents, bats, and shrews. Representative species
11 for which potentially suitable habitat occurs within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ include
12 Botta’s pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), cactus mouse (*Peromyscus eremicus*), canyon mouse
13 (*P. crinitis*), deer mouse (*P. maniculatus*), desert shrew (*Notiosorex crawfordi*), desert woodrat
14 (*Neotoma lepida*), little pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris*), long-tailed pocket mouse
15 (*Chaetodipus formosus*), Merriam’s pocket mouse (*Dipodomys merriami*), northern grasshopper
16 mouse (*Onychomys leucogaster*), southern grasshopper mouse (*O. torridus*), western harvest
17 mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*), and white-tailed antelope squirrel (*Ammospermophilus*
18 *leucurus*) (USGS 2007). Bat species that may occur within the area of the SEZ include the big
19 brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), Brazilian free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*), California myotis
20 (*Myotis californicus*), hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), little brown myotis (*M. lucifugus*), long-
21 legged myotis (*M. volans*), silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), and western pipistrelle
22 (*Parastrellus hesperus*) (USGS 2007). However, roost sites for the bat species (e.g., caves,
23 hollow trees, rock crevices, or buildings) would be limited to absent within the SEZ. Several
24 other special status bat species that could occur within the SEZ area are addressed in
25 Section 11.2.12.
26

27 Table 11.2.11.3-1 provides habitat information for representative mammal species that
28 could occur within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Special status mammal species are
29 discussed in Section 11.2.12.
30

31
32 **11.2.11.3.2 Impacts**
33

34 The types of impacts that mammals could incur from construction, operation, and
35 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
36 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
37 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the application of any additional
38 mitigation measures. Section 11.2.11.3.3, below, identifies design features of particular
39 relevance to mammals for the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ.
40

41 The assessment of impacts on mammal species is based on available information on the
42 presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.2.11.3.1 following the analysis
43 approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination with state
44 natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts more thoroughly.
45 These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions to avoid or
46 mitigate impacts on mammals (see Section 11.2.11.3.3).

1 Table 11.2.11.3-1 summarizes the magnitude of potential impacts on representative
2 mammal species resulting from solar energy development (with the inclusion of programmatic
3 design features) in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ.
4
5

6 **Cougar**

7

8 Up to 12,391 acres (50.1 km²) of potentially suitable cougar habitat could be lost through
9 solar energy and access road development within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. This
10 represents about 0.2% of potentially suitable cougar habitat within the SEZ region. About
11 154,416 acres (624.9 km²) of potentially suitable cougar habitat occurs within the area of
12 indirect effects for the SEZ and access road. This is about 3.1% of potentially suitable cougar
13 habitat within the SEZ region. Overall, impacts on cougar from solar energy development in the
14 SEZ would be small.
15

16 **Elk**

17

18
19 Based on land cover analyses, potentially suitable elk habitat does not occur within the
20 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Slightly more than 160 acres (0.6 km²) of potentially suitable
21 habitat occurs within the proposed access road corridor and could directly affect about 2 acres
22 (0.008 km²) of habitat. Thus, solar energy development in the SEZ would have little direct
23 impact on elk habitat. About 35,470 acres (143.5 km²) of potentially suitable elk habitat occurs
24 within the area of indirect effects, or more than 2.8% of potentially suitable elk habitat within the
25 SEZ region. Based on mapped ranges, the closest year-round elk habitat is about 4.4 mi (7.1 km)
26 from the SEZ, while the closest crucial summer habitat is about 19 mi (31 km) from the SEZ
27 (Figure 11.2.11.3-1). About 530 acres (2.1 km²) of mapped year-round elk habitat occurs within
28 the area of indirect effects. Overall, impacts on elk from solar energy development in the SEZ
29 would be small to none.
30

31 **Mule Deer**

32

33
34 Based on land cover analyses, up to 13,303 acres (53.9 km²) of potentially
35 suitable mule deer habitat could be lost through solar energy and access road development within
36 the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. This represents about 0.3% of potentially suitable mule deer
37 habitat within the SEZ region. About 149,047 acres (603.2 km²) of potentially suitable mule deer
38 habitat occurs within the area of indirect effects for the SEZ and access road. This is about 3.7%
39 of potentially suitable mule deer habitat within the SEZ region. Based on mapped range, the
40 closest year-round mule deer habitat is about 3 mi (5 km) from the SEZ (Figure 11.2.11.3-2).
41 About 6,465 acres (26.2 km²) of year-round mule deer habitat occurs within the area of indirect
42 effects, or about 0.6% of the year-round mule deer habitat within the SEZ region. The closest
43 winter mule deer habitat occurs 2.5 mi (4.0 km) from the SEZ; while the closest summer range is
44 4.9 mi (7.9 km) from the SEZ (Figure 11.2.11.3-2). About 9,740 acres (39.4 km²) of winter
45 range and 31 acres (0.1 km²) of summer range occur within the area of indirect effects. Overall,
46 impacts on mule deer from solar energy development in the SEZ would be small.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Mammal Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Big Game Cougar (<i>Puma concolor</i>)	Most common in rough, broken foothills and canyon country, often in association with montane forests, shrublands, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. About 4,934,200 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,328 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	148,938 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	63 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,478 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Mule deer (<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>)	Most habitats, including coniferous forests, desert shrub, chaparral, and grasslands with shrubs. Greatest densities in shrublands on rough, broken terrain that provides abundant browse and cover. About 3,999,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	144,498 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	61 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Pronghorn (<i>Antilocapra americana</i>)	Grasslands and semidesert shrublands on rolling topography that affords good visibility. Most abundant in shortgrass or midgrass prairies and least common in xeric habitats. About 1,691,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	2,046 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	82,177 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	15 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.0001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 1,292 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Small Game and Furbearers					
American badger (<i>Taxidea taxus</i>)	Open grasslands and deserts, meadows in subalpine and montane forests, alpine tundra. Digs burrows in friable soils. Most common in areas with abundant populations of ground squirrels, prairie dogs, and pocket gophers. About 4,605,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	152,466 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	62 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,426 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Black-tailed jackrabbit (<i>Lepus californicus</i>)	Open plains, fields, and deserts with scattered thickets or patches of shrubs. Also open, early stages of forests and chaparral habitats. Rests during the day in shallow depressions, and uses shrubs for cover. About 4,851,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	152,547 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	62 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,407 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Bobcat (<i>Lynx rufus</i>)	Most habitats except subalpine coniferous forest and montane meadow grasslands. Most common in rocky country from deserts through ponderosa forests. About 4,288,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	6,112 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,105 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	60 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,265 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)					
Coyote (<i>Canis latrans</i>)	All habitats at all elevations. Least common in dense coniferous forest. Where human control efforts occur, they are restricted to broken, rough country with abundant shrub cover and a good supply of rabbits or rodents. About 5,025,783 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	153,651 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	64 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,582 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Desert cottontail (<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>)	Abundant to common in grasslands, open forests, and desert shrub habitats. Can occur in areas with minimal vegetation as long as adequate cover (e.g., rock piles, fallen logs, fence rows) is present. Thickets and patches of shrubs, vines, and brush also used as cover. About 3,730,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,315 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	109,331 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	29 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,480 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Gray fox (<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>)	Deserts, open forests, and brush. Prefers wooded areas, broken country, brushlands, and rocky areas. Tolerant of low levels of residential development. About 2,836,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	78,063 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	30 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,637 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)					
Kit fox (<i>Vulpes macrotis</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas with relatively open vegetative cover and soft soils. Seeks shelter in underground burrows. About 4,055,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	146,162 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	61 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,330 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Red fox (<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>)	Most common in open woodlands, pasturelands, riparian areas, and agricultural lands. About 3,250,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,171 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	89,427 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	29 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,546 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.
Nongame (small) Mammals					
Big brown bat (<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>)	Most habitats from lowland deserts to timberline meadows. Roosts in hollow trees, rock crevices, mines, tunnels, and buildings. About 2,785,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	78,061 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	29 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,485 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Nongame (small)					
Mammals (Cont.)					
Botta's pocket gopher (<i>Thomomys bottae</i>)	Variety of habitats, including shortgrass plains, oak savanna, agricultural lands, and deserts. Burrows are more common in disturbed areas such as roadways and stream floodplains. About 2,533,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	96,745 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	28 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,444 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Brazilian free-tailed bat (<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>)	Cliffs, deserts, grasslands, old fields, savannas, shrublands, woodlands, and suburban/urban areas. Roosts in buildings, caves, and hollow trees. May roost in rock crevices, bridges, signs, or cliff swallow nests during migration. Large maternity colonies inhabit caves, buildings, culverts, and bridges. About 3,425,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,748 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	30 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,648 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Cactus mouse (<i>Peromyscus eremicus</i>)	Variety of areas, including desert scrub, semidesert chaparral, desert wash, semidesert grassland, and cliff and canyon habitats. About 3,205,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,024 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	91,847 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	59 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,089 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
California myotis (<i>Myotis californicus</i>)	Desertscrub, semidesert shrublands, lowland riparian, swamps, riparian suburban areas, plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, woodlands, and forests. Roosts in caves, mine tunnels, hollow trees, and loose rocks. About 2,717,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	96,834 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	30 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,648 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Canyon mouse (<i>Peromyscus crinitus</i>)	Associated with rocky substrates in a variety of habitats, including desert scrub, sagebrush shrublands, woodlands, cliffs and canyons, and volcanic rock and cinder lands. Source of free water not required. About 3,119,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	977 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.03% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	76,157 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,081 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid Mojave mid-elevation mixed desert scrub habitat.
Deer mouse (<i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i>)	Tundra; alpine and subalpine grasslands; plains grasslands; open, sparsely vegetated deserts; warm temperate swamps and riparian forests; and Sonoran desert scrub habitats. About 4,801,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	148,987 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	62 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,434 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Desert shrew (<i>Notiosorex crawfordi</i>)	Usually in arid areas with adequate cover such as semiarid grasslands, shortgrass plains, desert scrub, chaparral slopes, shortgrass plains, oak savannas and woodlands, and alluvial fans. About 3,059,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	112,817 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	62 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,378 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Desert woodrat (<i>Neotoma lepida</i>)	Sagebrush scrub; chaparral; deserts and rocky slopes with scattered cactus, yucca, pine-juniper, or other low vegetation; creosotebush desert; Joshua tree woodlands; scrub oak woodlands, pinyon-juniper woodlands; and riparian zones. Most abundant in rocky areas with Joshua trees. Dens built of debris on ground, among cacti or yucca, along cliffs, among rocks, or occasionally in trees. About 4,936,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	149,149 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	63 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,506 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Hoary bat (<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>)	Chaparral, shortgrass plains, scrub-grassland, deserts scrub, forests and woodlands. Usually roosts in trees, also in caves, rock crevices, and houses. About 2,398,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	5,134 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	54,198 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	28 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,470 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small) Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Little brown myotis (<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>)	Various habitats, including pinyon-juniper woodlands, montane shrublands, and riparian woodlands. It uses man-made structures for summer roosting, although caves and hollow trees are also utilized. Winter hibernation often occurs in caves or mines. Most foraging activity occurs in woodlands over or near water. About 3,360,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,329 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	133,976 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	50 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,308 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Little pocket mouse (<i>Perognathus longimembris</i>)	Mostly sandy and gravelly soils, but also stony soils and rarely rocky sites. About 3,871,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,318 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	143,526 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	60 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,259 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Long-legged myotis (<i>Myotis volans</i>)	Prefers pine forest, desert, and riparian habitats. Old buildings, rock crevices, and hollow trees are used for daytime roosting and winter hibernation. It forages in open areas, such as forest clearings. About 2,822,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	78,079 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	30 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,610 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Long-tailed pocket mouse (<i>Chaetodipus formosus</i>)	Prefers pine forest, desert, and riparian habitats. Old buildings, rock crevices, and hollow trees used for daytime roosting and winter hibernation. It forages in open areas, such as forest clearings. About 4,022,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,318 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	145,111 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	62 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,380 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Merriam's kangaroo rat (<i>Dipodomys merriami</i>)	Plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, desertscrub, shortgrass plains, oak and juniper savannahs, mesquite dunes, and creosote flats. About 4,023,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	148,166 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	61 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,331 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Northern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys leucogaster</i>)	Occurs in grasslands, sagebrush deserts, overgrazed pastures, weedy roadside ditches, sand dunes, and other habitats with sandy soil and sparse vegetation. About 4,262,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	2,059 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.05% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	125,503 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	59 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,166 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Silver-haired bat (<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>)	Urban areas, chaparral, alpine and subalpine grasslands, forests, scrub-grassland, oak savannah, and desertscrub habitats. Roosts under bark, and in hollow trees, caves and mines. Forages over clearings and open water. About 3,409,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,232 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	31 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,662 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Southern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys torridus</i>)	Low, arid, shrub and semiscrub vegetation of deserts. About 2,828,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,328 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	108,963 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	60 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,227 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects
Western harvest mouse (<i>Reithrodontomys megalotis</i>)	Various habitats, including scrub-grasslands, temperate swamps and riparian forests, salt marshes, shortgrass plains, oak savannah, dry fields, agricultural areas, deserts, and desertscrub. Grasses are the preferred cover. About 2,525,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	76,480 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	27 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,364 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Nongame (small) Mammals (Cont.)					
Western pipistrelle (<i>Parastrellus hesperus</i>)	Deserts and lowlands, desert mountain ranges, desert scrub flats, and rocky canyons. Roosts mostly in rock crevices, sometimes mines and caves, and rarely in buildings. Suitable roosts occur in rocky canyons and cliffs. Most abundant bat in desert regions. About 2,649,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	96,828 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	29 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,496 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
White-tailed antelope squirrel (<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>)	Low deserts, semidesert and montane shrublands, plateaus, and foothills in areas with sparse vegetation and hard gravelly surfaces. Spends its nights and other periods of inactivity in underground burrows. About 3,414,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,926 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	61 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,311 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Yuma myotis (<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>)	Riparian areas, grasslands, semidesert shrubland, mountain brush, woodlands, and deserts. It occurs where there is open water, regardless of the habitat. Roosts in caves, mines, cliffs, crevices, buildings, and swallow nests. About 2,715,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,242 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	95,709 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	30 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,625 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

Footnotes on next page.

TABLE 11.2.11.3-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 13,242 acres of direct effects within the SEZ was assumed.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 13,242 acres of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- ^e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within an 8-mi (13-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide access road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest existing highway. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide access road corridor to the existing highway, less the assumed area of direct effects.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 **Pronghorn**

2
3 Based on land cover analyses, up to 2,061 acres (8.3 km²) of potentially suitable
4 pronghorn habitat could be lost through solar energy and access road development within the
5 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. This represents about 0.1% of potentially suitable pronghorn
6 habitat within the SEZ region. About 83,469 acres (337.8 km²) of potentially suitable pronghorn
7 habitat occurs within the area of indirect effects for the SEZ and access road. This is about 4.9%
8 of potentially suitable pronghorn habitat within the SEZ region. Based on mapped range,
9 14,035 acres (56.8 km²) of year-round pronghorn habitat would be directly affected by solar
10 energy development within the SEZ (Figure 11.2.11.3-3), or about 1.5% of the year-round
11 habitat mapped within the SEZ region. About 93,360 (378 km²) of habitat occurs within the area
12 of indirect effects (Figure 11.2.11.3-3). Overall, impacts on pronghorn from solar energy
13 development in the SEZ would be small (based on land cover) to moderate (based on mapped
14 range).

15
16 **Other Mammals**

17
18 Direct impacts on all other representative mammal species would be small
19 (Table 11.2.11.3-1). Direct impacts (percent loss of potentially available habitat) for these
20 species would range from 0.03% for the canyon mouse to 0.5% for the gray fox, big brown bat,
21 Botta's pocket gopher, California myotis, long-legged myotis, western harvest mouse, western
22 pipistrelle, and Yuma myotis (Table 11.2.11.3-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitats for
23 these mammal species occur within the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 5.9% of
24 available habitat for the western pipistrelle).
25

26
27 **Summary**

28
29 Overall, impacts on mammal species, based on land cover analyses, would be small
30 (Table 11.2.11.3-1). Based on mapped ranges for big game, a moderate impact could occur to
31 pronghorn. In addition to habitat loss, other direct impacts on mammals could result from
32 collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., fences). Indirect impacts on mammals could
33 result from surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by
34 project activities, accidental spills, collection, and harassment. Indirect impacts are expected to
35 be negligible with implementation of programmatic design features.
36

37
38 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
39 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
40 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
41 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
42 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
43 particular importance for mammal species would be the restoration of original ground surface
44 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with desert scrub, playa, and wash
45 habitats.
46

1 **11.2.11.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
4 Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on mammals. Indirect impacts could be
5 reduced to negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those engineering
6 controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While SEZ-specific
7 design features important for reducing impacts on mammals are best established when
8 considering specific project details, design features that can be identified at this time are:
9

- 10 • The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free
11 movement of mammals, particularly big game species.
12
13 • Delamar Lake and the unnamed wash should be avoided.
14

15 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to other programmatic
16 design features, impacts on mammals could be reduced. Any residual impacts are anticipated to
17 be small given the relative abundance of potentially suitable habitats in the SEZ region.
18 However, potentially suitable habitats for a number of the mammal species occur throughout
19 much of the SEZ; therefore, species-specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would
20 be difficult or infeasible.
21

22
23 **11.2.11.4 Aquatic Biota**
24

25
26 **11.2.11.4.1 Affected Environment**
27

28 This section addresses aquatic habitats and biota known to occur in the proposed Delamar
29 Valley SEZ itself or within an area that could be affected, either directly or indirectly, by
30 activities associated with solar energy development within the SEZ. There are no surface water
31 bodies or perennial streams within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ or within the area of direct
32 effects associated with the assumed new road corridor (Figure 11.2.1.1-1). As described in
33 Section 11.2.9.1.1, 4 mi (6 km) of the intermittent Jumbo Wash and 8 mi (13 km) of an unnamed
34 wash cross through the SEZ. These washes are typically dry and flow only after precipitation, at
35 which time they carry water to Delamar Lake, a dry lake, 2,465 acres (10 km²) of which are also
36 located within the SEZ. Other ephemeral washes may also cross the SEZ, but they typically do
37 not support wetland or riparian habitats. As described in Section 11.2.9.1.1, Delamar Lake is
38 classified as a lacustrine wetland by the NWI. However, in the desert southwest, wetlands near
39 dry lakes rarely have water (USFS 1998). Consequently, aquatic habitat and communities are not
40 likely to be present in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, although opportunistic crustaceans and
41 aquatic insect larvae adapted to desert conditions may be present even under dry conditions.
42

43 There are no permanent surface water bodies or perennial streams located within the area
44 of indirect effects associated with the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. However, the boundary of
45 the area of indirect effects associated with the presumed new road corridor does extend to the
46 spring-fed perennial Pahrangat Creek, which flows into Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge.

1 Pahranaagat NWR contains stream and wetland habitat critical for aquatic biota, including several
2 protected endemic fish species, such as the White River springfish (*Crenichthys baileyi baileyi*)
3 and the Pahranaagat roundtail chub (*Gila robusta jordani*). There are no intermittent surface water
4 features in the area of indirect effects associated with the presumed road corridors, but there are
5 several within the area of indirect effects associated with the SEZ, including 141 acres (0.6 km²)
6 of Delamar Lake, 6 mi (7 km) of Jumbo Wash, and 9 mi (14 km) of an unnamed intermittent
7 stream. The intermittent/ephemeral nature of these features suggests aquatic habitat and biota are
8 unlikely. However, more detailed site survey data would be needed to characterize the aquatic
9 biota, if present.

10
11 Outside of the potential indirect effects area, but within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ, there
12 are several dry lakes, the area of which totals approximately 152,193 acres (616 km²). There are
13 319 mi (513 km) of intermittent stream and 223 mi (359 km) of perennial stream located within
14 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ. Ash Spring and the Pahranaagat NWR are also located within 50 mi
15 (80 km) of the SEZ. Within the SEZ and the area of potential indirect effects, intermittent
16 streams and dry lakes are the only surface-water features present, representing approximately
17 7% of the amount of intermittent stream and 2% of dry lake available within the overall analysis
18 area.

21 ***11.2.11.4.2 Impacts***

22
23 Section 5.10.3 discusses in detail the types of impacts that could occur to aquatic habitats
24 and biota due to the development of utility-scale solar energy facilities. Effects that are
25 particularly relevant to aquatic habitats and communities include water withdrawal and changes
26 in water, sediment, and contaminant inputs associated with runoff.

27
28 No permanent water bodies or streams are present within the area of direct or indirect
29 effects associated with the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The nearest perennial surface waters
30 are located more than 8 mi (13 km) from the SEZ and the intermittent streams in the SEZ do
31 not drain into any permanent surface waters. Therefore, no direct impacts on perennial aquatic
32 habitat are expected to result from solar development activities within the SEZ. Ground
33 disturbance related to the presumed new access road terminates at U.S. 93, less than 1 mi (2 km)
34 from Pahranaagat Creek. Therefore, indirect impacts on the creek may result from the deposition
35 of fugitive dust following ground disturbance. Intermittent surface water features are present
36 within the area of direct and indirect effects associated with the SEZ, and ground disturbance
37 could result in airborne and waterborne sediment deposition into these habitats. However,
38 intermittent streams and water bodies within the SEZ are typically dry and no aquatic habitat or
39 communities are expected to exist. Consequently, impacts on aquatic biota are expected to be
40 minimal, although more detailed site surveys for biota in ephemeral and intermittent surface
41 waters would be necessary to determine whether solar energy development activities would
42 result in direct or indirect impacts to aquatic biota, if present. The implementation of commonly
43 used engineering practices to control water runoff and sediment deposition into Pahranaagat
44 Creek, intermittent washes, and Delamar Lake would further minimize the potential for impacts
45 on aquatic habitat.

1 As identified in Section 5.10.3, water quality in aquatic habitats could be affected by the
2 introduction of contaminants such as fuels, lubricants, or pesticides/herbicides during site
3 characterization, construction, operation, or decommissioning for a solar energy facility. Within
4 the SEZ, there is the potential for contaminants to enter washes and Delamar Lake, especially if
5 heavy machinery is used in or near the channel. The potential for introducing contaminants into
6 permanent surface waters would be small, given the relatively large distance from any features to
7 solar development activities (minimum of approximately 8 mi [13 km]).
8

9 In arid environments, reductions in the quantity of water in aquatic habitats are of
10 particular concern. Water quantity in aquatic habitats, including surface water features outside of
11 the SEZ and area of indirect effects, could also be affected if significant amounts of surface
12 water or groundwater were utilized for power plant cooling water, for washing mirrors, or for
13 other needs. Of the technologies available, a PV system is the most practical given the amount of
14 groundwater present and the existing water allotments (Section 11.2.9.2). The associated impacts
15 would ultimately depend on the water source used (including groundwater from aquifers at
16 various depths). Additional details regarding the volume of water required and the types of
17 organisms present in potentially affected water bodies would be required in order to further
18 evaluate the potential for impacts from water withdrawals.
19
20

21 ***11.2.11.4.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

22

23 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
24 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects on aquatic biota and
25 aquatic habitats from development and operation of solar energy facilities. While some SEZ-
26 specific design features are best established when specific project details are being considered, a
27 design feature that can be identified at this time includes the following:
28

- 29 • Appropriate engineering controls should be implemented to minimize the
30 amount of contaminants and sediment entering washes and Delamar Lake and
31 Pahranaagat Creek.
32

33 If this SEZ-specific design feature is implemented in addition to programmatic design
34 features and if the utilization of water from groundwater or surface water sources is adequately
35 controlled to maintain sufficient water levels in aquatic habitats, the potential impacts on aquatic
36 biota and habitats from solar energy development at the Delamar Valley SEZ would be
37 negligible.
38

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11.2.12 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Rare Species)

This section addresses special status species that are known to occur, or for which suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Special status species include the following types of species³:

- Species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA;
- Species that are proposed for listing, under review, or are candidates for listing under the ESA;
- Species that are listed by the BLM as sensitive;
- Species that are listed by the state of Nevada⁴; and
- Species that have been ranked as S1 or S2 by the state of Nevada, or as species of concern by the state of Nevada or the USFWS; hereafter referred to as “rare” species.

Special status species known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the Delamar Valley SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined from natural heritage records available through NatureServe Explorer (NatureServe 2010), information provided by the NNHP (NDCNR 2004, 2005, 2009a,b; Miskow 2009), SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005, 2007), and ECOS (USFWS 2010c). Information reviewed consisted of county-level occurrences as determined from NatureServe and the NNHP, element occurrences provided by the NNHP, and modeled land cover types and predicted suitable habitats for the species within the 50-mi (80-km) region as determined from SWReGAP. The 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region intersects Clark, Lincoln, and Nye Counties, Nevada, as well as Washington County, Utah. However, the affected area around the SEZ occurs entirely within Lincoln County, Nevada. See Appendix M for additional information on the approach used to identify species that could be affected by development within the SEZ.

11.2.12.1 Affected Environment

The affected area considered in our assessment included the areas of direct and indirect effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur). For the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, the area of direct effects included the SEZ and the portions of the road corridor where ground-disturbing activities are assumed to occur. Due to the proximity of

³ See Section 4.6.4 for definitions of these species categories. Note that some of the categories of species included here do not fit BLM’s definition of special status species as defined in BLM Manual 6840 (BLM 2008). These species are included here to ensure broad consideration of species that may be most vulnerable to impacts.

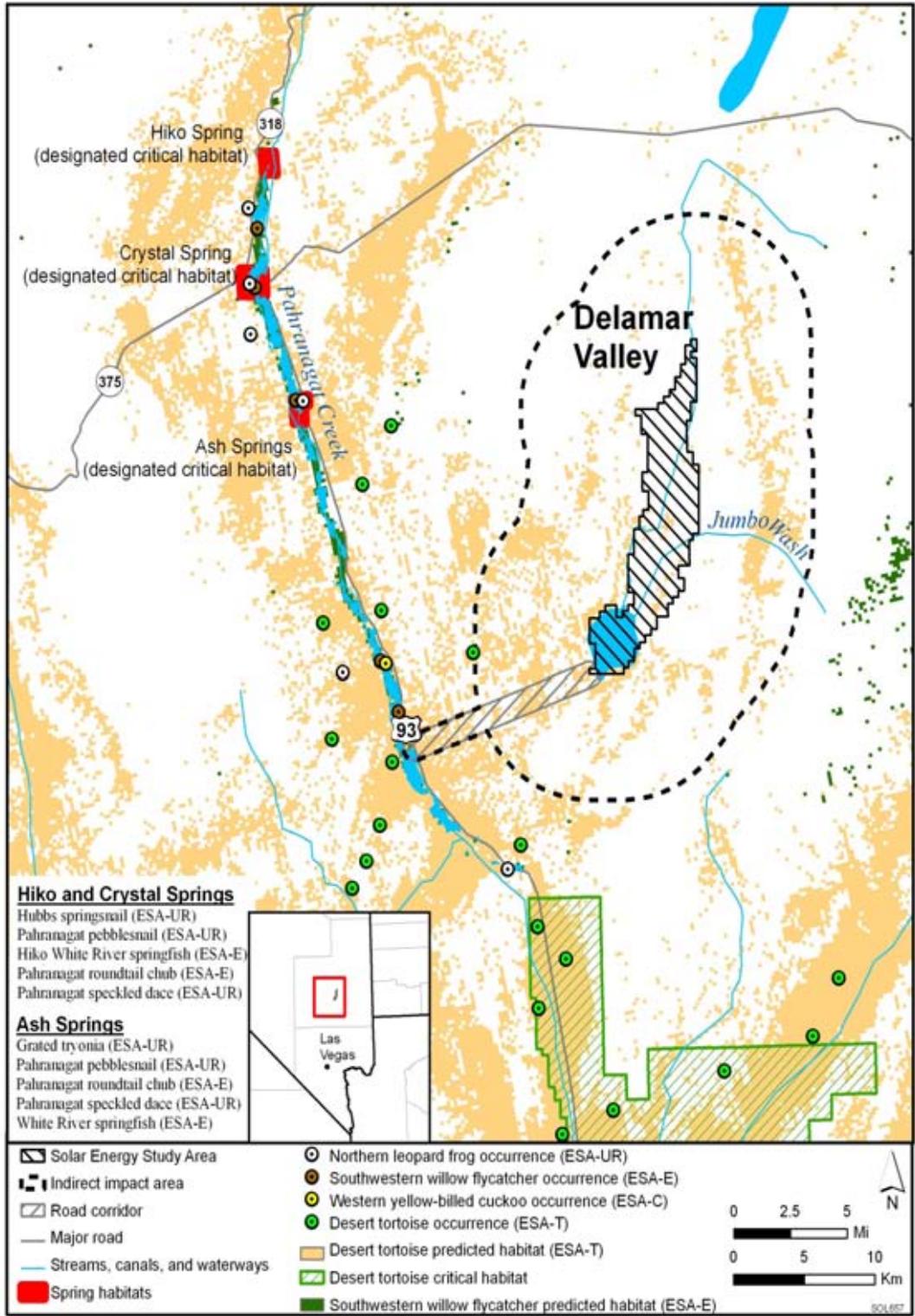
⁴ State-listed species for the state of Nevada are those protected under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants).

1 existing infrastructure, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside of
2 the SEZ are not assessed, assuming that the existing transmission infrastructure might be used to
3 connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-specific analysis
4 would be conducted for new transmission construction or line upgrades (see Section 11.2.1.2 for
5 development assumptions for this SEZ). The area of indirect effects was defined as the area
6 within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and portions of the access road corridor where ground-
7 disturbing activities would not occur but that could be indirectly affected by activities in the area
8 of direct effects. Indirect effects considered in the assessment included effects from surface
9 runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and accidental spills from the SEZ and road construction area, but
10 do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential magnitude of indirect effects would
11 decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ. This area of indirect effects was identified
12 on the basis of professional judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area
13 that would potentially be subject to indirect effects. The affected area includes both the direct
14 and indirect effects areas.

15
16 The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is inter-mountain basin
17 semidesert shrubland (Section 11.2.10). Potentially unique habitats in the affected area in which
18 special status species may reside include rocky cliffs and outcrops, riparian woodlands, desert
19 washes, and playa habitats. Aquatic habitats that occur in the affected area include Jumbo Wash
20 and other small ephemeral streams that drain into Delamar Lake (approximately 2,500 acres
21 [10 km²] in size), which exists in the southern portion of the SEZ. Although the assumed access
22 road corridor for the SEZ does not cross any surface water features, approximately 0.5 mi
23 (0.8 km) of Pahrnagat Creek intersects the area of potential indirect effects for the access road
24 corridor (Figure 11.2.12.1-1).

25
26 In scoping comments regarding the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (Stout 2009), the
27 USFWS expressed concern that groundwater withdrawals associated with solar energy
28 development on the SEZ may reduce the White River Valley regional groundwater supply that
29 supports spring-fed aquatic habitats in the SEZ region, including habitats in the White River,
30 Pahrnagat, and Moapa Valleys. The spatial extent of this groundwater system extends from
31 Ely in central Nevada to the Moapa Valley in southern Nevada. However, as discussed in
32 Section 11.2.9.2, groundwater in the Delamar Valley is not a major contributor to the far
33 northern or far southern extents of the White River Valley regional groundwater system. Instead,
34 groundwater interaction from the Delamar Valley with the White River Regional groundwater
35 system is highly localized, occurring primarily within the Pahrnagat Valley. For these reasons,
36 the analysis in this section does not consider impacts on some of the species mentioned in the
37 USFWS scoping letter. Instead, only those species dependent on groundwater-supported habitats
38 within the Pahrnagat Valley are included in our assessment here. This includes species that
39 occur in aquatic and riparian habitat associated with the following springs: Ash Springs, Crystal
40 Spring, and Hiko Spring (Figure 11.2.12.1-1). Although these areas are outside of the affected
41 area as defined above, they are included in our evaluation because of the possible effect of
42 groundwater withdrawals.

43
44 All special status species that are known to occur within the Delamar Valley SEZ region
45 (i.e., within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ) are listed, with their status, nearest recorded
46 occurrence, and habitats in Appendix J. Of these species, there are 49 that could be affected by



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2

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FIGURE 11.2.12.1-1 Known or Potential Occurrences of Species Listed as Endangered or Threatened under the ESA, Candidates for ESA Listing, or under Review for Listing in the Affected Area of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (Sources: Miskow 2009; USFWS 2010c; USGS 2007).

1 solar energy development on the SEZ (including those dependent on groundwater discharge in
2 the region), on the basis of recorded occurrences or the presence of potentially suitable habitat in
3 the area. These species, their status, and their habitats are presented in Table 11.2.12.1-1. For
4 many of the species listed in the table, their predicted potential occurrence in the affected area is
5 based only on a general correspondence between mapped SWReGAP land cover types and
6 descriptions of species habitat preferences. This overall approach to identifying species in the
7 affected area probably overestimates the number of species that actually occur in the affected
8 area. For many of the species identified as having potentially suitable habitat in the affected area,
9 the nearest known occurrence is more than 20 mi (32 m) away from the SEZ.

10
11 Based on NNHP records and information provided by the USFWS, only the desert
12 tortoise is known to occur within the affected area of the Delamar Valley SEZ. In addition to this
13 species, there are 16 groundwater-dependent species or species with habitats that may be
14 affected by groundwater discharge in the White River Valley regional groundwater system from
15 withdrawals in the Delamar Valley. These species include the Ash Springs riffle beetle, grated
16 tryonia, Hubbs springsnail, nearctic riffle beetle, Pahrnagat naucorid, Pahrnagat pebblesnail,
17 Hiko White River springfish, Pahrnagat roundtail chub, Pahrnagat speckled dace, White River
18 desert sucker, White River springfish, northern leopard frog, southwestern toad, phainopepla,
19 southwestern willow flycatcher, and western yellow-billed cuckoo. Ten additional groundwater-
20 dependent species were identified in the FWS scoping letter (Stout 2009): Moapa pebblesnail,
21 Moapa Valley springsnail, Moapa Warm Spring riffle beetle, Big Spring spinedace, Moapa dace,
22 Moapa speckled dace, Moapa White River springfish, Pahrump poolfish, Railroad Valley
23 springfish, and White River spinedace. However, these species occur outside the Pahrnagat
24 Valley, and, as discussed above, are considered to be unaffected by groundwater withdrawals on
25 the Delamar Valley SEZ.

26 27 28 ***11.2.12.1.1 Species Listed under the ESA That Could Occur in the Affected Area***

29
30 In scoping comments regarding the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, the USFWS
31 expressed concern for impacts of project development within the SEZ on the Mojave population
32 of the desert tortoise—a species listed as threatened under the ESA in the SEZ region
33 (Stout 2009). The USFWS also expressed concern that groundwater withdrawals to serve
34 development on the SEZ from the White River Valley regional groundwater system may also
35 reduce the groundwater supply that supports aquatic and riparian habitats for various ESA-listed
36 species in the SEZ region. The following ESA-listed species that may occur outside the area of
37 indirect effects but that could be impacted from groundwater withdrawals within the SEZ are
38 considered: Hiko White River springfish (endangered), Pahrnagat roundtail chub (endangered),
39 White River springfish (endangered), and southwestern willow flycatcher (endangered). These
40 species are discussed below and information on their habitats is presented in Table 11.2.12.1-1;
41 additional basic information on life history, habitat needs, and threats to populations of these
42 species is provided in Appendix J.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Special Status Species That Could be Affected by Solar Energy Development on the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants							
Ackerman milkvetch	<i>Astragalus ackermanii</i>	NV-S2	Endemic to the Sheep and Pintwater ranges of southern Nevada in crevices and ledges of carbonate cliffs in the mixed shrub, sagebrush, and juniper woodland habitat communities at elevations between 4,000 and 6,200 ft. ⁱ Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Desert National Wildlife Range, approximately 21 mi ^j southwest of the SEZ. About 2,689,000 acres ^k of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	976 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	78 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	48,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoidance or minimization of disturbance to occupied habitats in the areas of direct effects; translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. Note that these same potential mitigations apply to all special status plants.
Antelope Canyon goldenbush	<i>Ericameria cervina</i>	NV-S1	Rock crevices and talus in shadscale and Douglas-fir-bristlecone pine communities often on calcareous substrates; less commonly on ash flow tuff. Elevation ranges between 3,100 and 8,800 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands, approximately 33 mi southeast of the SEZ. About 850,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	3,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Charleston ground-daisy	<i>Townsendia jonesii</i> var. <i>tumulosa</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Endemic to Nevada, where the species is known from 27 occurrences encompassing an area of less than 10 acres. Occurs in open, sparsely vegetated calcareous areas, on shallow gravelly carbonate soils of slopes and exposed knolls in forest clearings. Most commonly in montane conifer habitat, but also in pinyon-juniper, and lower subalpine conifer communities. Elevation ranges between 5,200 and 11,000 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Desert National Wildlife Range, approximately 40 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 1,950,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	45,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing impacts on rocky cliffs and outcrops would reduce impacts. See Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Eastwood milkweed	<i>Asclepias eastwoodiana</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada from public and private lands in Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, and Nye Counties in open areas on a wide variety of basic (pH usually >8) soils, including calcareous clay knolls, sand, carbonate or basaltic gravels, or shale outcrops, generally barren and lacking competition. Small washes or other moisture-accumulating microsites at elevations between 4,700 and 7,100 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands, approximately 31 mi north of the SEZ. About 663,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	2,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	25 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	48,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Jaeger beardtongue	<i>Penstemon thompsoniae</i> ssp. <i>jaegeri</i>	NV-S2	Endemic to southern Nevada, where it is known from 24 occurrences on limestone soils of knolls and slopes, drainages, and under conifers within pinyon-juniper through the subalpine conifer zones. Elevation ranges between 5,600 and 11,000 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Desert National Wildlife Range, approximately 41 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 724,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	2,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Long-calyx milkvetch	<i>Astragalus oophorus</i> var. <i>lonchocalyx</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Regionally endemic to the Great Basin in western Utah and eastern Nevada in pinyon-juniper woodlands, sagebrush, and mixed shrub communities at elevations between 5,800 and 7,500 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands, approximately 11 mi east of the SEZ. About 3,145,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	11,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	61 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	101,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Meadow Valley sandwort	<i>Eremogone stenomeres</i>	NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada, where it is restricted to Clark and Lincoln Counties on limestone cliffs at elevations between 2,950 and 3,950 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands, approximately 31 mi south of the SEZ. About 129,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	161 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Needle Mountains milkvetch	<i>Astragalus eurylobus</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Gravel washes, playa margins, and arid grasslands on sandy soils at elevations between 4,250 and 6,250 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands, approximately 26 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 68,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (4.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	2 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	1,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance of playa habitat could reduce impacts. See the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Nevada willowherb	<i>Epilobium nevadense</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Pinyon-juniper woodlands and oak/mountain mahogany communities, on talus slopes and rocky limestone outcrops. Elevation ranges between 5,000 and 8,800 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands, approximately 20 mi east of the SEZ. About 879,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	3,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Pioche blazingstar	<i>Mentzelia argillicola</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Endemic to Nevada on dry, soft, silty clay soils on knolls and slopes with sparse vegetation consisting mainly of sagebrush. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Patterson Wash, approximately 40 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 1,980,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	29 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	105,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Rock phacelia	<i>Phacelia petrosa</i>	BLM-S; NV-S2	Dry limestone and volcanic talus slopes of foothills, washes, and gravelly canyon bottoms on substrates derived from calcarous material in mixed desert scrub, creosotebush, and blackbrush communities at elevations between 2,500 and 5,800 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Desert National Wildlife Range, approximately 40 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 2,100,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	976 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	80 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	46,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Rock purpusia	<i>Ivesia arizonica</i> var. <i>saxosa</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Endemic to southern Nevada in crevices of cliffs and boulders on volcanic substrates in pinyon-juniper communities at elevations between 4,900 and 6,900 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands, approximately 11 mi north of the SEZ. About 850,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	1 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	4,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing impacts on rocky cliffs and outcrops would reduce impacts. See Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Sheep Mountain milkvetch	<i>Astragalus amphioxys</i> var. <i>musimonum</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Restricted to the foothills of the Sheep Mountains in southern Nevada (historically occurred in Arizona) on carbonate alluvial gravels, particularly along drainages, roadsides, and in other microsites with enhanced runoff, at elevations between 4,400 and 6,000 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Desert National Wildlife Range, approximately 40 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 1,977,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	976 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	78 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	46,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
St. George blue-eyed grass	<i>Sisyrinchium radicum</i>	NV-S1	Primarily occurs in the Las Vegas–St. George region in moist, sometimes alkaline meadows, stream banks, and spring borders at elevations between 2,000 and 4,300 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is along the Pahrnagat Creek, approximately 15 mi west of the SEZ. About 24,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	138 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Tiehm blazingstar	<i>Mentzelia tiehmii</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Endemic to Nevada on hilltops of white soil, sparsely vegetated white calcareous knolls, and bluffs with scattered perennials. Nearest recorded occurrence is along the White River, approximately 38 mi north of the SEZ. About 1,520,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	27 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	92,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Veyo milkvetch	<i>Astragalus ensiformis</i> var. <i>gracilior</i>	NV-S1	Restricted to Lincoln County, Nevada, and Washington County, Utah, on clay soil of open washes, valley floors, and hillsides under sagebrush within pinyon-juniper communities. Elevation ranges between 4,200 and 5,000 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands, approximately 43 mi east of the SEZ. About 2,790,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	2,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	80 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	113,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
White bearpoppy	<i>Arctomecon merriamii</i>	BLM-S	Endemic to the Death Valley region of California and Nevada in barren gravelly areas, rocky slopes, and limestone outcrops at elevations between 2,000 and 5,900 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands, approximately 17 mi south of the SEZ. About 152,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	1 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	1,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing impacts on rocky cliffs and outcrops would reduce impacts. See Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
White River cat's-eye	<i>Cryptantha welshii</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Endemic to southern Nevada on dry, open, sparsely vegetated outcrops. Known to occur on carbonate substrates at elevations between 4,500 and 6,600 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is along the Meadow Valley Wash, approximately 25 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 152,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	1 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	1,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing impacts on rocky cliffs and outcrops would reduce impacts. See Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Invertebrates							
Ash Springs riffle beetle	<i>Stenelmis lariversi</i>	NV-S1	Endemic to Ash Springs in Lincoln County, Nevada approximately 15 mi west of the SEZ. About 198 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but approximately 198 acres of potentially suitable habitat in Ash Springs could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. The impact of water withdrawal on the White River Valley regional ground-water system that supports aquatic and mesic habitat in the SEZ region would depend on the volume of water withdrawn to support construction and operations. Limiting withdrawals from this regional ground-water system could

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
<i>Invertebrates</i>							
<i>(Cont.)</i>							
Ash Springs riffle beetle							reduce impacts on this species to negligible levels. Note that these potential impact magnitudes and potential mitigation measures apply to all groundwater-dependent special status species that may occur in the SEZ region.
<i>(Cont.)</i>							
Grated tryonia	<i>Tryonia clathrata</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-S2	Endemic to the Muddy River spring system in southeastern Nevada. Occurs in on or in algae and detritus substrates of slow-moving freshwater spring systems. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Ash Springs, approximately 15 mi west of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but approximately 198 acres of potentially suitable habitat in Ash Springs could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>							
Hubbs springsnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis hubbsi</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to Nevada, where it is restricted to Hiko and Crystal Spring. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Crystal Spring, approximately 18 mi west of the SEZ. About 361 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but approximately 361 acres of potentially suitable habitat in Hiko and Crystal Springs could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Mojave poppy bee	<i>Perdita meconis</i>	BLM-S; NV-S2	Known only from Clark County, Nevada, where the species is dependent on poppy plants (<i>Arctomecon</i> spp.) in roadsides, washes, and barren desert areas on gypsum soils. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands, approximately 35 mi south of the SEZ. About 130,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	163 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>							
Nearctic riffle beetle	<i>Stenelmis occidentalis</i>	NV-S1	High-gradient creeks as well as low-gradient medium rivers, springs, and brooks with woody debris, rocks, and exposed, submerged, or overhanging vegetation. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Ash Springs, approximately 15 mi west of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Pahranagat naucorid	<i>Pelocoris shoshone shoshone</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Known only to occur in the Muddy and White River Basins in southern Nevada. Inhabits quiet waters of warm, spring-fed habitats. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Ash Springs, approximately 15 mi west of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Invertebrates (Cont.)							
Pahrnagat pebblesnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis merriami</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to spring-fed systems in southern Nevada on rocks and emergent vegetation near the outflow of freshwater springs. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Ash Springs, approximately 15 mi west of the SEZ. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Red-tailed blazing star bee	<i>Megandrena mentzeliae</i>	NV-S2	Endemic to southern Nevada, where it is known only from Clark County and associated with the host plant <i>Mentzelia tricuspis</i> in open, dry, barren areas with gypsum to gravelly soils. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands, approximately 34 mi south of the SEZ. About 1,910,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	11,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	29 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	104,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of occupied habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Fish							
Hiko White River springfish	<i>Crenichthys baileyi grandis</i>	ESA-E; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to Lincoln and Mineral Counties, Nevada, where it is restricted to the remaining waters of the White River and the stream and outflow habitats of Hiko and Crystal Springs. The species has also been introduced into Blue Link Spring. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Crystal Spring, approximately 18 mi west of the SEZ. About 361 acres of critical habitat associated with the Hiko and Crystal Springs occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Pahranagat roundtail chub	<i>Gila robusta jordani</i>	ESA-E; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to Nevada, where it is restricted to the White River system. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Ash Springs, approximately 15 mi west of the SEZ. About 37 mi of potentially suitable habitat in the Pahranagat Valley occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Fish (Cont.)							
Pahranagat speckled dace	<i>Rhinichthys osculus velifer</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to Nevada, where it is restricted to the White River Valley system. Inhabits rivers, streams, tributaries, springs, brooks, marshes, lakes, and reservoirs. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Pahranagat Creek, approximately 15 mi west of the SEZ. About 37 mi of potentially suitable habitat in the Pahranagat Valley occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
White River desert sucker	<i>Catostomus clarkii intermedius</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to Nevada, where it is restricted to remnant streams of the White River system, especially small to medium rivers. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Pahranagat Creek, approximately 15 mi west of the SEZ. About 37 mi of potentially suitable habitat in the Pahranagat Valley occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Fish (Cont.)							
White River springfish	<i>Crenichthys baileyi baileyi</i>	ESA-E; NV-P; NV-S1	Restricted to the Ash Spring system approximately 15 mi west of the SEZ. About 198 acres of critical habitat in the White River system occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Amphibians							
Northern leopard frog	<i>Rana pipiens</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-S2	Low-gradient creeks, moderate-gradient rivers, pools, springs, canals, flood plains, reservoirs, shallow lakes, and wet meadows, especially with rooted aquatic vegetation. Also found in fields. Nearest recorded occurrence is from riparian areas along the Pahrnagat Creek, approximately 8 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 2,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Amphibians							
(Cont.)							
Southwestern toad	<i>Bufo microscaphus</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Woodlands and low-elevation riparian habitats in association with permanent or semipermanent water bodies, also in and along streams, ditches, flooded fields, irrigated croplands, and permanent reservoirs. Nearest recorded occurrence is from riparian areas along the Meadow Valley Wash, approximately 15 mi east of the SEZ. About 22,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Reptiles							
Desert tortoise ¹	<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	ESA-T; NV-P; NV-S2	Mojave and Sonoran Deserts in desert creosotebush communities on firm soils for digging burrows, and often along riverbanks, washes, canyon bottoms, creosote flats, and desert oases. Nearest recorded occurrence is 5 mi west of the SEZ. About 1,366,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	910 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	58 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	29,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of occupied habitats on the SEZ, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects, or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Reptiles (Cont.)							
Desert tortoise (Cont.)							reduce impacts. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.
Birds							
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Grasslands, sagebrush, and saltbrush habitats, as well as the periphery of pinyon-juniper woodlands. Usually nests in tall trees or on rock outcrops along cliff faces. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 1,277,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region. Although much of the habitat in the SEZ region is year-round foraging and nesting habitat, only winter foraging habitat occurs in the affected area.	910 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	7 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	37,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Birds (Cont.) Phainopepla	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Summer breeding resident in SEZ region in desert scrub, mesquite, and pinyon-juniper woodland communities, also desert riparian areas and orchards. Nests in trees or shrubs from 3 to 45 ft above the ground. Nearest recorded occurrence is from riparian areas along Pahrnagat Creek, approximately 19 mi northwest of the SEZ. About 1,077,000 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	46 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	15,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.5% of available potentially suitable habitat). Potentially suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Potentially suitable nesting habitat in riparian habitats in the White River and Pahrnagat Valleys may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all species that may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. In addition, avoiding or minimizing disturbance of potentially suitable riparian habitat in the area of direct effects may reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Birds (Cont.)							
Prairie falcon	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	BLM-S	Year-round resident in the SEZ region, primarily in open habitats in mountainous areas, steppe, grasslands, or cultivated areas. Typically nests in well-sheltered ledges of rocky cliffs and outcrops. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 2,534,000 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	11,300 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	87,700 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact on foraging and nesting habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys, avoiding or minimizing disturbance of all occupied nesting habitat, or compensatory mitigation may reduce impacts.
Southwestern willow flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	ESA-E; NV-P; NV-S1	Summer breeding resident in SEZ region in riparian shrublands and woodlands. Nests in thickets, scrubby and brushy areas, open second growth, swamps, and open woodlands. Nearest recorded occurrence is from riparian areas along Pahrnagat Creek, approximately 8 mi west of the SEZ. About 40,000 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	200 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat). Potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Potentially suitable nesting habitat in riparian habitats in the White River and Pahrnagat Valleys may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all species that may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. In addition, avoiding

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Birds (Cont.)							
Southwestern willow flycatcher (Cont.)							or minimizing disturbance of potentially suitable riparian habitat in the area of direct effects may reduce impacts.
Swainson's hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; CA-S2; NV-S2	Summer breeding resident in SEZ region in savanna, open pine-oak woodlands, grasslands, and cultivated lands. Nests typically in solitary trees, bushes, or small groves. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 2,165,000 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	1,950 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	75 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	91,600 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat (4.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Birds (Cont.)							
Western burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia hypugaea</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Summer breeding resident in SEZ region in open grasslands and prairies, as well as disturbed sites such as golf courses, cemeteries, and airports. Nests in burrows constructed by mammals (prairie dog, badger, etc.). Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 3,910,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	15,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	108 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	150,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact on foraging and nesting habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of occupied burrows in the area of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.
Western yellow-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>	ESA-C; NV-P; NV-S1	Summer breeding resident in SEZ region. Riparian obligate, usually in large tracts of cottonwood/willow habitats with dense sub-canopies. Nearest recorded occurrence is from riparian areas along Pahrnagat Creek, approximately 8 mi west of the SEZ. About 50 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ and within the road corridor, but suitable nesting habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Potentially suitable nesting habitat in riparian habitats in the White River and Pahrnagat Valleys may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all species that may be affected by groundwater withdrawal.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals							
Desert Valley kangaroo mouse	<i>Microdipodops megacephalus albiventer</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to central Nevada in desert areas at playa margins and in dune habitats. Nearest recorded occurrence is 20 mi north of the SEZ. About 617,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	10,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	2 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	29,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Avoidance of all playa habitats within the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of occupied habitats in the areas of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.
Fringed myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in SEZ region in lowland riparian, desert shrub, pinyon-juniper, and sagebrush habitats. Roosts in buildings and caves. Summer or year-round resident throughout the six-state solar energy region. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 4,534,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,200 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	106 acres of potentially suitable foraging or roosting habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	142,000 acres of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact primarily on foraging habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of cliffs and rock outcrops in the access road corridor could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Nelson's bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis nelsoni</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Open, steep rocky terrain in mountainous habitats of the eastern Mojave and Sonoran Deserts in California. Rarely uses desert lowlands, except as corridors for travel between mountain ranges. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 1,400,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	18 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	32,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of habitats within the area of direct effects that serve as movement corridors could further reduce impacts.
Pahranagat Valley montane vole	<i>Microtus montanus fucosus</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to Lincoln County, Nevada, where it is restricted to spring-fed riparian habitats in the Pahranagat Valley. Within that area, isolated populations utilize mesic montane and desert riparian patches. Nearest recorded occurrence is from riparian areas along Pahranagat Creek, approximately 9 mi west of the SEZ. About 12,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	780 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.3% of available potentially suitable habitat). Potentially suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Potentially suitable riparian habitats in the White River and Pahranagat Valleys may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See Ash Springs riffle beetle for potential mitigation measures applicable to all species that may be affected by groundwater withdrawal.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Silver-haired bat	<i>Lasiorycteris noctivagans</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in SEZ region in high-elevation (1,600 to 8,500 ft) forested areas comprised of aspen, cottonwood, white fir, pinyon-juniper, subalpine fir, willow, and spruce communities. Roosts in forests in tree foliage, cavities, or under loose bark. Nearest recorded occurrence is 42 mi south of the SEZ. About 3,400,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	14,500 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	101,000 acres of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Spotted bat	<i>Euderma maculatum</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in the SEZ region forests and shrubland habitats. Uses caves and rock crevices for roosting and winter hibernation. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the vicinity of Panaca, Nevada, approximately 35 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 3,750,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,150 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	87 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	94,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact primarily on foraging habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of cliffs and rock outcrops in the access road corridor could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S2	Year-round resident in the SEZ region in forests and shrubland habitats below 9,000 ft elevation. Uses caves, mines, and buildings for day roosting and winter hibernation. Nearest recorded occurrence is 42 mi south of the SEZ. About 2,870,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	14,500 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	48 acres of potentially suitable foraging or roosting habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	77,500 acres of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat (2.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact primarily on foraging habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of cliffs and rock outcrops in the access road corridor could reduce impacts.
Western small-footed bat	<i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in a variety of woodlands and riparian habitats at elevations below 9,000 ft. Roosts in caves, buildings, mines, and crevices of cliff faces. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 4,977,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	16,300 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	112 acres of potentially suitable foraging or roosting habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	155,000 acres of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact primarily on foraging habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of cliffs and rock outcrops in the access road corridor could reduce impacts on roosting and habitat.

^a BLM-S = listed as a sensitive species by the BLM; ESA-E = listed as endangered under the ESA; ESA-T = listed as threatened under the ESA; ESA-UR = under review for listing under the ESA; FWS-SC = USFWS species of concern; NV-P = protected in the state of Nevada under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants); NV-S1 = ranked as S1 in the state of Nevada; NV-S2 = ranked as S2 in the state of Nevada.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.2.12.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^b For plant species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP land cover types. For terrestrial vertebrate species, potentially suitable habitat was determined using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^c Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. No new transmission lines are assumed to be needed due to the proximity of transmission infrastructures to the SEZ.
- ^d Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within an 8-mi (13-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide road corridor from the SEZ to the nearest state highway. Direct impacts within this area were determined from the proportion of potentially suitable habitat within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide road corridor.
- ^f Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and the portions of the road and transmission corridors where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from project developments. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ. Indirect effects on groundwater-dependent species were considered outside these defined areas.
- ^g Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^h Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ⁱ To convert ft to m, multiply by 0.3048.
- ^j To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.
- ^k To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.
- ^l Species in bold text have been recorded or have designated critical habitat within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary.

1 **Desert Tortoise**

2
3 The Mojave population of the desert tortoise is listed as threatened under the ESA and is
4 known to occur in the SEZ region in desert shrubland habitats. The nearest recorded occurrences
5 of this species are 5 mi (8 km) west of the SEZ; designated critical habitat occurs outside the
6 affected area approximately 9 mi (14 km) south of the SEZ (Figure 11.2.12.1-1).

7
8 In the scoping letter for the Delamar Valley SEZ (Stout 2009), the USFWS identified
9 the potential for the desert tortoise to occur on the SEZ despite the lack of monitoring data in
10 areas adjacent to the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately
11 30,000 acres (121 km²) of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the affected area;
12 910 acres (3.7 km²) occurs within the SEZ, 58 acres (0.2 km²) occurs within the road corridor,
13 and 29,000 acres (117 km²) occurs in the area of indirect effects. The USGS desert tortoise
14 model (Nussear et al. 2009) identifies the affected area as having overall low habitat suitability
15 for desert tortoise (average suitability score: 0.1). According to the USGS model, the nearest
16 high-quality habitat (greater than or equal to 0.8 out of 1.0) is along Pahrangat Creek,
17 approximately 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability
18 model, approximately 1,366,000 acres (5,500 km²) of potentially suitable habitat for this species
19 occurs in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

20
21
22 **Southwestern Willow Flycatcher**

23
24 The southwestern willow flycatcher is a small neotropical migrant bird that inhabits
25 riparian shrublands, woodlands, and thickets in the southwestern United States. The nearest
26 recorded occurrence of this species is from riparian areas along Pahrangat Creek in the Desert
27 National Wildlife Range, approximately 8 mi (13 km) west of the SEZ. Potentially suitable
28 breeding and foraging habitats for this species within the Pahrangat Valley are dependent
29 upon surface discharges from the White River Valley regional groundwater system. According
30 to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, suitable habitat for this species does not occur on
31 the SEZ. However, approximately 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat are
32 expected to occur within the direct impact area of the access road corridor near Pahrangat
33 Creek; approximately 200 acres (1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
34 indirect effects. Approximately 40,000 acres (162 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs
35 throughout the SEZ region (Figure 11.2.12.1-1).

36
37
38 **Groundwater-Dependent Species**

39
40 The USFWS (Stout 2009) identified the potential for impacts on nine ESA-listed species
41 that could result from groundwater withdrawals that would serve solar energy development on
42 the SEZ. As discussed previously, on the basis of the analysis presented in Section 11.2.9.2,
43 five of these ESA-listed species are considered outside of the area that could be affected by
44 groundwater withdrawals on the Delamar Valley SEZ. Only those species dependent on springs
45 and spring-fed habitats within the Pahrangat Valley are considered here. The southwestern

1 willow flycatcher, which could also be affected in the Pahranaagat Valley by groundwater
2 withdrawals on the SEZ, is discussed above.

3
4
5 ***Hiko White River Springfish.*** The Hiko White River springfish is a small fish that is
6 listed as endangered under the ESA and is restricted to the remnant waters of the White River
7 and outflow habitats of the Hiko and Crystal Springs in Lincoln County, Nevada. The nearest
8 known occurrence of this species is from the Hiko Springs area, approximately 18 mi (29 km)
9 west of the SEZ. Approximately 360 acres (1.5 km²) of critical habitat has been designated at
10 Hiko and Crystal Springs (Figure 11.2.12.1-1).

11
12
13 ***Pahranaagat Roundtail Chub.*** The Pahranaagat roundtail chub is a small fish that is listed
14 as endangered under the ESA and is restricted to the remnant waters of the White River and
15 Pahranaagat Creek in Lincoln County, Nevada. The nearest known occurrence of this species is
16 from the Ash Springs area, approximately 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ (Figure 11.2.12.1-1).
17 Critical habitat has not been designated for this species.

18
19
20 ***White River Springfish.*** The White River springfish is a small fish that is listed as
21 endangered under the ESA and is currently restricted to the Ash Springs system in southeastern
22 Nevada. The nearest recorded occurrences and designated critical habitat are from the Ash
23 Springs, approximately 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ (Figure 11.2.12.1-1).

24 25 26 ***11.2.12.1.2 Species That Are Candidates for Listing under the ESA***

27
28 In scoping comments regarding the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, the USFWS
29 identified one ESA candidate species that may be directly or indirectly affected by solar energy
30 development within the SEZ, the western yellow-billed cuckoo (Stout 2009). This species is a
31 neotropical migrant bird that inhabits large riparian woodlands in the western United States.
32 The nearest recorded occurrence of this species is from riparian areas along Pahranaagat Creek
33 in the Desert National Wildlife Range, approximately 8 mi (13 km) west of the SEZ
34 (Figure 11.2.12.1-1; Table 11.2.12.1-1). Additional basic information on life history, habitat
35 needs, and threats to populations of these species is provided in Appendix J.

36
37 In the scoping letter for the Delamar Valley SEZ (Stout 2009), the USFWS identified
38 the potential for impacts on this species from groundwater withdrawals to serve solar energy
39 development on the SEZ. Groundwater withdrawals from the White River Valley regional
40 groundwater system could affect surface discharge from this system in portions of the SEZ
41 region. Potentially suitable breeding and foraging habitats for this species within the Pahranaagat
42 Valley are dependent upon surface discharges from this groundwater system.

1 **11.2.12.1.3 Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA**
2

3 The USFWS (Stout 2009) identified three invertebrate species (mollusks) under review
4 for ESA listing that may be directly or indirectly affected by solar energy development within
5 the SEZ (Stout 2009). These species include the following: grated tryonia, Hubbs springsnail,
6 and Pahrana gat pebblesnail. These species do not occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary,
7 but they do occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge in the Pahrana gat Valley that
8 could be affected by groundwater withdrawals in the Delamar Valley SEZ. In addition to the
9 species identified by the USFWS, the northern leopard frog is another groundwater-dependent
10 species under ESA review that may occur within the Pahrana gat Valley (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
11 Appendix J provides basic information on life history, habitat needs, and threats to populations
12 of these species. General information on each species is provided below.
13

14
15 **Grated Tryonia**
16

17 The grated tryonia is a freshwater mollusk known from the Muddy River system in
18 southern Nevada. The nearest known occurrence of this species is from Ash Springs,
19 approximately 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ (Figure 11.2.12.1-1).
20

21
22 **Hubbs Springsnail**
23

24 The Hubbs springsnail is a freshwater mollusk restricted to Hiko and Crystal Springs
25 in southern Nevada. The nearest known occurrence of this species is from Crystal Spring,
26 approximately 18 mi (29 km) west of the SEZ (Figure 11.2.12.1-1).
27

28
29 **Pahrana gat Pebblesnail**
30

31 The Pahrana gat pebblesnail is a freshwater mollusk restricted to spring-fed habitats in the
32 White River system of southern Nevada. The nearest known occurrence of this species is from
33 Ash Springs, approximately 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ (Figure 11.2.12.1-1).
34

35
36 **Northern Leopard Frog**
37

38 The northern leopard frog is an amphibian widely distributed throughout North America.
39 The western distinct population segment (DPS) of the northern leopard frog, which includes
40 populations in the state of Nevada, is currently under review for ESA listing. Within this DPS,
41 populations are known to occur in various wetland communities, including creeks, rivers, pools,
42 springs, canals, and flooded fields. The nearest known occurrence of this species is from the
43 Pahrana gat Creek, approximately 8 mi (13 km) southwest of the SEZ. According to the
44 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, suitable habitat for this species does not occur within 5 mi
45 (8 km) of the SEZ border or within the access road corridor. However, potentially suitable

1 habitat is predicted to occur along Pahranaagat Creek and other portions of the White River
2 system (Figure 11.2.12.1-1).

3 4 5 **11.2.12.1.4 BLM-Designated Sensitive Species** 6

7 There are 34 BLM-designated sensitive species that may occur in the affected area of
8 the Delamar Valley SEZ or that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ
9 (Table 11.2.12.1-1). These BLM-designated sensitive species include the following (1) plants:
10 Charleston ground-daisy, Eastwood milkweed, long-calyx milkvetch, Needle Mountains
11 milkvetch, Nevada willowherb, Pioche blazingstar, rock phacelia, rock purpusia, Sheep
12 Mountain milkvetch, Tiehm blazingstar, white bearpoppy, and White River cat's-eye;
13 (2) invertebrates: Mojave poppy bee and Pahranaagat naucorid; (3) fish: White River desert
14 sucker; (4) amphibian: southwestern toad; (5) birds: ferruginous hawk, phainopepla, prairie
15 falcon, Swainson's hawk, and western burrowing owl; and (6) mammals: Desert Valley
16 kangaroo mouse, fringed myotis, Nelson's bighorn sheep, Pahranaagat Valley montane vole,
17 silver-haired bat, spotted bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, and western small-footed myotis.
18 Several additional BLM-designated species that may occur in the affected area were discussed
19 in Section 11.2.12.1.4 as species under review for ESA listing. These include the grated tryonia,
20 Pahranaagat speckled dace, and northern leopard frog. None of these BLM-designated sensitive
21 species have been recorded within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Habitats in which BLM-
22 designated sensitive species are found, the amount of potentially suitable habitat in the affected
23 area, and known locations of the species relative to the SEZ are presented in Table 11.2.12.1-1.
24 These species as related to the SEZ are described in the remainder of this section. Additional life
25 history information for these species is provided in Appendix J.
26
27

28 **Charleston Ground-Daisy** 29

30 The Charleston ground-daisy is a perennial forb that is endemic to Nevada, where it
31 occurs on gravelly slopes and knolls in montane forested areas. The species is known to occur in
32 the Desert National Wildlife Range, approximately 40 mi (64 km) southwest of the SEZ. The
33 species is not known to occur in the affected area and potentially suitable habitat is not known to
34 occur on the SEZ. However, potentially suitable pinyon-juniper and rocky cliff habitat for this
35 species may occur in the access road corridor and in portions of the area of indirect effects
36 (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
37
38

39 **Eastwood Milkweed** 40

41 The Eastwood milkweed is a perennial forb that is endemic to Nevada from public and
42 private lands in Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, and Nye Counties. It occurs in open areas on a
43 wide variety of basic (pH usually >8) soils, including calcareous clay knolls, sand, carbonate or
44 basaltic gravels, washes, or shale outcrops at elevations between 4,700 and 7,100 ft (1,430 and
45 2,150 m). The species is known to occur about 31 mi (50 km) north of the SEZ. Although it is

1 not known to occur in the affected area, potentially suitable shrubland and desert wash habitat
2 may occur in the SEZ and access road corridor (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

3
4
5 **Long-Calyx Milkvetch**

6
7 The long-calyx milkvetch is a perennial forb that is regionally endemic to the Great Basin
8 in southwestern Utah and eastern Nevada. It occurs in pinyon-juniper woodlands, sagebrush, and
9 mixed shrub communities at elevations between 5,800 and 7,500 ft (1,760 and 2,290 m). The
10 species is known to occur about 11 mi (18 mi) east of the SEZ. Although it is not known to occur
11 in the affected area, potentially suitable shrubland and desert wash habitat may occur in the SEZ
12 and access road corridor (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

13
14
15 **Needle Mountains Milkvetch**

16
17 The Needle Mountains milkvetch is a perennial forb that occurs on gravel washes and
18 sandy soils in alkaline desert and arid grasslands at elevations between 4,250 and 6,250 ft
19 (1,295 and 1,900 m). The species is known to occur about 26 mi (42 km) northeast of the SEZ.
20 Although it is not known to occur in the affected area, potentially suitable grassland and desert
21 wash habitat may occur in the SEZ and access road corridor (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

22
23
24 **Nevada Willowherb**

25
26 The Nevada willowherb is a perennial forb endemic to eastern Nevada and western Utah.
27 It occurs in pinyon-juniper woodlands and oak/mountain mahogany communities, on talus slopes
28 and rocky limestone outcrops at elevations between 5,000 and 8,800 ft (1,525 and 2,680 m). The
29 species is known to occur about 20 mi (32 km) east of the SEZ. The species is not known to
30 occur in the affected area and potentially suitable habitat is not known to occur on the SEZ or
31 access road corridor. However, potentially suitable woodland and rocky cliff habitat for this
32 species may occur in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

33
34
35 **Pioche Blazingstar**

36
37 The Pioche blazingstar is a perennial forb endemic to Nevada. It occurs on dry, soft,
38 silty clay soils on knolls and slopes with sparse vegetation consisting mainly of sagebrush. The
39 nearest known occurrences are from Patterson Wash, approximately 40 mi (64 km) northeast of
40 the SEZ. Although it is not known to occur in the affected area, potentially suitable shrubland
41 and desert wash habitat may occur in the SEZ and access road corridor (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

1 **Rock Phacelia**

2
3 The rock phacelia is an annual forb known only from Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. It
4 occurs in limestone and volcanic talus slopes of foothills, washes, and gravelly canyon bottoms
5 on substrates derived from calcarous material in mixed desert scrub, creosotebush, and
6 blackbrush communities at elevations between 2,500 and 5,800 ft (750 and 1,750 m). The
7 species is known to occur in the Desert National Wildlife Range, approximately 40 mi (64 km)
8 southwest of the SEZ. The species is not known to occur in the affected area, but potentially
9 suitable desert wash habitat may occur in the SEZ and potentially suitable desert wash habitat
10 and rocky cliff and outcrop habitat may occur in the access road corridor (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
11

12
13 **Rock Purpusia**

14
15 The rock purpusia is a perennial forb endemic to southern Nevada. It occurs in crevices
16 of cliffs and boulders on volcanic substrates in pinyon-juniper communities at elevations
17 between 4,900 and 6,900 ft (1,490 and 2,100 m). The species is known to occur about 11 mi
18 (18 km) north of the SEZ. The species is not known to occur in the affected area and potentially
19 suitable habitat is not known to occur on the SEZ. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP
20 land cover types, approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of potentially suitable cliff and rock outcrop
21 habitat occurs in the access road corridor, and approximately 4,600 ac (19 km²) of potentially
22 suitable woodland and rocky cliff habitat for this species may occur in portions of the area of
23 indirect effects (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
24

25
26 **Sheep Mountain Milkvetch**

27
28 The Sheep Mountains milkvetch is a perennial forb that is restricted to the foothills of
29 the Sheep Mountains in southern Nevada. The species is known to occur in the Desert National
30 Wildlife Range, approximately 40 mi (64 km) southwest of the SEZ. Although it is not known to
31 occur in the affected area, potentially suitable desert wash habitat may occur in the SEZ and
32 access road corridor (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
33

34
35 **Tiehm Blazingstar**

36
37 The Tiehm blazingstar is a perennial forb endemic to Nevada. It occurs on hilltops,
38 sparsely vegetated white calcareous knolls, and bluffs with other scattered perennial plant
39 species. The nearest recorded occurrences are from the White River, approximately 38 mi
40 (61 km) north of the SEZ. Although it is not known to occur in the affected area, potentially
41 suitable shrubland habitat may occur in the SEZ and access road corridor (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
42
43
44

1 **White Bearpoppy**

2
3 The white bearpoppy is a perennial forb that is endemic to the desert regions of
4 southeastern California and southern Nevada. It occurs in barren gravelly areas, rocky slopes,
5 and limestone outcrops at elevations between 2,000 and 5,900 ft (600 and 1,800 m). The nearest
6 known occurrences are approximately 17 mi (27 km) south of the SEZ. The species is not known
7 to occur in the affected area and potentially suitable habitat is not known to occur on the SEZ.
8 On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²)
9 of potentially suitable cliff and rock outcrop habitat occurs in the access road corridor, and
10 approximately 1,700 ac (6.9 km²) of potentially suitable cliff and rocky slope habitat for this
11 species may occur in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

12
13
14 **White River Cat's-Eye**

15
16 The White River cat's-eye is a perennial herb endemic to southern Nevada. It occurs on
17 dry, open, sparsely vegetated outcrops on carbonate substrates at elevations between 4,500 and
18 6,600 ft (1,370 and 2,010 m). The nearest recorded occurrences are 25 mi (40 km) northeast of
19 the SEZ. The species is not known to occur in the affected area and potentially suitable habitat is
20 not known to occur on the SEZ. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types,
21 approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of potentially suitable cliff and rock outcrop habitat occurs in
22 the access road corridor, and approximately 1,700 ac (6.9 km²) of potentially suitable cliff and
23 rocky slope habitat for this species may occur in portions of the area of indirect effects
24 (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

25
26
27 **Mojave Poppy Bee**

28
29 The Mojave poppy bee is an insect known only from Clark County, Nevada, where it is
30 dependent on poppy plants (*Arctemocon* spp.). Such habitats include roadsides, washes, and
31 barren desert areas. The nearest recorded occurrence is approximately 35 mi (56 km) south of the
32 SEZ. The species is not known to occur in the affected area and potentially suitable habitat is not
33 known to occur on the SEZ or access road corridor. However, potentially suitable habitat for this
34 species may occur in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

35
36
37 **Ferruginous Hawk**

38
39 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, only potentially suitable winter
40 habitat for the ferruginous hawk is predicted to occur within the affected area of the Delamar
41 Valley SEZ, although potentially suitable year-round habitat is expected to occur outside of the
42 affected area within the SEZ region. The species inhabits open grasslands, sagebrush flats, desert
43 scrub, and the edges of pinyon-juniper woodlands. This species is known to occur in Lincoln
44 County, Nevada, and potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and in other
45 portions of the affected area (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

1 **Phainopepla**

2
3 The phainopepla occurs in the southwestern United States and Mexico, where it breeds
4 in suitable habitats throughout much of the Delamar Valley SEZ region. The species occurs in
5 desert scrub, mesquite, and pinyon-juniper woodland communities, as well as desert riparian
6 areas and orchards. Nests are typically constructed in trees and shrubs from 3 to 45 ft (1 to 15 m)
7 above the ground. This species is known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. According to
8 SWReGAP, potentially suitable foraging or nesting habitat does not occur on the SEZ; however,
9 potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat may occur in the access road corridor and in
10 other portions of the affected area (Table 11.2.12.1-1). Potentially suitable nesting habitat in
11 riparian areas in the Pahrangat Valley (outside of the 5-mi [8-km] affected area surrounding
12 the SEZ) could be affected by groundwater withdrawals from the White River Valley regional
13 groundwater system to serve construction and operations of solar energy facilities on the
14 Delamar Valley SEZ. The availability of suitable nesting habitat throughout the affected area
15 has not been determined.

16
17
18 **Prairie Falcon**

19
20 The prairie falcon occurs throughout the western United States. According to the
21 SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the prairie falcon, it is considered a year-round resident
22 throughout the Delamar Valley SEZ region. The species occurs in open habitats in mountainous
23 areas, sagebrush-steppe, grasslands, or cultivated areas. Nests are typically constructed in well-
24 sheltered ledges of rocky cliffs and outcrops. This species occurs in Lincoln County, Nevada,
25 and potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and throughout most of the affected
26 area (Table 11.2.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is
27 no suitable nesting habitat within the SEZ, but approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of cliff and
28 rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the access road
29 corridor. An additional 5,000 acres (20 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that might be
30 potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects outside of the SEZ and
31 access road corridor.

32
33
34 **Swainson's Hawk**

35
36 The Swainson's hawk occurs throughout the southwestern United States. According to
37 the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the Swainson's hawk, only summer breeding habitat
38 occurs in the Delamar Valley SEZ region. This species inhabits desert, savanna, open pine-oak
39 woodland, grassland, and cultivated habitats. Nests are typically constructed in solitary trees,
40 bushes, or small groves. This species occurs in Lincoln County, Nevada, and potentially suitable
41 foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
42 On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no suitable nesting habitat
43 (solitary trees) within the area of direct effects, but approximately 2,900 acres (12 km²) of
44 pinyon-juniper woodland that may be potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of
45 indirect effects.

1 **Western Burrowing Owl**

2
3 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the western burrowing owl, the
4 species is a summer (breeding) resident of open, dry grasslands and desert habitats in the
5 Delamar Valley SEZ region. The species occurs locally in open areas with sparse vegetation,
6 where it forages in grasslands, shrublands, and open disturbed areas, and nests in burrows
7 typically constructed by mammals. The species occurs in Lincoln County, Nevada, and
8 potentially suitable summer breeding habitat may occur in the SEZ, access road corridor, and in
9 other portions of the affected area (Table 11.2.12.1-1). The availability of nest sites (burrows)
10 within the affected area has not been determined, but shrubland habitat that may be suitable for
11 either foraging or nesting occurs throughout the affected area.
12

13
14 **Desert Valley Kangaroo Mouse**

15
16 The Desert Valley kangaroo mouse is endemic to central Nevada, where it inhabits desert
17 areas at playa margins and in dune habitats. This species is known to occur as near as the Dry
18 Lake Valley, approximately 20 mi (32 km) north of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP
19 habitat suitability model for the kangaroo mouse, potentially suitable year-round habitat occurs
20 within the SEZ, access road corridor, and throughout the affected area (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
21

22
23 **Fringed Myotis**

24
25 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident in the Delamar Valley SEZ region, where it
26 occurs in a variety of habitats, including riparian, shrubland, sagebrush, and pinyon-juniper
27 woodlands. The species roosts in buildings and caves. It is known to occur in Lincoln County,
28 Nevada, and the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the species indicates that potentially
29 suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ and throughout most of the affected area
30 (Table 11.2.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no
31 suitable roosting habitat within the SEZ, but approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of cliff and rock
32 outcrop habitat that may be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the access road
33 corridor. An additional 5,000 acres (20 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that might be
34 potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects outside of the SEZ and
35 access road corridor.
36

37
38 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

39
40 The Nelson's bighorn sheep (also called the desert bighorn sheep) is a subspecies of
41 bighorn sheep that occurs in the Delamar Valley SEZ region. This species occurs in desert
42 mountain ranges in Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah. The Nelson's bighorn sheep
43 uses primarily montane shrubland, forest, and grassland habitats, and may utilize desert valleys
44 as corridors for travel between portions of its range. It is known to occur in Lincoln County,
45 Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the species, suitable habitat

1 does not occur on the SEZ; however, habitat that is potentially suitable as a migration corridor
2 may occur in the affected area (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

5 **Silver-Haired Bat**

7 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, the silver-haired bat is a year-
8 round resident in the Delamar Valley SEZ region, where it occurs in montane forested habitats
9 such as aspen, pinyon-juniper, and spruce communities. Foraging may occur in desert shrubland
10 habitats. This species roosts in tree foliage or cavities, or under loose bark. The species is known
11 to occur about 42 mi (67 km) south of the SEZ. Potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur
12 on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.2.12.1-1). On the basis of an
13 evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no suitable roosting habitat (trees) within the
14 area of direct effects, but approximately 2,900 acres (12 km²) of pinyon-juniper woodland that
15 may be potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.

18 **Spotted Bat**

20 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, the spotted bat is a year-round
21 resident in the Delamar Valley SEZ region, where it occurs in a variety of forested and shrubland
22 habitats. It roosts in caves and rock crevices. The species is known to occur in the vicinity of
23 Panaca, Nevada, approximately 35 mi (56 km) northeast of the SEZ. Potentially suitable foraging
24 habitat may occur on the SEZ and throughout most of the affected area (Table 11.2.12.1-1). On
25 the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no suitable roosting habitat
26 within the SEZ, but approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that
27 may be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the access road corridor. An additional
28 5,000 acres (20 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that might be potentially suitable roosting
29 habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects outside of the SEZ and access road corridor.

32 **Townsend's Big-Eared Bat**

34 The Townsend's big-eared bat is widely distributed throughout the western United States.
35 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, the species forages year-round in a wide
36 variety of desert and non-desert habitats in the Delamar Valley SEZ region. The species roosts
37 in caves, mines, tunnels, buildings, and other man-made structures. The nearest recorded
38 occurrences are approximately 42 mi (67 km) south of the Delamar Valley SEZ. Potentially
39 suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ and throughout most of the affected area
40 (Table 11.2.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no
41 suitable roosting habitat within the SEZ, but approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of cliff and
42 rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the access road
43 corridor. An additional 5,000 acres (20 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that might be
44 potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects outside of the SEZ
45 and access road corridor.

1 **Western Small-Footed Bat**

2
3 The western small-footed bat is widely distributed throughout the western United States.
4 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, this species is a year-round resident in
5 southern Nevada, where it occupies a wide variety of desert and non-desert habitats, including
6 cliffs and rock outcrops, grasslands, shrubland, and mixed woodlands. The species roosts in
7 caves, mines, and tunnels, beneath boulders or loose bark, and in buildings, and other man-
8 made structures. The species is known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada, and potentially
9 suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ and throughout most of the affected area
10 (Table 11.2.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no
11 suitable roosting habitat within the SEZ, but approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of cliff and
12 rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the access road
13 corridor. An additional 5,000 acres (20 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that might be
14 potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects outside of the SEZ
15 and access road corridor.
16
17

18 **Groundwater-Dependent Species**

19
20 There are a number of species that do not occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary
21 or within the access road corridor but that do occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge
22 from the White River Valley regional groundwater system in habitats within the Pahrana-
23 gat Valley that may interact with groundwater of the Delamar Valley. Groundwater from the
24 Delamar Valley to serve solar energy development on the SEZ could affect aquatic and riparian
25 habitats supported by groundwater discharge in the Pahrana-
26 gat Valley. The phainopepla, which
27 could also be affected in the Pahrana-
28 gat Valley by groundwater withdrawals on the SEZ, is
29 discussed above.

30 ***Pahrana-
31 gat Naucorid.*** The Pahrana-
32 gat naucorid is an aquatic insect known only to occur
33 in the Muddy and White River Basins in southern Nevada. It inhabits warm, quiet waters of
34 spring-fed systems. The nearest recorded occurrence is from Ash Springs, approximately 15 mi
35 (24 km) west of the SEZ (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

36 ***White River Desert Sucker.*** The White River desert sucker is a small fish endemic to
37 Nevada, where it is restricted to remnant streams of the White River system. The nearest
38 recorded occurrence of this species is from the Pahrana-
39 gat Creek, approximately 15 mi (24 km)
40 west of the SEZ (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

41
42 ***Southwestern Toad.*** The southwestern toad is an amphibian that occupies scattered
43 habitats in Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. It occurs in woodlands and low-elevation
44 riparian habitats in association with permanent or semipermanent water bodies. The nearest
45 recorded occurrence of this species is from riparian areas along the Meadow Valley Wash,
46 approximately 15 mi (24 km) east of the SEZ (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

1 ***Pahranagat Valley Montane Vole.*** The Pahranagat Valley montane vole is endemic to
2 Lincoln County, Nevada, where it is restricted to springs in the Pahranagat Valley. Within that
3 area, isolated populations utilize mesic montane and desert riparian habitat. The species is known
4 to occur near Pahranagat Creek, approximately 9 mi (14 km) west of the SEZ. According to the
5 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable habitat for this species does not occur
6 in the SEZ or within the access road corridor; however, a potentially suitable habitat may occur
7 in portions of the affected area. Potentially suitable riparian habitats for this species that occurs
8 outside of the 5-mi (8-km) area surrounding the SEZ could be dependent on groundwater
9 discharge from the White River Valley regional groundwater system.

11.2.12.1.5 *State-Listed Species*

10
11
12
13
14 There are 15 species listed by the State of Nevada that may occur in the Delamar Valley
15 SEZ affected area or that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ
16 (Table 11.2.12.1-1). These state-listed species include the following (1) fish: Hiko White River
17 springfish, Pahranagat roundtail chub, Pahranagat speckled dace, White River desert sucker, and
18 White River springfish; (2) reptile: desert tortoise; (3) birds: phainopepla, southwestern willow
19 flycatcher, Swainson’s hawk, and western yellow-billed cuckoo; and (4) mammals: Desert
20 Valley kangaroo mouse, fringed myotis, Pahranagat Valley montane vole, spotted bat, and
21 Townsend’s big-eared bat. All of these species are protected in the state of Nevada under
22 NRS 501.110. Each of these species has been previously discussed because of its known
23 or review status under the ESA (Section 11.2.12.1.1 or 11.2.12.1.2) or the BLM
24 (Section 11.2.12.1.3). Additional life history information for these species is provided in
25 Appendix J.

11.2.12.1.6 *Rare Species*

26
27
28
29
30 There are 47 rare species (i.e., state rank of S1 or S2 in the state of Nevada or ranked as a
31 species of concern by the State of Nevada or USFWS) that may be affected by solar energy
32 development on the Delamar Valley SEZ (Table 11.2.12.1-1). Of these species, there are nine
33 that have not been previously discussed because of their known or pending status under the ESA
34 (Section 11.2.12.1.1 or 11.2.12.1.2) or the BLM (Section 11.2.12.1.3). These nine species
35 include the following (1) plants: Ackerman milkvetch, Antelope Canyon goldenbush, Jaeger
36 beardtongue, Meadow Valley sandwort, St. George blue-eyed grass, and Veyo milkvetch; and
37 (2) invertebrates: Ash Springs riffle beetle, nearctic riffle beetle, and red-tailed blazing star bee.
38 The habitats and known occurrences of these species relative to the SEZ are shown in
39 Table 11.2.12.1-1. Additional life history information is provided in Appendix J.

11.2.12.2 **Impacts**

40
41
42
43
44 The potential for impacts on special status species from utility-scale solar energy
45 development within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is presented in this section. The types of

1 impacts that special status species could incur from construction and operation of utility-scale
2 solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.4.

3
4 The assessment of impacts on special status species is based on available information on
5 the presence of species in the affected area, as presented in Section 11.2.12.1, following the
6 analysis approach described in Appendix M. It is assumed that, prior to development, surveys
7 would be conducted to determine the presence of special status species and their habitats in and
8 near areas where ground-disturbing activities would occur. Additional NEPA assessments, ESA
9 consultations, and coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address
10 project-specific impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in
11 additional required actions to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts on special status species (see
12 Section 11.2.12.3).

13
14 Solar energy development within the Delamar Valley SEZ could affect a variety of
15 habitats (see Sections 11.2.9 and 11.2.10). These impacts on habitats could in turn affect special
16 status species that are dependent on those habitats. Based on NNHP records, the desert tortoise is
17 the only special status species known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the Delamar Valley SEZ
18 boundary. There are 15 species that occur more than 5 mi (8 km) from the SEZ boundary in
19 habitats in the Pahranaagat Valley that could be affected by groundwater withdrawals from the
20 Delamar Valley SEZ. These species include the following (1) invertebrates: Hubbs springsnail,
21 nearctic riffle beetle, Pahranaagat naucorid, and Pahranaagat pebblesnail; (2) fish: Hiko White
22 River springfish, Pahranaagat roundtail chub, Pahranaagat speckled dace, White River desert
23 sucker, and White River springfish; (3) amphibians: northern leopard frog and southwestern
24 toad; (4) birds: phainopepla, southwestern willow flycatcher, and western yellow-billed cuckoo;
25 and (5) mammals: Pahranaagat Valley montane vole. Withdrawals from this regional groundwater
26 system may be needed to support construction and operations of solar energy facilities on the
27 Delmar Valley SEZ, which could in turn affect those special status species with habitats that are
28 dependent on groundwater. Other special status species may occur on the SEZ or within the
29 affected area, based on the presence of potentially suitable habitat. As discussed in
30 Section 11.2.12.1, this approach to identifying the species that could occur in the affected area
31 probably overestimates the number of species that actually occur in the affected area, and may
32 therefore overestimate impacts on some special status species.

33
34 Potential direct and indirect impacts on special status species within the SEZ and in the
35 area of indirect effects outside the SEZ are presented in Table 11.2.12.1-1. In addition, the
36 overall potential magnitude of impacts on each species (assuming programmatic design features
37 are in place) is presented along with any potential species-specific mitigation measures that
38 could further reduce impacts.

39
40 Impacts on special status species could occur during all phases of development
41 (construction, operation, and decommissioning and reclamation) of a utility-scale solar energy
42 project within the SEZ. Construction and operation activities could result in short- or long-term
43 impacts on individuals and their habitats, especially if these activities are sited in areas where
44 special status species are known to or could occur. As presented in Section 11.2.1.2, a 9-mi
45 (14-km) long access road corridor is assumed to be needed to serve solar facilities within this

1 SEZ. Impacts of transmission line construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this
2 evaluation due to the proximity of existing infrastructure to the SEZ.

3
4 Direct impacts would result from habitat destruction or modification. It is assumed that
5 direct impacts would occur only within the SEZ and the access road construction area where
6 ground-disturbing activities are expected to occur. Indirect impacts could result from depletions
7 of groundwater resources, surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust
8 generated by project activities, accidental spills, harassment, and lighting. No ground-disturbing
9 activities associated with project facilities are anticipated to occur within the area of indirect
10 effects. Decommissioning of facilities and reclamation of disturbed areas after operations cease
11 could result in short-term negative impacts on individuals and habitats adjacent to project areas,
12 but over the long-term, conditions would improve especially if original land contours and native
13 plant communities were restored in previously disturbed areas.

14
15 The successful implementation of programmatic design features (discussed in Appendix
16 A, Section A.2.2) would reduce direct impacts on some special status species, especially those
17 that depend on habitat types that can be easily avoided (e.g., playas). Indirect impacts on special
18 status species could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic design
19 features, especially those engineering controls that would reduce groundwater consumption,
20 runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust.

21 22 23 ***11.2.12.2.1 Impacts on Species Listed under the ESA***

24
25
26 Impacts on the five ESA-listed species that may occur in the Delamar Valley SEZ
27 affected area, or that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ, are discussed
28 below. These assessments are based on the best information available, but discussions of
29 potential impacts and mitigation options should be held in consultation with the USFWS. Formal
30 consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the ESA is required for any federal action that
31 may adversely affect an ESA-listed species.

32 33 34 **Desert Tortoise**

35
36 The Mojave population of the desert tortoise is listed as threatened under the ESA and the
37 species is known to occur about 5 mi (8 km) west of the SEZ (Figure 11.2.12.1-1). According to
38 the USFWS (Stout 2009), desert tortoise populations have the potential to occur on the Delamar
39 Valley SEZ and access road corridor despite the lack of monitoring effort in adjacent areas and
40 the relatively low habitat suitability (as determined by the USGS habitat suitability model
41 [Nussear et al. 2009]). According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately
42 910 acres (4 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and 58 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially
43 suitable habitat within the access road corridor could be directly affected by construction and
44 operations of solar energy development on the SEZ (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct effects area
45 represents about 0.1% of available suitable habitat of the desert tortoise in the region. About
46 29,000 acres (117 km²) of suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this
47 area represents about 2.1% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

1 The overall impact on the desert tortoise from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
3 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of
4 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
5 implementation of programmatic design features alone is unlikely to reduce these impacts to
6 negligible levels. Avoidance of potentially suitable habitats for this species is not a feasible
7 means of mitigating impacts because these habitats (desert scrub) are widespread throughout the
8 area of direct effects. Pre-disturbance surveys to determine the abundance of desert tortoises on
9 the SEZ to remove them from the affected area, and the implementation of a desert tortoise
10 translocation plan and compensation plan could further reduce direct impacts.

11
12 Development of actions to reduce impacts (e.g., reasonable and prudent alternatives,
13 reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions of incidental take statements) for the
14 desert tortoise, including development of a survey protocol, avoidance measures, minimization
15 measures, and, potentially, translocation actions and compensatory mitigation, would require
16 formal consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the ESA. Consultation with the Nevada
17 Department of Wildlife (NDOW) should also occur to determine any state mitigation
18 requirements.

19
20 There are inherent dangers to tortoises associated with their capture, handling, and
21 translocation from the SEZ. These actions, if done improperly, can result in injury or death.
22 To minimize these risks, and as stated above, the desert tortoise translocation plan should be
23 developed in consultation with the USFWS, and follow the *Guidelines for Handling Desert*
24 *Tortoises During Construction Projects* (Desert Tortoise Council 1994) and other current
25 translocation guidance provided by the USFWS. Consultation will identify potentially suitable
26 recipient locations, density thresholds for tortoise populations in recipient locations, and
27 procedures for pre-disturbance clearance surveys and tortoise handling, as well as disease testing
28 and post-translocation monitoring and reporting requirements. Despite some risk of mortality or
29 decreased fitness, translocation is widely accepted as a useful strategy for the conservation of the
30 desert tortoise (Field et al. 2007).

31
32 To offset impacts of solar development on the SEZ, compensatory mitigation may be
33 needed to balance the acreage of habitat lost with acquisition of lands that would be improved
34 and protected for desert tortoise populations (USFWS 1994). Compensation can be accomplished
35 by improving the carrying capacity for the desert tortoise on the acquired lands. Other mitigation
36 actions may include funding for the habitat enhancement of the desert tortoise on existing federal
37 lands. Consultation with the USFWS and NDOW would be necessary to determine the
38 appropriate mitigation ratio to acquire, enhance, and preserve desert tortoise compensation lands.

39 40 41 **Southwestern Willow Flycatcher**

42
43 The southwestern willow flycatcher is listed as endangered under the ESA and is known
44 to occur in the Pahranaagat Valley, approximately 8 mi (13 km) west of the SEZ. According to
45 the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the
46 SEZ. However, approximately 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat within the

1 access road corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations of solar energy
2 development on the SEZ (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents less than 0.1%
3 of available suitable habitat of the southwestern willow flycatcher in the region. About 200 acres
4 (1 km²) of suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area represents
5 about 0.5% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
6

7 Riparian habitats in the Pahranaagat Valley that may provide suitable nesting and foraging
8 habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher may be affected by spring discharges associated
9 with the White River Valley regional groundwater system from groundwater withdrawals from
10 the Delamar Valley to serve development on the SEZ. Solar energy development on the SEZ
11 may require water from the same regional groundwater system that supports the riparian habitats
12 for this species in the Pahranaagat Valley. As discussed below for other groundwater-dependent
13 species, impacts on this species could range from small to large depending upon the solar energy
14 technology deployed, the scale of development within the SEZ, and the cumulative rate of
15 groundwater withdrawals (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
16

17 The implementation of programmatic design features and complete avoidance or
18 limitations of groundwater withdrawals from the regional groundwater system could reduce
19 impacts on the southwestern willow flycatcher to small or negligible levels. Impacts can be
20 better quantified for specific projects once water needs are identified. In addition, the avoidance
21 of construction activities within riparian areas within the access road corridor would further
22 reduce impacts.
23

24 Development of actions to reduce impacts (e.g., reasonable and prudent alternatives,
25 reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions of incidental take statements) for the
26 southwestern willow flycatcher, including development of a survey protocol, avoidance
27 measures, minimization measures, and, potentially, compensatory mitigation, would require
28 formal consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the ESA. Consultation with the NDOW
29 should also occur to determine any state mitigation requirements.
30
31

32 **Groundwater-Dependent Species**

33

34 There are three species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA that do not
35 occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary or within the access road corridor but that do
36 occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge from the White River Valley regional
37 groundwater system in the Pahranaagat Valley. These species include the following fish: Hiko
38 White River springfish, Pahranaagat roundtail chub, and White River springfish. The
39 southwestern willow flycatcher also could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.
40 Groundwater withdrawn from the Delamar Valley to serve construction and operations of solar
41 energy facilities on the SEZ could affect aquatic and riparian habitats within the Pahranaagat
42 Valley. These withdrawals could affect habitat for the ESA-listed species that are dependent on
43 groundwater. Such impacts would result from the lowering of the water table and alteration of
44 hydrologic processes.
45

1 Impacts of groundwater depletion from solar energy development in the Delamar Valley
2 SEZ cannot be quantified without identification of the cumulative amount of groundwater
3 withdrawals needed to support development on the SEZ. Consequently, the overall impact on
4 these species could range from small to large, and would depend in part on the solar energy
5 technology deployed, the scale of development within the SEZ, the type of cooling system used,
6 and the degree of influence water withdrawals in the SEZ would have on drawdown and surface
7 water discharges in habitats supporting these species (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
8

9 The implementation of programmatic design features and complete avoidance or
10 limitations of groundwater withdrawals from the regional groundwater system would reduce
11 impacts on the groundwater-dependent species to small or negligible levels. Impacts can be
12 better quantified for specific projects once water needs are identified and through application of a
13 regional groundwater model.
14

15 ***11.2.12.2 Impacts on Species That Are Candidates for Listing under the ESA*** 16

17
18 According to the USFWS scoping letter (Stout 2009) and as verified by NNHP records,
19 the western yellow-billed cuckoo is the only ESA candidate species that may be affected by solar
20 energy development on the Delamar Valley SEZ. This species is known to occur in riparian areas
21 along the Pahranaagat Creek, approximately 8 mi (13 km) west of the SEZ (Figure 11.2.12.1-1).
22 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable habitat for this species
23 does not occur anywhere within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary or within the access road
24 corridor. However, riparian habitats in the White River and Pahranaagat Valleys may provide
25 suitable nesting and foraging habitat for this species; these habitats may be affected by spring
26 discharges associated with the White River Valley regional groundwater system. Solar energy
27 development on the SEZ may require water from the same regional groundwater system that
28 supports the riparian habitats for this species in the Pahranaagat Valley. For this reason, and as
29 discussed for the groundwater-dependent species above, impacts on the western yellow-billed
30 cuckoo could range from small to large depending upon the solar energy technology deployed,
31 the scale of development within the SEZ, and the cumulative rate of groundwater withdrawals
32 (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
33

34 The implementation of programmatic design features and complete avoidance or
35 limitations of groundwater withdrawals from the regional groundwater system could reduce
36 impacts on the western yellow-billed cuckoo. Impacts can be better quantified for specific
37 projects once water needs are identified. Coordination with the USFWS and NDOW should be
38 conducted to identify an appropriate survey protocol and mitigation requirements, which may
39 include avoidance, minimization, or compensation.
40

41 ***11.2.12.3 Impacts on Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA*** 42

43
44 There are four species currently under review for ESA listing that may be affected by
45 solar energy development on the Delamar Valley SEZ. These include the grated tryonia, Hubbs
46 springsnail, Pahranaagat pebblesnail, and northern leopard frog. These species do not occur

1 within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but they do occur in areas dependent on groundwater
2 discharge within the Pahrangat Valley, which is hydrologically connected to groundwater in the
3 Delamar Valley. Potential impacts on these species (which could range from small to large) and
4 mitigations that could reduce those impacts would be similar to those described for groundwater-
5 dependent ESA-listed species in Section 11.2.12.2.1. For all of these species, potential impacts
6 and mitigation options should be discussed with the USFWS prior to project development.
7
8

9 ***11.2.12.2.4 Impacts on BLM-Designated Sensitive Species***

10
11 BLM-designated sensitive species that may be affected by solar energy development on
12 the Delamar Valley SEZ and are not previously discussed as ESA-listed (Section 11.2.12.2.1),
13 candidates for ESA listing (Section 11.2.12.2.2), or under review for ESA listing
14 (Section 11.2.12.2.3) are discussed below.
15
16

17 **Charleston Ground-Daisy**

18
19 The Charleston ground-daisy is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar
20 Valley SEZ and potentially suitable habitat does not occur on the SEZ; however, approximately
21 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat within the access road corridor could be directly
22 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents
23 less than 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 45,500 acres (184 km²) of
24 potentially suitable habitat occur in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.3% of
25 the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
26

27 The overall impact on the Charleston ground-daisy from construction, operation, and
28 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
29 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
30 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
31 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
32 impacts to negligible levels.
33

34 Avoiding or minimizing impacts on rocky cliffs and outcrops in the access road corridor
35 may be sufficient to reduce impacts on the Charleston ground-daisy to small or negligible levels.
36 For this species and other special status plants, impacts also could be reduced by conducting pre-
37 disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing impacts of occupied habitats in the area of direct
38 effects. If avoidance and minimization are not feasible options, plants could be translocated from
39 the area of direct effects to protected areas that would not be affected directly or indirectly by
40 future development. Alternatively, or in combination with translocation, a compensatory
41 mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied
42 habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or
43 suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation
44 strategy that used one or more of these options could be designed to completely offset the
45 impacts of development.
46

1 **Eastwood Milkweed**

2
3 The Eastwood milkweed is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar Valley
4 SEZ; however, approximately 2,000 acres (8 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and
5 25 acres (0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected
6 by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents about
7 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 48,000 acres (194 km²) of
8 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 7.2%
9 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

10
11 The overall impact on the Eastwood milkweed from construction, operation, and
12 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
13 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
14 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
15 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
16 impacts to negligible levels.

17
18 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to mitigate impacts on the Eastwood
19 milkweed is not feasible because potentially suitable sagebrush and mixed shrubland habitat is
20 widespread throughout the area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced with the
21 implementation of programmatic design features and the mitigation options described previously
22 for the Charleston ground-daisy. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design
23 features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its
24 habitat on the SEZ.

25
26
27 **Long-Calyx Milkvetch**

28
29 The long-calyx milkvetch is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar
30 Valley SEZ; however, approximately 11,200 acres (45 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the
31 SEZ and 61 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly
32 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents
33 about 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 101,000 acres (409 km²) of
34 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 3.2%
35 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

36
37 The overall impact on the long-calyx milkvetch from construction, operation, and
38 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
39 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of
40 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
41 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
42 impacts to negligible levels.

43
44 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to mitigate impacts on the long-calyx
45 milkvetch is not feasible because potentially suitable sagebrush and mixed shrubland habitat is
46 widespread throughout the area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced with the

1 implementation of programmatic design features and the mitigation options described previously
2 for the Charleston ground-daisy. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design
3 features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its
4 habitat on the SEZ.
5
6

7 **Needle Mountains Milkvetch**

8

9 The Needle Mountains milkvetch is not known to occur in the affected area of the
10 Delamar Valley SEZ; however, approximately 3,100 acres (13 km²) of potentially suitable
11 habitat on the SEZ and 2 acres (<1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat within the road corridor
12 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact
13 area represents about 4.6% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 1,800 acres
14 (7 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
15 about 2.7% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
16

17 The overall impact on the Needle Mountains milkvetch from construction, operation, and
18 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
19 considered moderate because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the
20 area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10% of potentially
21 suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is
22 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
23

24 Avoiding or minimizing impacts on all playa habitats on the SEZ may be sufficient to
25 reduce impacts on the Needle Mountains milkvetch to small or negligible levels, but this would
26 restrict development on a large portion of the SEZ. Impacts also could be reduced with the
27 implementation of programmatic design features and the mitigation options described previously
28 for the Charleston ground-daisy. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design
29 features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its
30 habitat on the SEZ.
31
32

33 **Nevada Willowherb**

34

35 The Nevada willowherb is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar Valley
36 SEZ, and potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur in the area of direct effects.
37 However, approximately 3,000 acres (12 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
38 indirect effects; this area represents about 0.3% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ
39 region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
40

41 The overall impact on the Nevada willowherb from construction, operation, and
42 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
43 considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
44 direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design
45 features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
46

1 **Pioche Blazingstar**

2
3 The Pioche blazingstar is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar Valley
4 SEZ; however, approximately 12,000 acres (49 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ
5 and 29 acres (0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly
6 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents
7 about 0.6% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 105,000 acres (425 km²) of
8 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 5.3%
9 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

10
11 The overall impact on the Pioche blazingstar from construction, operation, and
12 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
13 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of
14 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
15 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
16 impacts to negligible levels.

17
18 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to mitigate impacts on the Pioche
19 blazingstar is not feasible because potentially suitable shrubland habitat is widespread
20 throughout the area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced with the
21 implementation of programmatic design features and the mitigation options described previously
22 for the Charleston ground-daisy. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design
23 features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its
24 habitat on the SEZ.

25
26
27 **Rock Phacelia**

28
29 The rock phacelia is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar Valley SEZ;
30 however, approximately 976 acres (4 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and
31 80 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected
32 by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents about
33 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 46,000 acres (186 km²) of
34 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.2%
35 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

36
37 The overall impact on the rock phacelia from construction, operation, and
38 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
39 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
40 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
41 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
42 impacts to negligible levels.

43
44 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to mitigate impacts on the rock phacelia is
45 not feasible because potentially suitable mixed desert scrub habitat is widespread throughout the
46 area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced with the implementation of

1 programmatic design features and the mitigation options described previously for the Charleston
2 ground-daisy. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be
3 determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
4

6 **Rock Purpusia**

7
8 The rock purpusia is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar Valley SEZ
9 and potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur in the area of direct effects.
10 However, approximately 3,000 acres (12 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area
11 of indirect effects; this area represents about 0.4% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ
12 region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
13

14 The overall impact on the rock purpusia from construction, operation, and
15 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
16 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
17 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
18 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
19 impacts to negligible levels.
20

21 Avoiding or minimizing impacts on rocky cliffs and outcrops in the access road corridor
22 may be sufficient to reduce impacts on the rock purpusia to small or negligible levels. Impacts
23 also could be reduced with the implementation of programmatic design features and the
24 mitigation options described previously for the Charleston ground-daisy. The need for
25 mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting
26 pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
27

28 **Sheep Mountain Milkvetch**

29
30
31 The Sheep Mountain milkvetch is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar
32 Valley SEZ; however, approximately 976 acres (4 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the
33 SEZ and 78 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly
34 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents
35 about 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 46,000 acres (186 km²) of
36 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.3%
37 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
38

39 The overall impact on the Sheep Mountain milkvetch from construction, operation, and
40 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
41 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of
42 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
43 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
44 impacts to negligible levels.
45

1 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to mitigate impacts on the Sheep Mountain
2 milkvetch is not feasible because potentially suitable mixed desert scrub habitat is widespread
3 throughout the area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced with the
4 implementation of programmatic design features and the mitigation options described previously
5 for the Charleston ground-daisy. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design
6 features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its
7 habitat on the SEZ.
8
9

10 **Tiehm Blazingstar**

11
12 The Tiehm blazingstar is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar Valley
13 SEZ; however, approximately 12,000 acres (49 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ
14 and 27 acres (0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly
15 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents
16 about 0.8% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 92,700 acres (375 km²) of
17 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 6.1%
18 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
19

20 The overall impact on the Tiehm blazingstar from construction, operation, and
21 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
22 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of
23 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
24 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
25 impacts to negligible levels.
26

27 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to mitigate impacts on the Tiehm
28 blazingstar is not feasible because potentially suitable shrubland habitat is widespread
29 throughout the area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced with the
30 implementation of programmatic design features and the mitigation options described previously
31 for the Charleston ground-daisy. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design
32 features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its
33 habitat on the SEZ.
34
35

36 **White Bearpoppy**

37
38 The white bearpoppy is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar Valley
39 SEZ, and potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur in the area of direct effects.
40 However, approximately 161 acres (0.7 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
41 indirect effects; this area represents about 0.1% of the available potentially suitable habitat in the
42 SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
43

44 The overall impact on the white bearpoppy from construction, operation, and
45 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
46 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of

1 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
2 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
3 impacts to negligible levels.
4

5 Avoiding or minimizing impacts on rocky cliffs and outcrops in the access road corridor
6 may be sufficient to reduce impacts on the white bearpoppy to small or negligible levels. Impacts
7 also could be reduced with the implementation of programmatic design features and the
8 mitigation options described previously for the Charleston ground-daisy. The need for
9 mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting
10 pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
11

12 13 **White River Cat's-Eye** 14

15 The White River cat's-eye is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar
16 Valley SEZ and potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur in the area of direct
17 effects. However, approximately 1,700 acres (7 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the
18 area of indirect effects; this area represents about 1.1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the
19 SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
20

21 The overall impact on the White River cat's-eye from construction, operation, and
22 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
23 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
24 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
25 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
26 impacts to negligible levels.
27

28 Avoiding or minimizing impacts on rocky cliffs and outcrops in the access road corridor
29 may be sufficient to reduce impacts on the White River cat's-eye to small or negligible levels.
30 Impacts also could be reduced with the implementation of programmatic design features and the
31 mitigation options described previously for the Charleston ground-daisy. The need for
32 mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting
33 pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
34

35 36 **Mojave Poppy Bee** 37

38 The Mojave poppy bee is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar Valley
39 SEZ, and potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur in the area of direct effects.
40 However, approximately 163 acres (0.7 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
41 indirect effects; this area represents about 0.1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ
42 region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
43

44 The overall impact on the Mojave poppy bee from construction, operation, and
45 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
46 considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of

1 direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design
2 features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
3
4

5 **Ferruginous Hawk**

6

7 The ferruginous hawk occurs only as a winter resident in the vicinity of the Delamar
8 Valley SEZ and potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in the affected area.
9 Approximately 910 acres (4 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ and 7 acres
10 (<0.1 km²) within the road corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations
11 (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the
12 SEZ region. About 37,000 acres (150 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the
13 area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.9% of the available suitable foraging habitat
14 in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
15

16 The overall impact on the ferruginous hawk from construction, operation, and
17 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
18 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in
19 the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the
20 SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
21 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to
22 mitigate impacts on the ferruginous hawk is not feasible because potentially suitable shrubland
23 habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effects.
24
25

26 **Phainopepla**

27

28 The phainopepla is not known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the Delamar Valley SEZ,
29 and suitable habitat does not occur on the site. However, approximately 46 acres (0.2 km²) of
30 potentially suitable foraging or nesting habitat within the access road corridor could be directly
31 affected by construction and operations of solar energy facilities on the SEZ (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
32 This direct effects area represents less than 0.1% of available suitable habitat of the phainopepla
33 in the region. About 15,900 acres (64 km²) of suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential
34 indirect effects; this area represents about 1.5% of the available suitable habitat in the region
35 (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
36

37 Riparian habitats in the White River and Pahrnagat Valleys that may provide suitable
38 nesting and foraging habitat for the phainopepla may be affected by spring discharges associated
39 with the White River Valley regional groundwater system. Solar energy development on the
40 SEZ may require water from the same regional groundwater system that supports these riparian
41 habitats. As discussed above for other groundwater-dependent species in Section 11.2.12.2.1,
42 impacts on this species could range from small to large depending upon the solar energy
43 technology deployed, the scale of development within the SEZ, and the cumulative rate of
44 groundwater withdrawals (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
45

1 The implementation of programmatic design features and complete avoidance of or
2 limitations on groundwater withdrawals from the regional groundwater system would reduce
3 impacts on the phainopepla to small or negligible levels. Impacts can be better quantified for
4 specific projects once water needs are identified. In addition, the complete avoidance of riparian
5 areas in the access road corridor would further reduce impacts.
6
7

8 **Prairie Falcon** 9

10 The prairie falcon is a year-round resident in the Delamar Valley SEZ region, and
11 potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat may occur in the affected area. Approximately
12 11,300 acres (46 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ and 52 acres (0.2 km²)
13 of potentially suitable foraging or nesting habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected
14 by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents 0.4% of
15 potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 87,700 acres (355 km²) of potentially
16 suitable foraging and nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
17 about 3.5% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1). Most of this
18 area could serve as foraging habitat (open shrublands). On the basis of SWReGAP land cover
19 data, potentially suitable nesting habitat (cliffs and rock outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ.
20 However, approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may be
21 potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
22

23 The overall impact on the prairie falcon from construction, operation, and
24 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
25 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
26 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
27 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
28 impacts on this species to negligible levels.
29

30 Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitats to mitigate impacts on the prairie
31 falcon is not feasible because potentially suitable shrubland habitat is widespread throughout the
32 area of direct effects. However, the complete avoidance of cliff and rock outcrop habitats within
33 the access road corridor would reduce impacts on nesting habitats of this species to negligible
34 levels. Impacts also could be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or
35 minimizing impacts of occupied habitats (especially nesting habitats) in the area of direct effects.
36 If avoidance and minimization are not feasible options, a compensatory mitigation plan could be
37 developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects. Compensation could involve the
38 protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats
39 lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or both of these options
40 could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development. The need for mitigation,
41 other than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance
42 surveys for the species and its habitat in the area of direct effects.
43
44
45

1 **Swainson’s Hawk**

2
3 The Swainson’s hawk is considered a summer breeding resident within the Delamar
4 Valley SEZ region, and potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in the affected
5 area. Approximately 1,950 acres (8 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ and
6 75 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the road corridor could be directly
7 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents
8 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 91,600 acres (371 km²) of
9 potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area
10 represents about 4.2% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
11 On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no suitable nesting habitat
12 (solitary trees) within the area of direct effects, but approximately 2,900 acres (12 km²) of
13 pinyon-juniper woodland that may be potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of
14 indirect effects.

15
16 The overall impact on the Swainson’s hawk from construction, operation, and
17 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
18 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat for this
19 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging and
20 nesting habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to
21 be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all
22 potentially suitable foraging habitats to mitigate impacts on the prairie falcon is not feasible
23 because potentially suitable foraging habitats are widespread throughout the area of direct effects
24 and readily available in other portions of the affected area.

25
26
27 **Western Burrowing Owl**

28
29 The western burrowing owl is a summer breeding resident within the Delamar Valley
30 SEZ region and potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in the affected area.
31 Approximately 15,400 acres (62 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and 108 acres
32 (0.4 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected by
33 construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents 0.4% of
34 potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 150,000 acres (607 km²) of potentially
35 suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 3.8% of the
36 potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1). Most of this area could serve
37 as foraging and nesting habitat (shrublands). The abundance of burrows suitable for nesting on
38 the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects has not been determined.

39
40 The overall impact on the western burrowing owl from construction, operation, and
41 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
42 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat for this
43 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging and
44 nesting habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to
45 be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

1 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts on
2 the western burrowing owl because potentially suitable shrubland habitats are widespread
3 throughout the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
4 Impacts on the western burrowing owl could be reduced through the implementation of
5 programmatic design features and by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding occupied
6 burrows on the SEZ. If avoidance and minimization are not feasible options, a compensatory
7 mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects. Compensation
8 could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to
9 compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one
10 or both of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development. The
11 need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by
12 conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat within the area of direct
13 effects.
14
15

16 **Desert Valley Kangaroo Mouse**

17

18 The Desert Valley kangaroo mouse is not known to occur in the affected area of the
19 Delamar Valley SEZ. However, approximately 10,900 acres (44 km²) of potentially suitable
20 habitat on the SEZ and 2 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor
21 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact
22 area represents 1.8% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 29,000 acres
23 (117 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
24 about 4.7% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
25

26 The overall impact on the Desert Valley kangaroo mouse from construction, operation,
27 and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
28 considered moderate because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat for
29 this species in the area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10%
30 of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design
31 features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.
32

33 Avoiding or minimizing impacts on all playa habitats in the SEZ could reduce impacts on
34 this species, but this would restrict development on a large portion of the SEZ. Pre-disturbance
35 surveys and avoidance of occupied habitats in the area of direct effects also could reduce
36 impacts. If avoidance and minimization are not feasible options, a compensatory mitigation plan
37 could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats.
38 Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable
39 habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy
40 that uses one or both of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of
41 development.
42
43
44

1 **Fringed Myotis**

2
3 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident within the Delamar Valley SEZ region.
4 On the basis of SWReGAP land cover data, suitable roosting habitats (caves) do not occur on
5 the SEZ. However, approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that
6 may be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the access road corridor. Approximately
7 13,200 acres (53 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ and 106 acres
8 (0.4 km²) of potentially suitable foraging or roosting habitat in the road corridor could be
9 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area
10 represents about 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. About 142,000 acres
11 (575 km²) of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
12 effects; this area represents about 3.1% of the available suitable habitat in the region
13 (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

14
15 The overall impact on the fringed myotis from construction, operation, and
16 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
17 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat for
18 this species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in
19 the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient
20 to reduce indirect impacts on this species.

21
22 Avoiding or minimizing direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because
23 suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects and readily available in other
24 portions of the affected area. Impacts on the fringed myotis could be reduced by conducting
25 pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied roosts in the area of
26 direct effects. If avoidance and minimization are not feasible options, a compensatory mitigation
27 plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats.
28 Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable
29 habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy
30 that used one or both of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of
31 development. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be
32 determined by conducting pre disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat in the area of
33 direct effects.

34
35
36 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

37
38 The Nelson's bighorn sheep is not known to occur in the affected area of the Delamar
39 Valley SEZ, and suitable habitat is not expected to occur on the site. However, approximately
40 18 acres (0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected
41 by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents less than
42 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. About 32,600 acres (132 km²) of potentially
43 suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.3% of
44 the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

1 The overall impact on the Nelson's bighorn sheep from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
3 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
4 of direct effects represents less than 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
5 implementation of programmatic design features are expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
6 impacts on this species to negligible levels.
7

8 Impacts on the Nelson's bighorn sheep could be reduced to small or negligible levels by
9 conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing impacts on occupied habitats
10 and important movement corridors within the area of direct effects. If avoidance or minimization
11 is not feasible, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate
12 direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement
13 of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A
14 comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or both of these options could be designed to
15 completely offset the impacts of development. The need for mitigation should first be determined
16 by conducting surveys for the species and its habitat within the area of direct effects.
17
18

19 **Silver-Haired Bat**

20

21 The silver-haired bat is a year-round resident within the Delamar Valley SEZ region. On
22 the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no suitable roosting habitat
23 (trees) within the area of direct effects, but approximately 2,900 acres (12 km²) of pinyon-
24 juniper woodland that may be potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
25 effects. Approximately 14,500 acres (59 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the
26 SEZ and 52 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the road corridor could
27 be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact
28 area represents about 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. About 101,000 acres
29 (409 km²) of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
30 effects; this area represents about 3.0% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region
31 (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
32

33 The overall impact on the silver-haired bat from construction, operation, and
34 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
35 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in
36 the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
37 implementation of programmatic design features are expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
38 impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoiding or minimizing direct impacts on all
39 foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of
40 direct effects and readily available in other portions of the affected area.
41
42

43 **Spotted Bat**

44

45 The spotted bat is a year-round resident within the Delamar Valley SEZ region. On the
46 basis of SWReGAP land cover data, suitable roosting habitats (caves) do not occur on the SEZ.

1 However, approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may be
2 potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the access road corridor. Approximately
3 12,150 acres (49 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ and 87 acres (0.4 km²)
4 of potentially suitable foraging or roosting habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected
5 by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents about
6 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. About 94,000 acres (380 km²) of potentially
7 suitable foraging and nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
8 about 2.5% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

9
10 The overall impact on the spotted bat from construction, operation, and decommissioning
11 of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is considered small because
12 the amount of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat for this species in the area of
13 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
14 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
15 impacts on this species to negligible levels.

16
17 Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitat is not a feasible way to mitigate
18 impacts on the spotted bat because potentially suitable habitats are widespread throughout the
19 area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region. However,
20 implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the fringed myotis could reduce
21 direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need for mitigation, other than
22 programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for
23 the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

24 25 26 **Townsend's Big-Eared Bat**

27
28 The Townsend's big-eared bat is a year-round resident within the Delamar Valley SEZ
29 region. On the basis of SWReGAP land cover data, suitable roosting habitats (caves) do not
30 occur on the SEZ. However, approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop
31 habitat that may be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the access road corridor.
32 Approximately 14,500 acres (59 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ and
33 48 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable foraging or roosting habitat in the road corridor could
34 be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact area
35 represents about 0.5% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. About 77,500 acres (314 km²)
36 of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
37 area represents about 2.7% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.2.12.1-1).

38
39 The overall impact on the Townsend's big-eared bat from construction, operation, and
40 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
41 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat for this
42 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the
43 region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
44 reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.

1 Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitat is not a feasible way to mitigate
2 impacts on the Townsend's big-eared bat because potentially suitable habitats are widespread
3 throughout the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
4 However, implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the fringed myotis
5 could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need for mitigation, other
6 than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys
7 for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
8
9

10 **Western Small-Footed Bat**

11
12 The western small-footed bat is a year-round resident within the Delamar Valley SEZ
13 region. On the basis of SWReGAP land cover data, suitable roosting habitats (caves) do not
14 occur on the SEZ. However, approximately 120 acres (0.5 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop
15 habitat that may be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the access road corridor.
16 Approximately 16,300 acres (66 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ and
17 112 acres (0.5 km²) of potentially suitable foraging or roosting habitat in the road corridor
18 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.2.12.1-1). This direct impact
19 area represents about 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. About 155,000 acres
20 (627 km²) of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
21 effects; this area represents about 3.1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region
22 (Table 11.2.12.1-1).
23

24 The overall impact on the western small-footed bat from construction, operation, and
25 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Delamar Valley SEZ is
26 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat for this
27 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the
28 region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
29 reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.
30

31 Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitat is not a feasible way to mitigate
32 impacts on the western small-footed bat because potentially suitable habitats are widespread
33 throughout the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
34 However, implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the fringed myotis
35 could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need for mitigation, other
36 than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys
37 for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
38
39

40 **Groundwater-Dependent Species**

41
42 There are four BLM-designated sensitive species that may be affected by solar energy
43 development in the Delamar Valley SEZ affected area, or that may be affected by solar energy
44 development on the SEZ. These include the Pahrnagat naucorid, White River desert sucker,
45 southwestern toad, and Pahrnagat Valley montane vole. These species do not occur within 5 mi
46 (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but they do occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge

1 within the Pahranaagat Valley, which is hydrologically connected to groundwater in the Delamar
2 Valley. Potential impacts on these species (which could range from small to large) and
3 mitigations that could reduce those impacts would be similar to those described for groundwater-
4 dependent ESA-listed species in Section 11.2.12.2.1. For all of these species, potential impacts
5 and mitigation options should be discussed with the USFWS prior to project development.
6
7

8 ***11.2.12.2.5 Impacts on State-Listed Species***

9

10 There are 15 species listed by the state of Nevada that may occur in the Delamar Valley
11 SEZ affected area or that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ
12 (Table 11.2.12.1-1). Impacts on each of these species have been previously discussed because of
13 their known or pending status under the ESA (Section 11.2.12.2.1, 11.2.12.2.2, or 11.2.12.2.3) or
14 their designation by the BLM as a sensitive species (Section 11.2.12.2.4).
15
16

17 ***11.2.12.2.6 Impacts on Rare Species***

18

19 There are 47 rare species (state rank of S1 or S2 in Nevada or a species of concern by the
20 state of Nevada or USFWS) that may be affected by solar energy development on the Delamar
21 Valley SEZ. Impacts on 35 of these species have been previously discussed due to the species'
22 known or pending status under the ESA (Section 11.2.12.2.1, 11.2.12.2.2, or 11.2.12.2.3) or
23 designation under the BLM (Section 11.2.12.2.4). The remaining nine species that have not been
24 previously discussed included the following (1) plants: Ackerman milkvetch, Antelope Canyon
25 goldenbush, Jaeger beardtongue, Meadow Valley sandwort, St. George blue-eyed grass, and
26 Veyo milkvetch; and (2) invertebrates: Ash Springs riffle beetle, nearctic riffle beetle, and red-
27 tailed blazing star bee. Impacts and potentially applicable mitigation measures (if necessary) for
28 each of these species are provided in Table 11.2.12.1-1. Additional life history information is
29 provided in Appendix J.
30
31

32 **11.2.12.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

33

34 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
35 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects of utility-scale solar
36 energy development on special status species. While some SEZ-specific design features are best
37 established when project details are being considered, some design features can be identified at
38 this time, including the following:
39

- 40 • Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the SEZ and access road
41 corridor (i.e., area of direct effects) to determine the presence and abundance
42 of special status species, including those identified in Table 11.2.12.1-1;
43 disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be avoided or
44 minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing impacts to
45 occupied habitats is not possible, translocation of individuals from areas of
46 direct effects, or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied

1 habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy for
2 special status species that used one or more of these options to offset the
3 impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the
4 appropriate federal and state agencies.
5

- 6 • Avoiding or minimizing disturbance of wetland habitats within the area of
7 direct effects, including riparian, desert wash, and playa habitats, could reduce
8 or eliminate impacts on the Needle Mountains milkvetch, phainopepla,
9 southwestern willow flycatcher, and Desert Valley kangaroo mouse.
10
- 11 • Avoiding or minimizing disturbance of cliffs and rock outcrops in the access
12 road corridor could reduce or eliminate impacts on the following nine special
13 status species: Charleston ground-daisy, Rock purpusia, White bearpoppy,
14 White River cat's-eye, prairie falcon, fringed myotis, spotted bat, Townsend's
15 big-eared bat, and western small-footed bat.
16
- 17 • Avoidance or minimization of groundwater withdrawals from the Delamar
18 Valley to serve solar energy development on the SEZ would reduce or prevent
19 impacts on the following 15 groundwater-dependent species: Ash Springs
20 riffle beetle, grated tryonia, Hubbs springsnail, nearctic riffle beetle,
21 Pahrnagat naucorid, Pahrnagat pebblesnail, Hiko White River springfish,
22 Pahrnagat roundtail chub, Pahrnagat speckled dace, White River desert
23 sucker, White River springfish, northern leopard frog, southwestern toad,
24 phainopepla, southwestern willow flycatcher, and western yellow-billed
25 cuckoo. Potential impacts on these species, and mitigations, should be
26 quantified through hydrologic modeling once water needs are identified for
27 specific projects.
28
- 29 • Consultation with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted to address the
30 potential for impacts on the following five species listed as threatened or
31 endangered under the ESA that may be affected by solar energy development
32 on the SEZ: Hiko White River springfish, Pahrnagat roundtail chub, White
33 River springfish, desert tortoise, and southwestern willow flycatcher.
34 Consultation would identify an appropriate survey protocol, avoidance and
35 minimization measures, and, if appropriate, reasonable and prudent
36 alternatives, reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions for
37 incidental take statements.
38
- 39 • Coordination with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted for the
40 following four species under review for listing under the ESA that may be
41 affected by solar energy development on the SEZ: grated tryonia, Hubbs
42 springsnail, Pahrnagat pebblesnail, and northern leopard frog. Coordination
43 would identify an appropriate survey protocol, and mitigation requirements,
44 which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or compensation.
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- Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the affected area should be avoided or minimized. This can be accomplished by identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.

If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to required programmatic design features, impacts on the special status and rare species could be reduced.

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1 **11.2.13 Air Quality and Climate**

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4 **11.2.13.1 Affected Environment**

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7 **11.2.13.1.1 Climate**

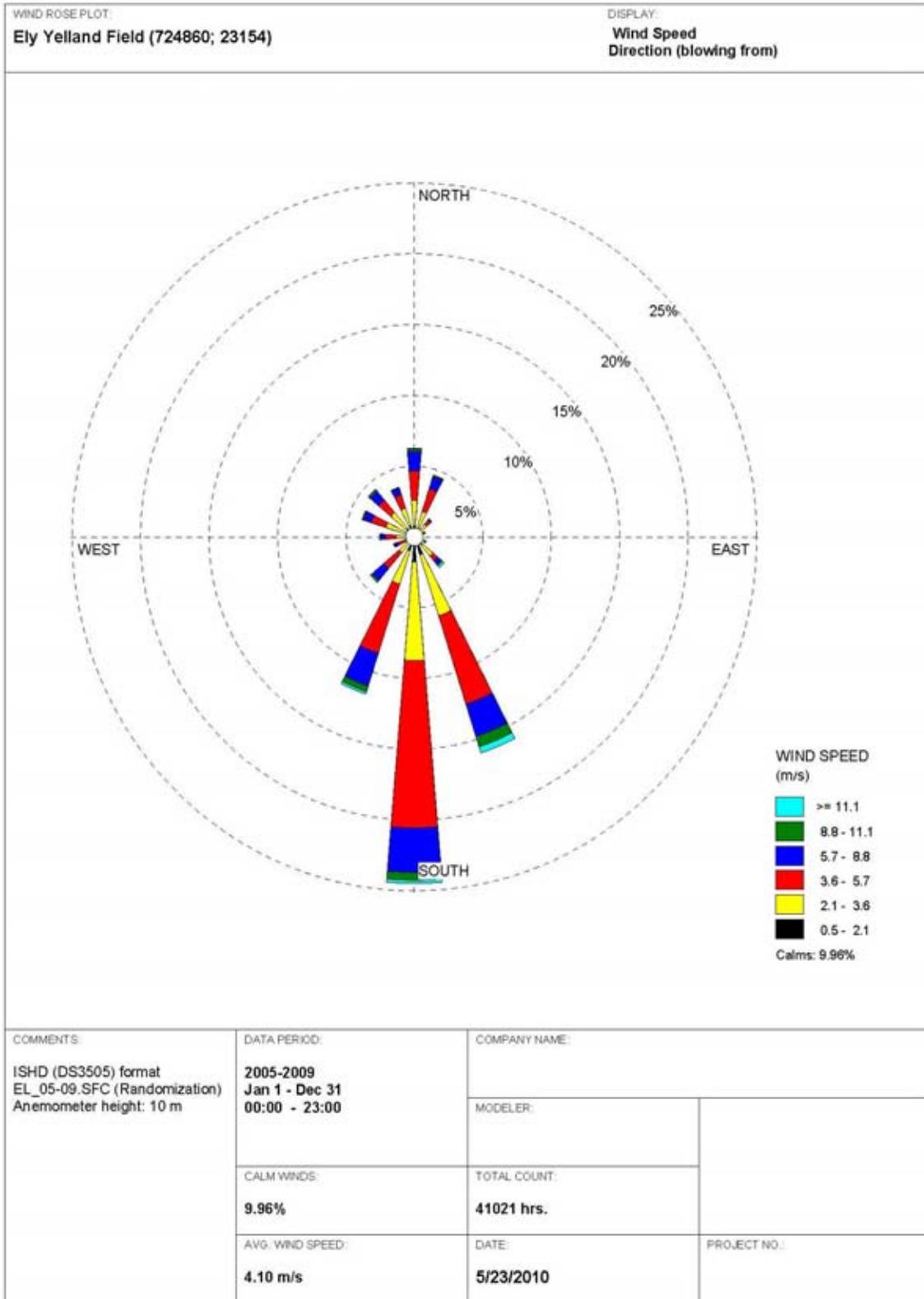
8
9 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located in southeastern Nevada, in the south
10 central portion of Lincoln County. Nevada lies on the eastern lee side of the Sierra Nevada
11 Range, which markedly influences the climate of the state under the prevailing westerlies
12 (NCDC 2010a). In addition, the mountains east and north of Nevada act as a barrier to the cold
13 arctic air masses, and thus long periods of extremely cold weather are uncommon. The SEZ lies
14 at an average elevation of about 4,600 ft (1,400 m) in the south central portion of the Great Basin
15 Desert, which has a high desert climate marked by year-round pleasant weather (mild winters
16 and warm summers), large daily temperature swings due to dry air, scant precipitation, low
17 relative humidity, and abundant sunshine. Meteorological data collected at the Ely Yelland Field,
18 about 124 mi (200 km) north of the Delamar Valley SEZ boundary, and Pahranaagat NWR, about
19 9 mi (14 km) southwest, are summarized below.

20
21 A wind rose from the Ely Yelland Field, Nevada, for the 5-year period 2005 to 2009,
22 taken at a level of 33 ft (10 m), is presented in Figure 11.2.13.1-1 (NCDC 2010b).⁵ During this
23 period, the annual average wind speed at the airport was about 9.2 mph (4.1 m/s), with a
24 prevailing wind direction from the south (about 24.4% of the time) and secondarily from the
25 south–southeast (about 16.0% of the time). The southerly wind component predominates, with
26 about 52% of wind directions ranging from south–southeast clockwise to south–southwest.
27 Winds blew predominantly from the south every month throughout the year. Wind speeds
28 categorized as calm (less than 1.1 mph [0.5 m/s]) occurred frequently (about 10% of the time)
29 because of the stable conditions caused by strong radiative cooling from late night to sunrise.
30 Average wind speeds by season were relatively uniform; they are the highest in spring at
31 9.7 mph (4.3 m/s), lower in summer and fall at 9.2 mph (4.1 m/s), and lowest in winter at
32 8.7 mph (3.9 m/s).

33
34 For the 1964 to 2009 period, the annual average temperature at Pahranaagat NWR was
35 59.5°F (15.3°C) (WRCC 2010f).⁶ December was the coldest month, with an average minimum
36 temperature of 26.7°F (–2.9°C), and July was the warmest month, with an average maximum of
37 98.6°F (37.0°C). In summer, daytime maximum temperatures were frequently in the 90s, and
38

⁵ Although the Ely Yelland Field is rather far away from the Delamar Valley SEZ, it was chosen to be representative of the SEZ, considering the similar north–south orientation of valley and mountain ranges.

⁶ Pahranaagat NWR is located closer (about 9 mi [14 km]) to the Delamar Valley SEZ than Caliente (22 mi [35 km]) but is lower in elevation by about 1,200 ft (366 m) and 1,000 ft (305 m) than the SEZ and Caliente, respectively. Annual-average temperature at Pahranaagat NWR is about 6.1°F (3.4°C) higher than that at Caliente, while precipitation and snowfall at Pahranaagat NWR are about 71% and 13% of those at Caliente, respectively.



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FIGURE 11.2.13.1-1 Wind Rose at 33 ft (10 m) at Ely Yelland Field, Nevada, 2005 to 2009 (Source: NCDC 2010b)

1 minimums were in the mid-50s or higher. The minimum temperatures recorded were below
 2 freezing ($\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$ [0°C]) during the colder months (most days in December and January). During
 3 the same period, the highest temperature, 113°F (45.0°C), was reached in July 2007, and the
 4 lowest, -1°F (-18.3°C), in December 1990. In a typical year, about 100 days had a maximum
 5 temperature of greater than or equal to 90°F (32.2°C), while about 95 days had minimum
 6 temperatures at or below freezing.

7
 8 For the 1964 to 2009 period, annual precipitation at Pahranaagat NWR averaged about
 9 6.19 in. (15.7 cm) (WRCC 2010f). On average, there are 31 days annually with measurable
 10 precipitation (0.01 in. [0.025 cm] or higher). Precipitation is relatively evenly distributed by
 11 season, although recorded precipitation is slightly higher in winter and spring than in summer
 12 and fall. Snow falls as early as November and continues as late as April; most of the snow falls
 13 in December and January. The annual average snowfall at Pahranaagat NWR is about 1.4 in.
 14 (3.6 cm); the highest monthly snowfall recorded was 9.0 in (22.9 cm) in December 1992.

15
 16 Because the area surrounding the proposed Delamar
 17 Valley SEZ is far from major water bodies (more than 300 mi
 18 [483 km]) and because surrounding mountain ranges block air
 19 masses from penetrating into the area, severe weather events,
 20 such as thunderstorms and tornadoes, are rare.

21
 22 In Nevada, flooding could occur from melting of heavy
 23 snowpack. On occasion, heavy summer thunderstorms also
 24 cause flooding of local streams, usually in sparsely populated
 25 mountainous areas, but they are seldom destructive (NCDC
 26 2010a). Since 1996, 18 floods (17 flash floods and 1 flood)
 27 were reported in Lincoln County; most of these occurred in the
 28 nestled mountain communities and some caused property
 29 damage. In January 2005, heavy rain and rapid snow melt
 30 caused extensive flooding in southern Lincoln and northeast
 31 Clark Counties, bringing about significant property damage.

32
 33 In Lincoln County, 7 hail storms have been reported
 34 since 1981, none of which caused property damage
 35 (NCDC 2010c). Hail measuring 1.5 in (3.8 cm) in diameter
 36 was reported in 1981. In Lincoln County, 22 high-wind events
 37 have been reported since 1995, which caused some property
 38 damage. Such events, with a maximum wind speed of 83 mph
 39 (37 m/s), have occurred any time of the year with a peak during
 40 spring months. In addition, four thunderstorm wind events have
 41 been reported since 1964. Thunderstorm winds, with a
 42 maximum wind speed of 69 mph (31 m/s). occurred mostly
 43 during summer months on occasion, one of which caused minor
 44 property damage.

TABLE 11.2.13.1-1 Annual Emissions of Criteria Pollutants and VOCs in Lincoln County, Nevada, Encompassing the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, 2002^a

Pollutant ^b	Emissions (tons/yr)
SO ₂	230
NO _x	3,453
CO	47,458
VOCs	172,491
PM ₁₀	2,586
PM _{2.5}	1,604

^a Includes point, area, onroad and nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire emissions.

^b Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 2.5 \mu\text{m}$; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 10 \mu\text{m}$; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; and VOCs = volatile organic compounds.

Source: WRAP (2009).

1 In Lincoln County, no dust storms have been reported (NCDC 2010c). However, about
2 85% of the SEZ is covered with fine sandy loams and silt loams, which have moderate dust
3 storm potential. On occasion, high winds and dry soil conditions could result in blowing dust in
4 Lincoln County. Dust storms can deteriorate air quality and visibility and have adverse effects on
5 health.

6
7 Hurricanes and tropical storms formed off the coast of Central America and Mexico
8 weaken over the cold waters off the California coast. Accordingly, hurricanes never hit Nevada.
9 Historically, one tropical depression has passed within 100 mi (160 km) of the proposed Delamar
10 Valley SEZ (CSC 2010). Tornadoes in Lincoln County, which encompasses the proposed
11 Delamar Valley SEZ, occur infrequently. In the period 1950 to July 2010, a total of six tornadoes
12 (0.1 per year) were reported in Lincoln County (NCDC 2010c). However, all tornadoes
13 occurring in Lincoln County were relatively weak (i.e., one was unclassified, four were F0,
14 and one was F1 on the Fujita tornado scale). None of these tornadoes caused injuries or deaths,
15 but one of them caused some property damage. All tornadoes in Lincoln County were reported
16 far from the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ.

17 18 19 ***11.2.13.1.2 Existing Air Emissions***

20
21 Lincoln County has several industrial emission sources scattered over the county, but
22 their emissions are relatively small. No emission sources are located around the proposed
23 Delamar Valley SEZ. Because of the sparse population, only a handful of major roads, such as
24 U.S. 93 and State Routes 318, 319, and 375, exist in Lincoln County. Thus, onroad mobile
25 source emissions are not substantial. Data on annual emissions of criteria pollutants and VOCs in
26 Lincoln County are presented in Table 11.2.13.1-1 for 2002 (WRAP 2009). Emission data are
27 classified into six source categories: point, area, onroad mobile, nonroad mobile, biogenic, and
28 fire (wildfires, prescribed fires, agricultural fires, structural fires). In 2002, nonroad sources were
29 major contributors to total SO₂ and NO_x emissions (about 56% and 57%, respectively). Biogenic
30 sources (i.e., vegetation—including trees, plants, and crops—and soils) that release naturally
31 occurring emissions contributed primarily to CO emissions (about 56%) and secondarily to NO_x
32 emissions (about 22%), and accounted for most of VOC emissions (about 99%). Fire sources
33 were primary contributors to PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions (about 60% and 83%, respectively) and
34 secondary contributors to SO₂ and CO emissions (41% and 33%, respectively). Area sources
35 accounted for about 37% of PM₁₀ and 13% of PM_{2.5}. In Lincoln County, point sources were
36 minor contributors to criteria pollutants and VOCs.

37
38 In 2005, Nevada produced about 56.3 MMt of *gross*⁷ CO₂e⁸ emissions, which is about
39 0.8% of the total U.S. GHG emissions in that year (NDEP 2008). Gross GHG emissions in

7 Excluding GHG emissions removed as a result of forestry and other land uses and excluding GHG emissions associated with exported electricity.

8 A measure used to compare the emissions from various GHGs on the basis of their global warming potential, defined as the cumulative radiative forcing effects of a gas over a specified time horizon resulting from the emission of a unit mass of gas relative to a reference gas, CO₂. The CO₂e for a gas is derived by multiplying the mass of the gas by the associated global warming potential.

1 Nevada increased by about 65% from 1990 to 2005 because of Nevada’s rapid population
2 growth, compared to 16.3% growth in U.S. GHG emissions during the same period. In 2005,
3 electrical generation (48%) and transportation (30%) were the primary contributors to gross
4 GHG emission sources in Nevada. Fuel use in the residential, commercial, and industrial sectors
5 combined accounted for about 12% of total state emissions. Nevada’s *net* emissions were about
6 51.3 MMt CO₂e, considering carbon sinks from forestry activities and agricultural soils
7 throughout the state. The EPA (2009a) also estimated 2005 emissions in Nevada. Its estimate of
8 CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion was 49.6 MMt, which was comparable to the state’s
9 estimate. Electric power generation and transportation accounted for about 52.7% and 33.6% of
10 the CO₂ emissions total, respectively, while the residential, commercial, and industrial sectors
11 accounted for the remainder (about 13.7%).
12
13

14 ***11.2.13.1.3 Air Quality*** 15

16 The EPA set NAAQS for six criteria pollutants (EPA 2010a): SO₂, NO₂, CO, O₃, PM
17 (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and Pb. Nevada has its own SAAQS, which are similar to the NAAQS but
18 have some differences (NAC 445B.22097). In addition, Nevada has set standards for 1-hour H₂S
19 emissions, which are not addressed by the NAAQS. The NAAQS and Nevada SAAQS for
20 criteria pollutants are presented in Table 11.2.13.1-2.
21

22 Lincoln County is located administratively within the Nevada Intrastate AQCR, along
23 with 10 other counties in Nevada. This excludes Las Vegas Intrastate AQCR, including Clark
24 County only—which encompasses Las Vegas—and Northwest Nevada Intrastate AQCR,
25 including five northwest counties—which encompasses Reno. Currently, the area surrounding
26 the proposed SEZ is designated as being unclassifiable/attainment of NAAQS for all criteria
27 pollutants (40 CFR 81.329).
28

29 Because of Lincoln County’s low population density, it has no significant emission
30 sources of its own and only minor mobile emissions along major highways. Accordingly,
31 ambient air quality in Lincoln County is relatively good. There are no ambient air-monitoring
32 stations in Lincoln County. To characterize ambient air quality around the SEZ, one monitoring
33 station in Clark County was chosen: Apex in the northeast corner of North Las Vegas in Clark
34 County, about 63 mi (101 km) to the south of the SEZ. The Apex station, which is located
35 downwind of the Las Vegas area along with predominant southwesterly winds, but upwind of the
36 SEZ, can be considered representative of the proposed SEZ. Ambient concentrations of NO₂, O₃,
37 PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5} are recorded at the Apex station. The East Sahara Avenue station, which is on
38 the outskirts of Las Vegas, has only one SO₂ monitor in the area. CO concentrations at the East
39 Tonopah Avenue station in Las Vegas, which is the farthest downwind of Las Vegas among CO
40 monitoring stations, were presented. No Pb measurements have been made in the state of Nevada
41 because of low Pb concentration levels after the phaseout of leaded gasoline. The background
42 concentrations of criteria pollutants at these stations for the period 2004 to 2008 are presented in
43 Table 11.2.13.1-2 (EPA 2010b). Monitored concentration levels were lower than their respective
44 standards (up to 65%), except O₃, which approaches the 1-hour NAAQS/SAAQS but exceeds
45 the 8-hour NAAQS. However, ambient concentrations around the SEZ are anticipated to be

TABLE 11.2.13.1-2 NAAQS, SAAQS, and Background Concentration Levels Representative of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ in Lincoln County, Nevada, 2004 to 2008

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	NAAQS	SAAQS	Background Concentration Level	
				Concentration ^{b,c}	Measurement Location, Year
SO ₂	1-hour	75 ppb ^d	– ^e	–	–
	3-hour	0.5 ppm	0.5 ppm	0.009 ppm (1.8%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
	24-hour	0.14 ppm	0.14 ppm	0.008 ppm (5.7%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
	Annual	0.030 ppm	0.030 ppm	0.006 ppm (20%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
NO ₂	1-hour	100 ppb ^f	–	–	–
	Annual	0.053 ppm	0.053 ppm	0.006 ppm (11%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2007
CO	1-hour	35 ppm	35 ppm	5.7 ppm (16%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2004
	8-hour	9 ppm	9 ppm ^g	3.9 ppm (43%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
O ₃	1-hour	0.12 ppm ^h	0.12 ppm ⁱ	0.104 ppm (87%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
	8-hour	0.075 ppm	–	0.081 ppm (108%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2007
PM ₁₀	24-hour	150 µg/m ³	150 µg/m ³	97 µg/m ³ (65%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2006
	Annual	–	50 µg/m ³	22 µg/m ³ (44%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2008
PM _{2.5}	24-hour	35 µg/m ³	–	10.2 µg/m ³ (29%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
	Annual	15.0 µg/m ³	–	4.05 µg/m ³ (27%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
Pb	30-day	–	1.5 µg/m ³	–	–
	Calendar quarter	1.5 µg/m ³	–	–	–
	Rolling 3-month	0.15 µg/m ^{3 j}	–	–	–

- ^a Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO₂ = nitrogen dioxide; O₃ = ozone; Pb = lead; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 µm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 µm; and SO₂ = sulfur dioxide.
- ^b Monitored concentrations are the second-highest for all averaging times less than or equal to 24-hour averages, except fourth-highest daily maximum for 8-hour O₃ the 98th percentile for 24-hour PM_{2.5}, and arithmetic mean for annual SO₂, NO₂, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}.
- ^c Values in parentheses are background concentration levels as a percentage of NAAQS or SAAQS. Calculation of 1-hour SO₂ and NO₂ to NAAQS was not made, because no measurement data based on new NAAQS are available.
- ^d Effective August 23, 2010.
- ^e A dash indicates not applicable or not available.
- ^f Effective April 12, 2010.
- ^g CO standard for the area less than 5,000 ft (1,524 m) above mean sea level. CO standard for the area at or greater than 5,000 ft (1,524 m) above mean sea level is 6 ppm.
- ^h The EPA revoked the 1-hour O₃ standard in all areas, although some areas have continuing obligations under that standard (“anti-backsliding”).
- ⁱ O₃ standard for the Lake Tahoe Basin, #90, is 0.10 ppm.
- ^j Effective January 12, 2009.

Sources: EPA (2010a,b); NAC 445B.22097.

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1 lower than those presented in the table, except PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, which can be either higher or
2 lower.

3
4 PSD regulations (see 40 CFR 52.21), which are designed to limit the growth of air
5 pollution in clean areas, apply to a major new source or the modification of an existing major
6 source within an attainment or unclassified area (see Section 4.11.2.3). As a matter of policy,
7 the EPA recommends that the permitting authority notify the Federal Land Managers when a
8 proposed PSD source would be located within 62 mi (100 km) of a sensitive Class I area. There
9 are several Class I areas around the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, none of which is situated
10 within 62 mi (100 km) of the SEZ, in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. The nearest Class I area is
11 Zion NP in Utah (40 CFR 81.430), about 89 mi (143 km) east of the proposed Delamar Valley
12 SEZ. This Class I area is not located downwind of prevailing winds at the proposed Delamar
13 Valley SEZ (Figure 11.2.13.1-1). The next nearest Class I area is Grand Canyon NP in Arizona,
14 which is about 98 mi (158 km) southeast of the SEZ.

15 16 17 **11.2.13.2 Impacts**

18
19 Potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with a solar project would be of
20 most concern during the construction phase. Impacts on ambient air quality from fugitive dust
21 emissions resulting from soil disturbances are anticipated, but they would be of short duration.
22 During the operations phase, only a few sources with generally low-level emissions would exist
23 for any of the four types of solar technologies evaluated. A solar facility would either not burn
24 fossil fuels or burn only small amounts during operation. (For facilities using HTFs, fuel could
25 be used to maintain the temperature of the HTFs for more efficient daily start-up.) Conversely,
26 solar facilities could displace air emissions that would otherwise be released from fossil fuel
27 power plants.

28
29 Air quality impacts shared by all solar technologies are discussed in detail in
30 Section 5.11.1, and technology-specific impacts are discussed in Section 5.11.2. Impacts specific
31 to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are presented in the following sections. Any such impacts
32 would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design features
33 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the application of any additional mitigation
34 measures. Section 11.2.13.3 below identifies SEZ-specific design features of particular relevance
35 to the Delamar Valley SEZ.

36 37 38 **11.2.13.2.1 Construction**

39
40 The Delamar Valley SEZ has a relatively flat terrain; thus only a minimum number of
41 site preparation activities, perhaps with no large-scale earthmoving operations, would be
42 required. However, fugitive dust emissions from soil disturbances during the entire construction
43 phase would be a major concern because of the large areas that would be disturbed in a region
44 that experiences windblown dust problems. Fugitive dusts, which are released near ground level,
45 typically have more localized impacts than similar emissions from an elevated stack with
46 additional plume rise induced by buoyancy and momentum effects.

1 **Methods and Assumptions**
2

3 Air quality modeling for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions associated with construction
4 activities was performed using the EPA-recommended AERMOD model (EPA 2009b). Details
5 for emissions estimation, the description of AERMOD, input data processing procedures, and
6 modeling assumption are described in Appendix M, Section M.13. Estimated air concentrations
7 were compared with the applicable NAAQS/SAAQS levels at the site boundaries and nearby
8 communities and with Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) increment levels at nearby
9 Class I areas.⁹ However, no receptors were modeled for PSD analysis at the nearest Class I area,
10 Zion NP in Utah, because it is about 89 mi (143 km) from the SEZ, which is over the maximum
11 modeling distance of 31 mi (50 km) for the AERMOD. Rather, several regularly spaced
12 receptors in the direction of the Zion NP were selected as surrogates for the PSD analysis. For
13 the Delamar Valley SEZ, the modeling was conducted based on the following assumptions and
14 input:

- 15 • Uniformly distributed emissions of 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) each and
16 6,000 acres (24.3 km²) in total, in the southern portion of the SEZ, close to the
17 nearest residence and the town of Alamo,
18
- 19 • Surface hourly meteorological data from Ely Yelland Field¹⁰ and upper air
20 sounding data from the Mercury/Desert Rock Airport for the 2005 to 2009
21 period, and
22
- 23 • A regularly spaced receptor grid over a modeling domain of 62 × 62 mi
24 (100 km × 100 km) centered on the proposed SEZ, and additional discrete
25 receptors at the SEZ boundaries.
26
27

⁹ To provide a quantitative assessment, the modeled air impacts of construction were compared to the NAAQS/SAAQS levels and the PSD Class I increment levels. Although the Clean Air Act exempts construction activities from PSD requirements, a comparison with the Class I increment levels was used to quantify potential impacts. Only monitored data can be used to determine the attainment status. Modeled data are used to assess potential problems and as a consideration in the permitting process.

¹⁰ The number of missing hours at the Ely Yelland Field amounts to about 17.7% of the total hours, which may not be acceptable for regulatory applications because that percentage exceeds the 10% limit defined by the EPA. However, because the wind patterns at Ely Yelland Field are more representative of wind at the Delamar Valley SEZ than the wind patterns at other airports (which have more complete data but are located in different topographic features), the former values were used for the screening analysis.

1 **Results**

2

3 The modeling results for both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentration increments and total

4 concentrations (modeled plus background concentrations) that would result from construction-

5 related fugitive emissions are summarized in Table 11.2.13.2-1. Maximum 24-hour PM₁₀

6 concentration increments modeled to occur at the site boundaries would be an estimated

7 408 µg/m³, which far exceeds the relevant standard level of 150 µg/m³. Total 24-hour PM₁₀

8 concentrations of 505 µg/m³ would also exceed the standard level at the SEZ boundary.

9 However, high PM₁₀ concentrations would be limited to the immediate areas surrounding the

10 SEZ boundary and would decrease quickly with distance. Predicted maximum 24-hour PM₁₀

11 concentration increments would be about 9 µg/m³ at the nearest residence, Alamo, and Ash

12 Springs (about 9 mi (14 km) west-southwest, 11 mi [18 km] west, and 15 mi [24 km] west-

13 northwest of the SEZ, respectively), about 5 µg/m³ at Crystal Springs and Hiko, and about

14 1.5 µg/m³ at Caliente and Panaca. Annual average modeled PM₁₀ concentration increments and

15 total concentration (increment plus background) at the SEZ boundary would be about 74.6 µg/m³

16 and 96.6 µg/m³, respectively, which are higher than the SAAQS level of 50 µg/m³. Annual

17 PM₁₀ increments would be much lower, 0.2 µg/m³ at Alamo and Ash Springs and 0.1 µg/m³ or

18 less at all nearby towns, including the nearest residence. Total 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentrations

19 would be 36.1 µg/m³ at the SEZ boundary, which is slightly higher than the NAAQS level of

20 35 µg/m³; modeled increments contribute about two times more than background concentration

21 to this total. The total annual average PM_{2.5} concentration would be 11.5 µg/m³, which is below

22 the NAAQS level of 15.0 µg/m³. At the nearest residence, predicted maximum 24-hour and

23 annual PM_{2.5} concentration increments would be about 0.1 and 0.01 µg/m³, respectively.

24

TABLE 11.2.13.2-1 Maximum Air Quality Impacts from Emissions Associated with Construction Activities for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	Rank ^b	Concentration (µg/m ³)			Percentage of NAAQS/SAAQS		
			Maximum Increment ^b	Background ^c	Total	NAAQS/SAAQS	Increment	Total
PM ₁₀	24 hours	H6H	408	97	505	150	272	337
	Annual	- ^d	74.6	22	96.6	50	149	193
PM _{2.5}	24 hours	H8H	25.9	10.2	36.1	35	74	103
	Annual	-	7.5	4.1	11.5	15.0	50	77

^a PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 µm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 µm.

^b Concentrations for attainment demonstration are presented. H6H = highest of the sixth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. H8H = highest of the multiyear average of the eighth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. For the annual average, multiyear averages of annual means over the 5-year period are presented. Maximum concentrations are predicted to occur at the site boundaries.

^c See Table 11.2.13.1-2.

^d A dash = not applicable.

1 Predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ concentration increments at the surrogate receptors
2 for the nearest Class I Area—Zion NP in Utah—would be about 4.0 and 0.08 µg/m³, or 50% and
3 2.0% of the PSD increments for a Class I area, respectively. These surrogate receptors are more
4 than 58 mi (93 km) from the Zion NP; thus predicted concentrations in Zion NP would be much
5 lower than the above values (about 18% of the PSD increments for 24-hour PM₁₀), considering
6 the same decay ratio with distance.
7

8 In conclusion, predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ and 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentration
9 levels could exceed the standard levels used as a guideline at the SEZ boundaries and in the
10 immediate surrounding areas during the construction of solar facilities. To reduce potential
11 impacts on ambient air quality and in compliance with programmatic design features, aggressive
12 dust control measures would be used. Potential air quality impacts on nearby communities would
13 be much lower. Predicted total concentrations for annual PM_{2.5} would be below the respective
14 standard levels. Modeling indicates that emissions from construction activities are not anticipated
15 to exceed Class I PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearest federal Class I area (Zion NP in Utah).
16 Construction activities are not subject to the PSD program, and the comparison provides only a
17 screen for gauging the size of the impact. Accordingly, it is anticipated that impacts of
18 construction activities on ambient air quality would be moderate and temporary.
19

20 Construction emissions from the engine exhaust from heavy equipment and vehicles
21 could cause impacts on AQRVs (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at the nearby federal Class I
22 areas. SO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be very low, because programmatic design
23 features would require ultra-low-sulfur fuel with a sulfur content of 15 ppm. NO_x emissions from
24 engine exhaust would be primary contributors to potential impacts on AQRVs. Construction-
25 related emissions are temporary in nature and thus would cause some unavoidable but short-term
26 impacts.
27

28 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
29 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 69-kV transmission line might
30 be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-specific
31 analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However, some
32 construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ. Potential impacts on ambient air
33 quality would be a minor component of construction impacts in comparison with solar facility
34 construction and would be temporary.
35
36

37 ***11.2.13.2.2 Operations***

38
39 Emission sources associated with the operation of a solar facility would include auxiliary
40 boilers; vehicle (commuter, visitor, support, and delivery) traffic; maintenance (e.g., mirror
41 cleaning and repair and replacement of damaged mirrors); and drift from cooling towers for the
42 parabolic trough or power tower technology if wet cooling was implemented (drift comprises
43 low-level PM emissions). The type of emission sources caused by and offset by operation of a
44 solar facility are discussed in Appendix M, Section M.13.4.
45

1 Potential air emissions displaced by the solar project development at the Delamar Valley
 2 SEZ are presented in Table 11.2.13.2-2. Total power generation capacity ranging from 1,471 to
 3 2,648 MW is estimated for the Delamar Valley SEZ for various solar technologies
 4 (see Section 11.2.2). The estimated amount of emissions avoided for the solar technologies
 5 evaluated depends only on the megawatts of conventional fossil fuel-generated power displaced,
 6 because a composite emission factor per megawatt-hour of power by conventional technologies
 7 is assumed (EPA 2009c). If the Delamar Valley SEZ were fully developed, it is expected that
 8 emissions avoided could be substantial. Development of solar power in the SEZ could result in
 9 avoided air emissions ranging from 6.8 to 12% of total emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂
 10 from electric power systems in the state of Nevada (EPA 2009c). Avoided emissions could be up
 11 to 2.6% of total emissions from electric power systems in the six-state study area. When
 12 compared with all source categories, power production from the same solar facilities could
 13 displace up to 9.9% of SO₂, 3.7% of NO_x, and 6.6% of CO₂ emissions in the state of Nevada
 14
 15

**TABLE 11.2.13.2-2 Annual Emissions from Combustion-Related Power Generation
 Avoided by Full Solar Development of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ**

Area Size (acres)	Capacity (MW) ^a	Power Generation (GWh/yr) ^b	Emissions Displaced (tons/yr; 10 ³ tons/yr for CO ₂) ^c			
			SO ₂	NO _x	Hg	CO ₂
16,552	1,471–2,648	2,578–4,640	3,637–6,546	3,119–5,615	0.021–0.037	2,002–3,604
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in Nevada ^d			6.8–12%	6.8–12%	6.8–12%	6.8–12%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in Nevada ^e			5.5–9.9%	2.1–3.7%	– ^f	3.7–6.6%
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in the six-state study area ^d			1.4–2.6%	0.84–1.5%	0.71–1.3%	0.76–1.4%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in the six-state study area ^e			0.77–1.4%	0.12–0.21%	–	0.24–0.43%

^a It is assumed that the SEZ would eventually have development on 80% of the lands and that a range of 5 acres (0.020 km²) per MW (for parabolic trough technology) to 9 acres (0.036 km²) per MW (power tower, dish engine, and photovoltaic technologies) would be required.

^b Assumed a capacity factor of 20%.

^c Composite combustion-related emission factors for SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ of 2.82, 2.42, 1.6 × 10⁻⁵, and 1,553 lb/MWh, respectively, were used for the state of Nevada.

^d Emission data for all air pollutants are for 2005.

^e Emission data for SO₂ and NO_x are for 2002, while those for CO₂ are for 2005.

^f A dash indicates not estimated.

Sources: EPA (2009a,c); WRAP (2009).

1 (EPA 2009a; WRAP 2009). These emissions could be up to 1.4% of total emissions from all
2 source categories in the six-state study area. Power generation from fossil fuel-fired power
3 plants accounts for about 93% of the total electric power generated in Nevada for which
4 contribution of natural gas and coal combustion is comparable (EPA 2009c). Thus, solar
5 facilities to be built in the Delamar Valley SEZ could be more important than those built in other
6 states in terms of reducing fuel combustion-related emissions.
7

8 As discussed in Section 5.11.2.5, the operation of associated transmission lines would
9 generate some air pollutants from activities such as periodic site inspections and maintenance.
10 However, these activities would occur infrequently, and the amount of emissions would be small.
11 In addition, transmission lines could produce minute amounts of O₃ and its precursor NO_x,
12 associated with corona discharge (i.e., the breakdown of air near high-voltage conductors),
13 which is most noticeable for high-voltage lines during rain or very humid conditions. Since
14 the Delamar Valley SEZ is located in an arid desert environment, these emissions would be
15 small; potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with transmission lines would be
16 negligible, considering the infrequent occurrences and small amount of emissions from corona
17 discharges.
18
19

20 ***11.2.13.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation***

21

22 As discussed in Section 5.11.2.4, decommissioning/reclamation activities are similar to
23 construction activities but are on a more limited scale and of shorter duration. Potential impacts
24 on ambient air quality would be correspondingly less than those from construction activities.
25 Decommissioning activities would last for a short period, and their potential impacts would be
26 moderate and temporary. The same mitigation measures adopted during the construction phase
27 would also be implemented during the decommissioning phase (Section 5.11.3).
28
29

30 **11.2.13.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

31

32 No SEZ-specific design features are required. Limiting dust generation during
33 construction and operations at the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (such as increased watering
34 frequency or road paving or treatment) is a required design feature under BLM's Solar Energy
35 Program. These extensive fugitive dust control measures would keep off-site PM levels as low as
36 possible during construction.
37
38
39

1 **11.2.14 Visual Resources**

2
3
4 **11.2.14.1 Affected Environment**

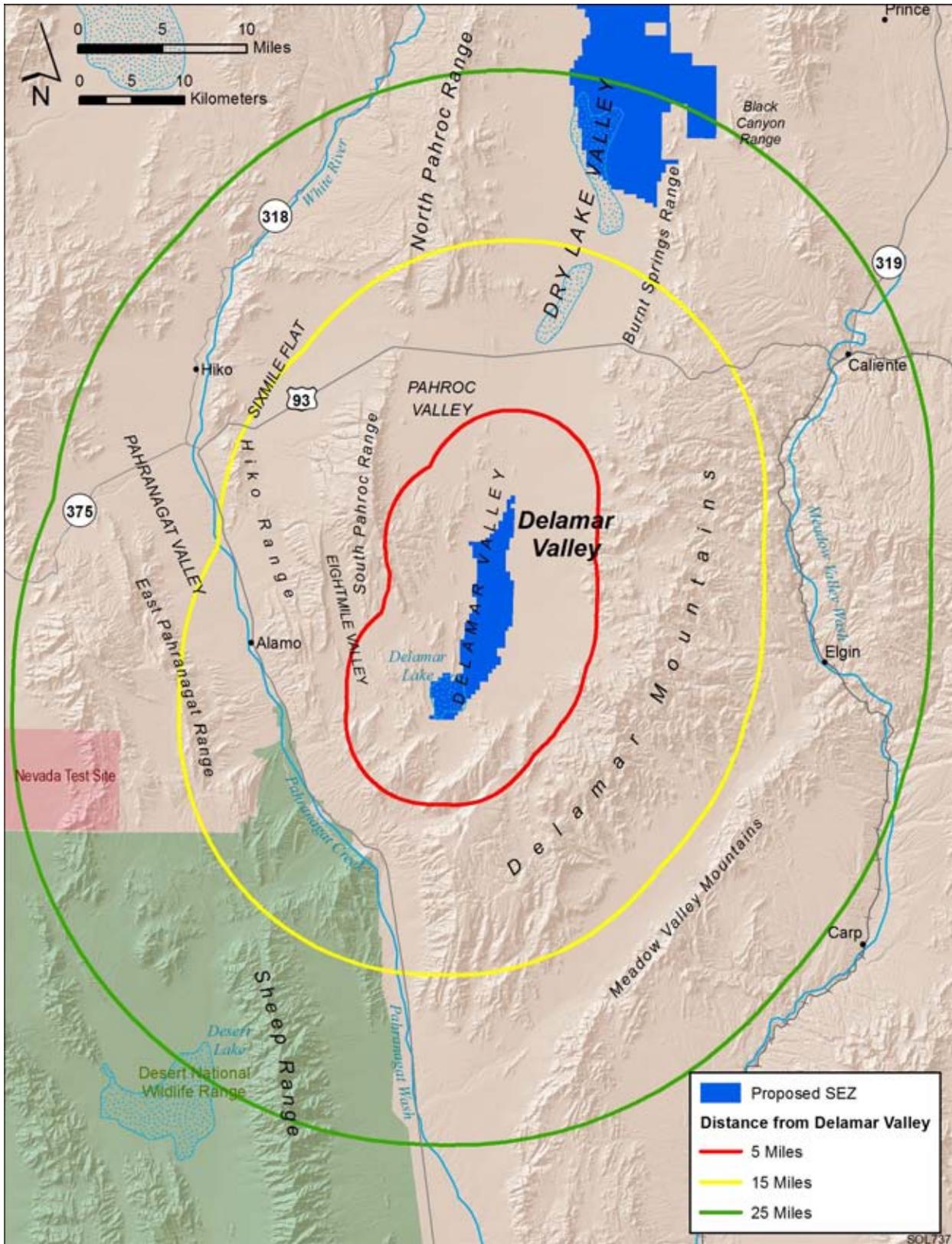
5
6
7 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located in Lincoln County in southeastern Nevada,
8 45 mi (72 km) west of the Utah border. The SEZ occupies 16,552 acres (66.984 km²) within the
9 Delamar Valley, and extends approximately 3.0 mi (4.8 km) east to west and approximately
10 13 mi (21 km) north to south. The SEZ ranges in elevation from approximately 4,540 ft
11 (1,380 m) in the southern portion to 4,760 ft (1,450 m) in the northern portion.

12
13 The SEZ lies within the Central Basin and Range Level III ecoregion, which is composed
14 of northerly trending fault-block ranges and intervening drier basins (Bryce et al. 2003). Valleys,
15 lower slopes, and alluvial fans are either shrub- and grass-covered, or shrub-covered. Higher
16 elevation mountain slopes support woodland, mountain brush, and scattered forests. Land uses
17 within the ecoregion include grazing with some irrigated cropland found in valleys near
18 mountain water sources. At Level IV, the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located within the
19 Tonopah Basin ecoregion, which is a transition between the Great Basin and the more southerly
20 Mojave Desert. It is typified by broad, nearly flat to rolling valleys containing lake plains,
21 scattered hills, alluvial fans, bajadas, sand dunes, and hot springs. Ephemeral washes occur.
22 Surface water comes from springs and sporadic foothill precipitation events, but is generally
23 scarce (Bryce et al. 2003).

24
25 Delamar Valley is bounded by mountain ranges to the east, southeast, and west, with
26 open views to the north. The Delamar Mountains rise about 4.7 mi (7.6 km) east of the SEZ. The
27 foothills of the South Pahroc Mountain range are located approximately 2.4 mi (3.9 km) west of
28 the SEZ. These ranges include peaks that are generally between 3,000 and 5,000 ft (914 and
29 1,524 m) in elevation, but some peaks are over 7,000 ft (2,134 m). From north to south, the broad
30 Delamar Valley extends approximately 20 mi (32 km) and 8.5 mi (13.7 km) wide. The SEZ and
31 surrounding mountain ranges are shown in Figure 11.2.14.1-1.

32
33 Vegetation is generally sparse in much of the SEZ, with low-height shrubs, grasses, and
34 bare soil. Vegetation within the SEZ is predominantly winterfat, with Joshua trees, spiny
35 hopsage, and other low shrubs dominating the Delamar Valley floor. During an August 2009 site
36 visit, the vegetation presented a limited range of muted colors, with medium to coarse textures,
37 and generally low visual interest. Within the SEZ, soils are somewhat sandy, fine textured, and
38 very light brown to tan in color.

39
40 The southern portion of the SEZ has more visual variety and scenic quality than the rest
41 of the SEZ. A very flat playa (Delamar Lake) is located at the southern end of the SEZ, with
42 nearly white soil that provides a strong visual contrast visible at great distances. Immediately
43 west of the playa are large boulders and a rocky ridge that provide strong form, color, and texture
44 contrast to the playa. They also contain rock art that attracts visitors. The northern portion of the
45 SEZ is a broad, flat valley with distant mountains and is of low scenic quality. There are no
46 visible water features; however, much of the SEZ collects surface water temporarily.



1
2
3

FIGURE 11.2.14.1-1 Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ and Surrounding Lands

1 Cultural disturbances visible within the SEZ include unpaved roads, transmission lines,
2 fences, corrals, and trash. Delamar Lake is used for various recreational activities, including
3 driving OHVs, racing, setting off pyrotechnics, and launching model rockets. Grazing occurs
4 outside of the dry lakebed. These cultural modifications generally detract from the scenic quality
5 of the SEZ; however, the SEZ is so large that from many locations within the SEZ these features
6 are either not visible or are so distant as to have minimal effect on views. From most locations
7 within the SEZ the landscape is generally natural in appearance, with little visible disturbance.
8

9 The general lack of topographic relief, water, and variety results in low scenic value
10 within the SEZ itself; however, because of the flatness of the landscape and the breadth of the
11 Delamar Valley, the SEZ and surrounding valley floor present a panoramic landscape with
12 sweeping views of the surrounding mountains that add to the scenic values within the SEZ
13 viewshed. The mountain slopes and peaks to the east and west of the SEZ are, in general,
14 visually pristine. As viewed from the SEZ, most of the surrounding mountains appear to be
15 devoid of vegetation, and their generally jagged, irregular form, and brown colors provide
16 dramatic visual contrasts to the strong horizontal line, green vegetation, and light-colored soils
17 of the valley floor, particularly when viewed from nearby locations within the SEZ. Panoramic
18 views of the SEZ are shown in Figures 11.2.14.1-2, 11.2.14.1-3, and 11.2.14.1-4.
19

20 The BLM conducted a VRI for the SEZ and surrounding lands in 2004. The VRI
21 evaluates BLM-administered lands based on scenic quality; sensitivity level, in terms of public
22 concern for preservation of scenic values in the evaluated lands; and distance from travel routes
23 or KOPs. Based on these three factors, BLM-administered lands are placed into one of four
24 Visual Resource Inventory Classes, which represent the relative value of the visual resources.
25 Classes I and II are the most valued; Class III represents a moderate value; and Class IV
26 represents the least value. Class I is reserved for specially designated areas, such as national
27 wildernesses and other congressionally and administratively designated areas for which decisions
28 have been made to preserve a natural landscape. Class II is the highest rating for lands without
29 special designation. More information about VRI methodology is presented in Section 5.12 and
30 in *Visual Resource Inventory*, BLM Manual Handbook 8410-1 (BLM 1986a).
31

32 The VRI values for the SEZ are VRI Class 4, indicating low relative visual values. Most
33 of the immediate surroundings are also VRI Class 4, with the exception of the area immediately
34 to the east of the SEZ, which is VRI Class 3 (BLM 2009d). The BLM conducted a new VRI for
35 the SEZ and surrounding lands in 2010; however, the VRI was not completed in time for the new
36 data to be included in the draft PEIS. The new VRI data will be incorporated into the analyses
37 presented in the final PEIS.
38

39 The *Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan*
40 (BLM 2008b) indicates that the site is managed as VRM Class IV, which permits major
41 modification of the existing character of the landscape. More information about the BLM VRM
42 program is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Management*, BLM Manual
43 Handbook 8400 (BLM 1984).
44
45
46

1



2 **FIGURE 11.2.14.1-2 Approximately 180° Panoramic View of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, Facing West across Delamar Flat**
3 **toward South Pahroc Range from Stock Pond in the South-Central Portion of the SEZ**

4

5

6



7 **FIGURE 11.2.14.1-3 Approximately 120° Panoramic View of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, Facing South toward Delamar**
8 **Mountain WA from the Northern Boundary of Delamar Lake**

9

10

11



12 **FIGURE 11.2.14.1-4 Approximately 120° Panoramic View of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ from the Far Northern Portion of the**
13 **SEZ, Facing South across the Delamar Flat, with Delamar Mountains at Left and Center and the South Pahroc Range on the Right**

1 **11.2.14.2 Impacts**
2

3 The potential for impacts from utility-scale solar energy development on visual resources
4 within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ and surrounding lands, as well as the impacts of related
5 projects (e.g., access roads and transmission lines) outside of the SEZ, is presented in this
6 section, as are SEZ-specific design features.
7

8 Site-specific impact assessment is needed to systematically and thoroughly assess visual
9 impact levels for a particular project. Without precise information about the location of a project,
10 a relatively complete and accurate description of its major components, and their layout, it is not
11 possible to assess precisely the visual impacts associated with the facility. However, if the
12 general nature and location of a facility are known, a more generalized assessment of potential
13 visual impacts can be made by describing the range of expected visual changes and discussing
14 contrasts typically associated with these changes. In addition, a general analysis can identify
15 sensitive resources that may be at risk if a future project is sited in a particular area. Detailed
16 information about the methodology employed for the visual impact assessment used in this PEIS,
17 including assumptions and limitations, is presented in Appendix M.
18
19

20 *Potential Glint and Glare Impacts.* Similarly, the nature and magnitude of potential glint-
21 and glare-related visual impacts for a given solar facility is highly dependent on viewer position,
22 sun angle, the nature of the reflective surface and its orientation relative to the sun and the
23 viewer, atmospheric conditions, and other variables. The determination of potential impacts from
24 glint and glare from solar facilities within a given proposed SEZ would require precise
25 knowledge of these variables and is not possible given the scope of this PEIS. Therefore, the
26 following analysis does not describe or suggest potential contrast levels arising from glint and
27 glare for facilities that might be developed within the SEZ; however, it should be assumed that
28 glint and glare are possible visual impacts from *any* utility-scale solar facility, regardless of size,
29 landscape setting, or technology type. The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could
30 potentially cause large though temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities.
31 The visual contrast levels projected for sensitive visual resource areas discussed in the following
32 analysis do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these effects would be
33 incorporated into a future site- and project-specific assessment that would be conducted for
34 specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more information about potential glint
35 and glare impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy facilities, see Section 5.12 of this
36 PEIS.
37
38

39 **11.2.14.2.1 Impacts on the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ**
40

41 Some or all of the SEZ could be developed for one or more utility-scale solar energy
42 projects, utilizing one or more of the solar energy technologies described in Appendix F.
43 Because of the industrial nature and large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities, large visual
44 impacts on the SEZ would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and decommissioning
45 of solar energy projects. In addition, large impacts could be associated with solar facilities
46 utilizing highly reflective surfaces or major light-emitting facility components (solar dish,

1 parabolic trough, and power tower technologies), with somewhat lesser impacts expected for
2 PV facilities. These impacts would be expected to involve major modification of the existing
3 character of the landscape and would likely dominate the views nearby. Additional, and
4 potentially large impacts would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and
5 decommissioning of related facilities, such as access roads and electric transmission lines. While
6 the primary visual impacts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ would
7 occur during daylight hours, lighting required for utility-scale solar energy facilities would be a
8 potential source of visual impacts at night, both within the SEZ and on surrounding lands.
9

10 Common and technology-specific visual impacts from utility-scale solar energy
11 development, as well as impacts associated with electric transmission lines, are discussed in
12 Section 5.12 of this PEIS. Impacts would last throughout construction, operation, and
13 decommissioning, and some impacts could continue after project decommissioning. Visual
14 impacts resulting from solar energy development in the SEZ would be in addition to impacts
15 from solar energy development and other development that may occur on other public or private
16 lands within the SEZ viewshed. For discussion of cumulative impacts, see Section 11.2.22.4.13
17 of this PEIS.
18

19 The changes described above would be expected to be consistent with BLM VRM
20 objectives for VRM Class IV, as viewed from nearby KOPs. The current VRM class designated
21 for the SEZ is VRM Class IV. More information about impact determination using the BLM
22 VRM program is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Contrast Rating*, BLM
23 Manual Handbook 8431-1 (BLM 1986b).
24

25 Implementation of the programmatic design features intended to reduce visual impacts
26 (described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would be expected to reduce visual impacts associated
27 with utility-scale solar energy development within the SEZ; however, the degree of effectiveness
28 of these design features could be assessed only at the site- and project-specific level. Given the
29 large scale, reflective surfaces, and strong regular geometry of utility-scale solar energy facilities
30 and the lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities
31 away from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive viewing areas would be the primary
32 means of mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other visual impact mitigation measures
33 would generally be limited, but would be important to reduce visual contrasts to the greatest
34 extent possible.
35
36

37 ***11.2.14.2.2 Impacts on Lands Surrounding the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ*** 38

39 Because of the large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat,
40 open nature of the proposed SEZ, lands outside the SEZ would be subjected to visual impacts
41 related to construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities.
42 The affected areas and extent of impacts depend on a number of visibility factors and viewer
43 distance (for a detailed discussion of visibility and related factors, see Section 5.7). A key
44 component in determining impact levels is the intervisibility between the project and potentially
45 affected lands; if topography, vegetation, or structures screen the project from viewer locations,
46 there is no impact.

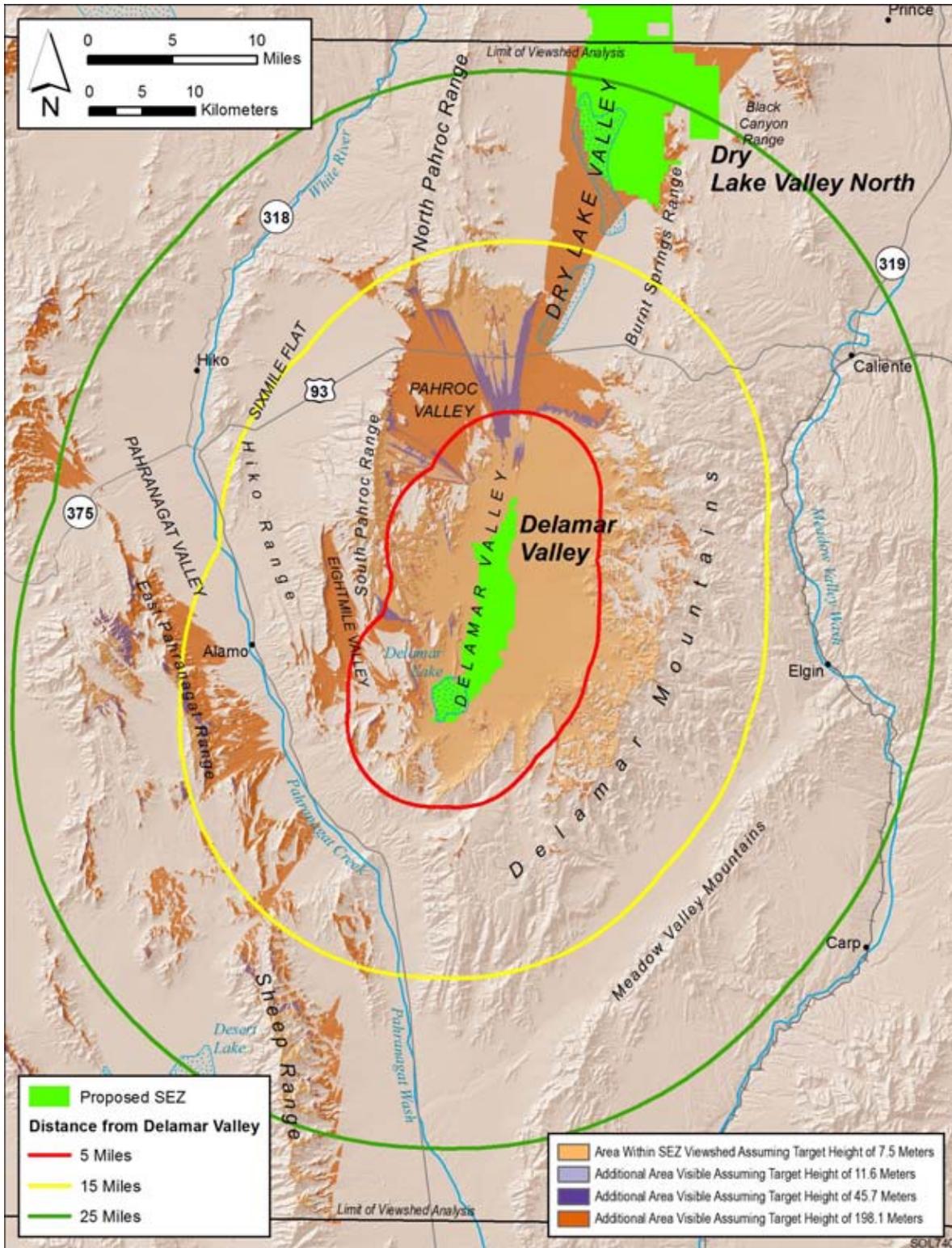
1 Preliminary viewshed analyses were run to identify which lands surrounding the
2 proposed SEZ are visible from the SEZ (see Appendix M for important information on
3 assumptions and limitations of the methods used). Four viewshed analyses were run, assuming
4 four different heights representative of project elements associated with potential solar energy
5 technologies: PV and parabolic trough arrays (24.6 ft [7.5 m]), solar dishes and power blocks for
6 CSP technologies (38 ft [11.6 m]), transmission towers and short solar power towers (150 ft
7 [45.7 m]), and tall solar power towers (650 ft [198.1 m]). Viewshed maps for the SEZ for all four
8 solar technology heights are presented in Appendix N.
9

10 Figure 11.2.14.2-1 shows the combined results of the viewshed analyses for all four solar
11 technologies. The colored segments indicate areas with clear lines of sight to one or more areas
12 within the SEZ and from which solar facilities within these areas of the SEZ would be expected
13 to be visible, assuming the absence of screening vegetation or structures and adequate lighting
14 and other atmospheric conditions. The light brown areas are locations from which PV and
15 parabolic trough arrays located in the SEZ could be visible. Solar dishes and power blocks for
16 CSP technologies would be visible from the areas shaded in light brown and the additional areas
17 shaded in light purple. Transmission towers and short solar power towers would be visible from
18 the areas shaded light brown and light purple, and the additional areas shaded in dark purple.
19 Power tower facilities located in the SEZ could be visible from areas shaded light brown, light
20 purple, and dark purple, and at least the upper portions of power tower receivers could be visible
21 from the additional areas shaded in medium brown.
22

23 For the following visual impact discussion, the tall solar power tower (650 ft [198.1 m])
24 and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds are shown in figures and
25 discussed in the text. These heights represent the maximum and minimum landscape visibility
26 for solar energy technologies analyzed in this PEIS. Viewsheds for solar dish and CSP
27 technology power blocks (38 ft [11.6 m]) and transmission towers and short solar power towers
28 (150 ft [45.7 m]) are presented in Appendix N. The visibility of these facilities would fall
29 between that for tall power towers and PV and parabolic trough arrays.
30
31

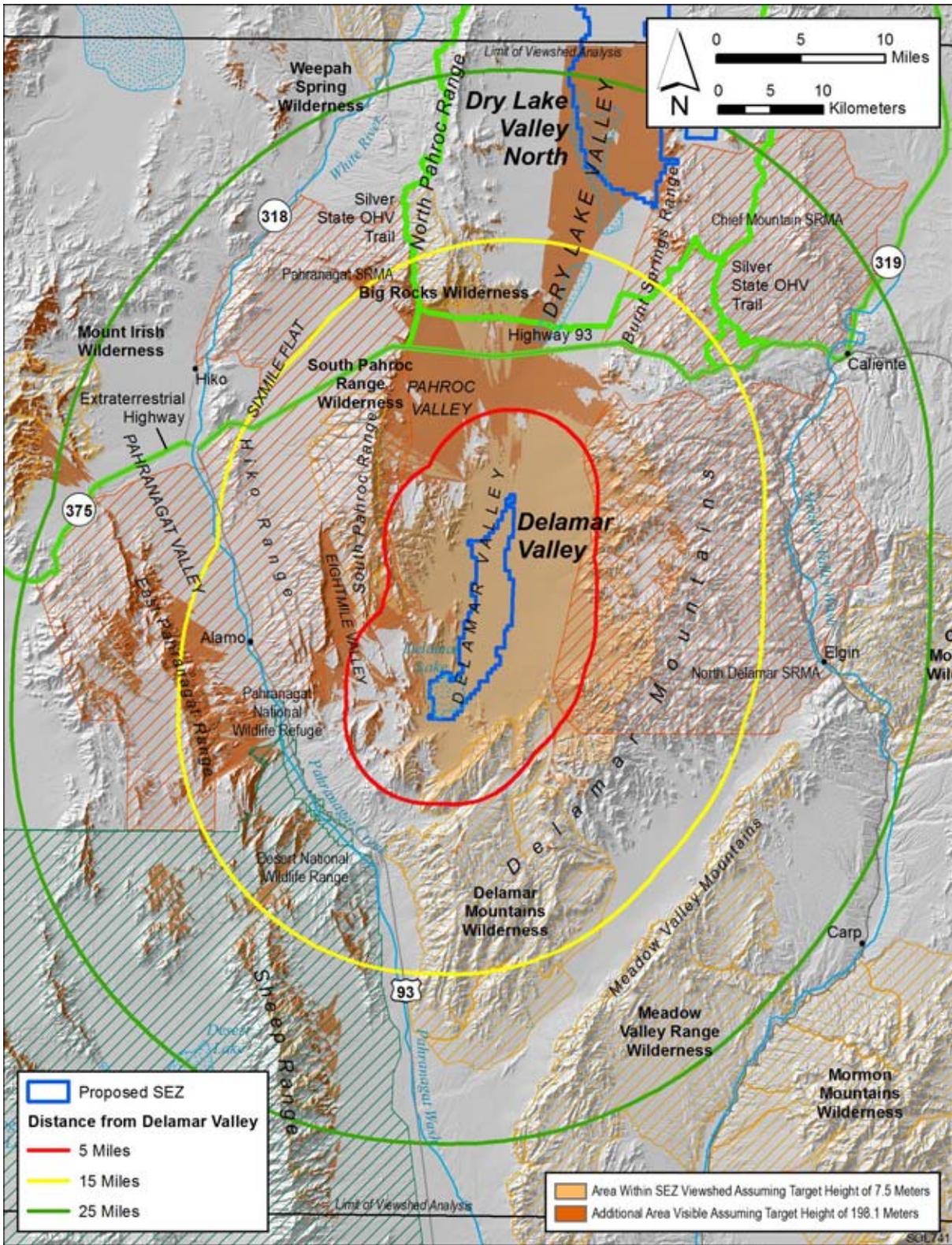
32 **Impacts on Selected Federal-, State-, and BLM-Designated Sensitive Visual** 33 **Resource Areas** 34

35 Figure 11.2.14.2-2 shows the results of a GIS analysis that overlays selected federal-,
36 state-, and BLM-designated sensitive visual resource areas onto the combined tall solar power
37 tower (650 ft [198.1 m]) and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds, in order
38 to illustrate which of these sensitive visual resource areas would have views of solar facilities
39 within the SEZ and therefore are potentially subject to visual impacts from those facilities.
40 Distance zones that correspond with BLM's VRM system-specified foreground–middleground
41 distance (5 mi [8 km]), background distance (15 mi [24 km]), and a 25-mi (40-km) distance zone
42 are shown as well, in order to indicate the effect of distance from the SEZ on impact levels,
43 which are highly dependent on distance.
44



1

2 **FIGURE 11.2.14.2-1 Viewshed Analyses for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ and**
 3 **Surrounding Lands, Assuming Solar Technology Heights of 24.6 ft (7.5 m), 38 ft (11.6 m),**
 4 **150 ft (45.7 m), and 650 ft (198.1 m) (shaded areas indicate lands from which solar**
 5 **development within the SEZ could be visible)**



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.2.14.2-2 Overlay of Selected Sensitive Visual Resource Areas onto Combined 650-ft**
 3 **(198.1-m) and 24.6-ft (7.5-m) Viewsheds for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ**
 4

1
2 The scenic resources included in the analysis were as follows:
3

- 4 • National Parks, National Monuments, National Recreation Areas, National
5 Preserves, National Wildlife Refuges, National Reserves, National
6 Conservation Areas, National Historic Sites;
7
- 8 • Congressionally authorized Wilderness Areas;
9
- 10 • Wilderness Study Areas;
11
- 12 • National Wild and Scenic Rivers;
13
- 14 • Congressionally authorized Wild and Scenic Study Rivers;
15
- 16 • National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails;
17
- 18 • National Historic Landmarks and National Natural Landmarks;
19
- 20 • All-American Roads, National Scenic Byways, State Scenic Highways, and
21 BLM- and USFS-designated scenic highways/byways;
22
- 23 • BLM-designated Special Recreation Management Areas; and
24
- 25 • ACECs designated because of outstanding scenic qualities.
26

27 Potential impacts on specific sensitive resource areas visible from and within 25 mi
28 (40 km) of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are discussed below. The results of this analysis
29 are also summarized in Table 11.2.14.2-1. Further discussion of impacts on these areas
30 is presented in Sections 11.2.3 (Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness
31 Characteristics) and 11.2.17 (Cultural Resources) of this PEIS.
32

33 The following visual impact analysis describes *visual contrast levels* rather than *visual*
34 *impact levels*. *Visual contrasts* are changes in the seen landscape, including changes in the forms,
35 lines, colors, and textures of objects seen in the landscape. A measure of *visual impact* includes
36 potential human reactions to the visual contrasts arising from a development activity, based on
37 viewer characteristics, including attitudes and values, expectations, and other characteristics that
38 that are viewer- and situation-specific. Accurate assessment of visual impacts requires
39 knowledge of the potential types and numbers of viewers for a given development and their
40 characteristics and expectations; specific locations where the project might be viewed from; and
41 other variables that were not available or not feasible to incorporate in the PEIS analysis. These
42 variables would be incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be
43 conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more discussion of visual
44 contrasts and impacts, see Section 5.12 of the PEIS.
45

TABLE 11.2.14.2-1 Selected Potentially Affected Sensitive Visual Resources within 25-mi (40-km) Viewshed of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, Assuming Power Tower Technology with a Target Height of 650 ft (198.1 m)

Feature Type	Feature Name and Total Acreage/Length ^a	Feature Area or Linear Distance		
		Visible within 5 mi	Visible between	
			5 mi and 15 mi	15 mi and 25 mi
WAs	Big Rocks (12,929 acres)	0 acres	2,531 acres (20%) ^b	3 acres (0.2%)
	Delamar Mountains (111,060 acres)	5,179 acres (5%) ^b	663 acres (0.6%)	0 acres
	Mount Irish (28,283 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	198 acres (0.7%)
	South Pahroc Range (25,674 acres)	1,566 acres (6%)	4,846 acres (19%)	36 acres (0.1%)
National Wildlife Range	Desert (1,626,903 acres)	0 acres	4,948 acres (0.3%)	14,463 acres (0.9%)
NWR	Pahranagat (5,540 acres)	0 acres	10 acres (0.2%)	0 acres
SRMAs	Chief Mountain (111,151 acres)	0 acres	222 acres (0.2%)	1,549 acres (1%)
	North Delamar (202,839 acres)	9,947 acres (5%)	27,700 acres (14%)	0 acres
	Pahranagat (298,567 acres)	3,504 acres (1%)	35,341 acres (12%)	13,774 acres (5%)
Scenic Highways	U.S. 93 (149 mi, 240 km)	0 mi	8.8 mi	0 mi
	Silver State Trail	0 mi	14 mi	0 mi

^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047; to convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

^b Percentage of total feature area for areal features.

GOOGLE EARTH™ VISUALIZATIONS

The visual impact analysis discussion in this section utilizes three-dimensional Google Earth™ perspective visualizations of hypothetical solar facilities placed within the SEZ. The visualizations include simplified wireframe models of a hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed at various locations within the SEZ as visual aids for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of utility-scale solar facilities. The visualizations are intended to show the apparent size, distance, and configuration of the SEZ, as well as the apparent size of a typical utility-scale solar power tower project and its relationship to the surrounding landscape, as viewed from potentially sensitive visual resource areas within the viewshed of the SEZ.

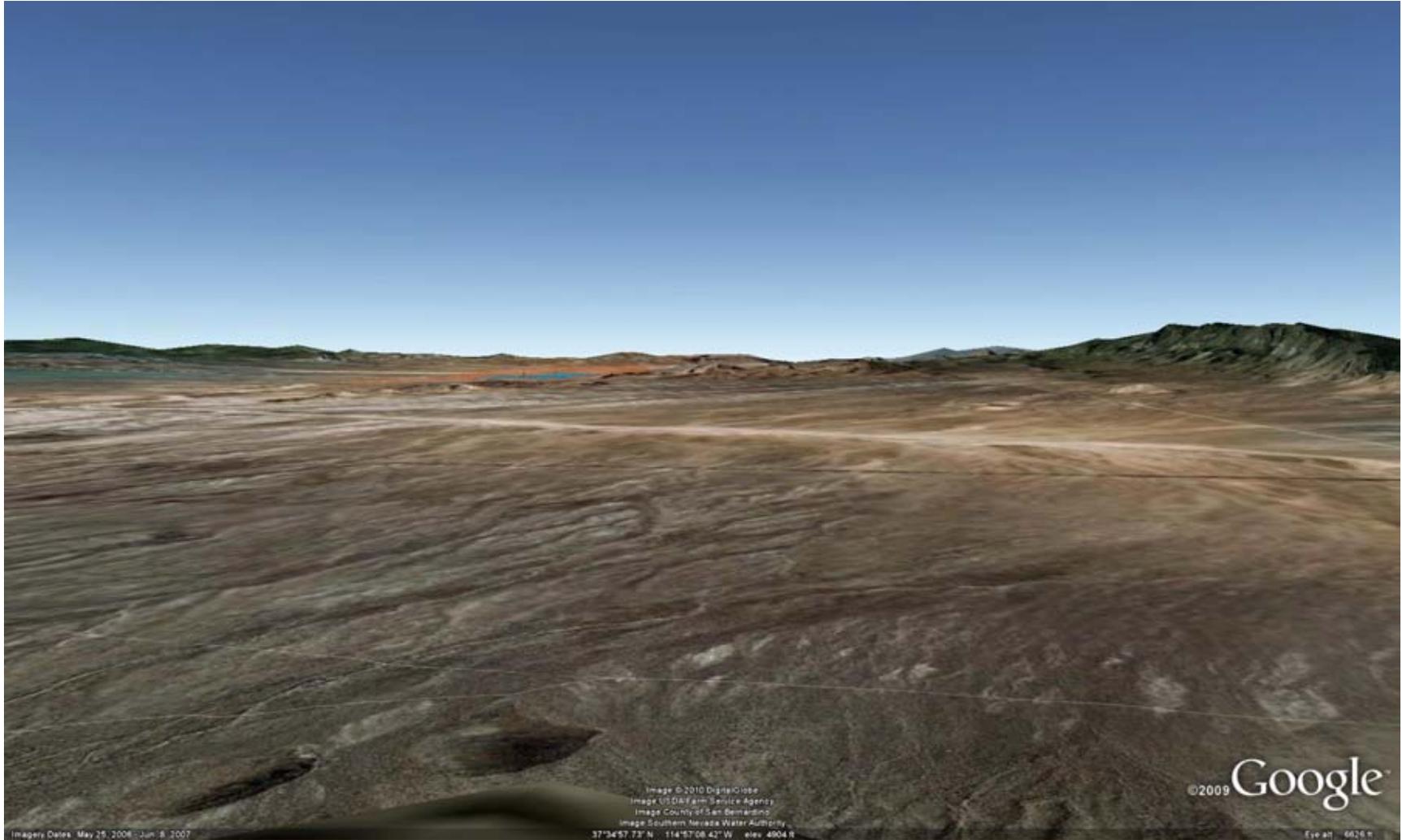
The visualizations are not intended to be realistic simulations of the actual appearance of the landscape or of proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. The placement of models within the SEZ did not reflect any actual planned or proposed projects within the SEZ, and did not take into account engineering or other constraints that would affect the siting or choice of facilities for this particular SEZ. The number of facility models placed in the SEZ does not reflect the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, but it should be noted that the discussion of expected visual contrast levels does account for the 80% development scenario. A solar power tower was chosen for the models because the unique height characteristics of power tower facilities make their visual impact potential extend beyond other solar technology types.

Wilderness Areas

- *Big Rocks*—Big Rocks Wilderness is a 12,929-acre (52.322 km²) congressionally designated WA located 12 mi (19km) north–northwest of the SEZ. Recreational opportunities include climbing, bouldering, camping, hiking, backpacking, hunting, and horseback riding.

As shown in Figure 11.2.14.2-2, solar energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible from the southern portion of the WA (approximately 2,534 acres [10.26 km²] in the 650-ft [198.1-m] viewshed, or 20% of the total WA acreage, and 2,221 acres [8.988 km²] in the 24.6-ft [7.5-m] viewshed, or 17% of the total WA acreage). The visible area of the WA extends to approximately 15mi (24 km) from the northern boundary of the SEZ.

Figure 11.2.14.2-3 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in orange) as seen from an unnamed peak in the southern portion of the WA, approximately 14 mi (23 km) from the northernmost boundary of the SEZ. The visualization includes simplified wireframe models of a hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed within the SEZ as a visual aid for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of utility-scale solar facilities. The receiver towers depicted in the visualization are properly scaled models of a 459-ft (139.9-m) power tower with an 867-acre (3.5-km²) field of 12-ft (3.7-m) heliostats, each representing approximately 100 MW of electric generating capacity. Four models were placed in the SEZ for this and other visualizations shown in this section of this PEIS. In the visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.



1

FIGURE 11.2.14.2-3 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from an Unnamed Peak within the Southern Portion of Big Rocks WA

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1 The visualization suggests that as seen from the WA, the southern portion of
2 the SEZ would be screened from view by the South Pahroc Range and, in
3 addition, the horizontal angle of view would be along the narrow, north-south
4 axis of the SEZ, so the SEZ would occupy a very small portion of the field of
5 view. Furthermore, because of the relatively long distance to the SEZ, the
6 vertical angle of view would be low, and solar facilities within the SEZ would
7 be seen edge-on, which would reduce their apparent size, conceal their strong
8 regular geometry, and cause them to appear to repeat the strong line of the
9 horizon, all of which would tend to reduce associated visual contrasts.

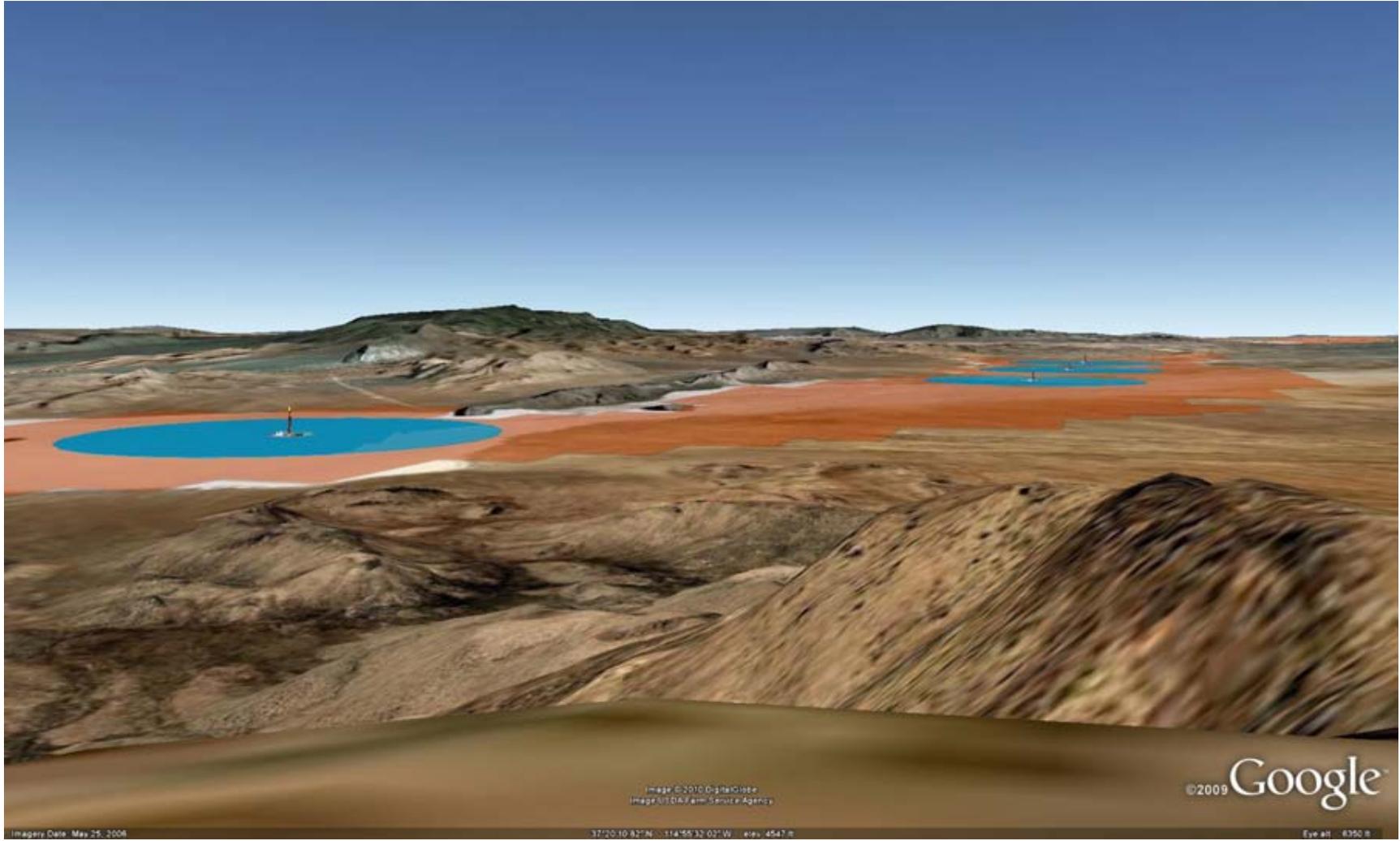
10
11 If power towers were located in the visible portions of the SEZ, when
12 operating, they would likely appear as points of light under the southern
13 horizon, against a backdrop of the valley floor. At night, if more than 200 ft
14 (61 m) tall, power towers would have navigation warning lights that could
15 potentially be visible from this location in the WA, and could be prominent in
16 the dark night skies of this remote area.

17
18 The small apparent size of the SEZ and low angle of view suggest that under
19 the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, weak levels of visual
20 contrast would be expected from solar development within the SEZ, as seen
21 from Big Rocks WA.

- 22
23 • *Delamar Mountains*—Delamar Mountains is an 111,060-acre (449.444-km²)
24 congressionally designated WA located 1.8 mi (2.9 km) southeast of the SEZ
25 at the point of closest approach. Recreational opportunities include camping,
26 hiking, rock scrambling, backpacking, hunting, and horseback riding. The
27 higher peaks in the central and eastern portions provide expansive views of
28 nearby mountains and valleys, including the Delamar Dry Lake bed.

29
30 As shown in Figure 11.2.14.2-2, within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar
31 energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible from portions of the northern
32 part of the WA. Visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi (40-km) radius of
33 analysis total approximately 5,827 acres (23.58 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m)
34 viewshed, or 5% of the total WA acreage, and 5,171 acres (20.93 km²) in the
35 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 5% of the total WA acreage. The visible area of
36 the WA extends to approximately 4.5 mi (7.2 km) from the southeastern
37 corner of the SEZ; thus the entire visible area is within the BLM VRM
38 program's foreground–middleground distance (5 mi [8 km]).

39
40 Figure 11.2.14.2-4 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
41 orange) as seen from an unnamed peak in the northwestern portion of the WA
42 (elevation approximately 6,340 ft [1,930 m]), approximately 2.8 mi (2.5 km)
43 from the southeastern boundary of the SEZ. The viewpoint is about 1,800 ft
44 (550 m) above the nearest point in the SEZ. The visualization suggests that
45 from this viewpoint the SEZ would nearly fill the horizontal field of view. The
46 SEZ would be visible as a wide band across the valley floor, and the proposed



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FIGURE 11.2.14.2-4 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from an Unnamed Peak within the Northwestern Portion of the Delamar Mountains WA

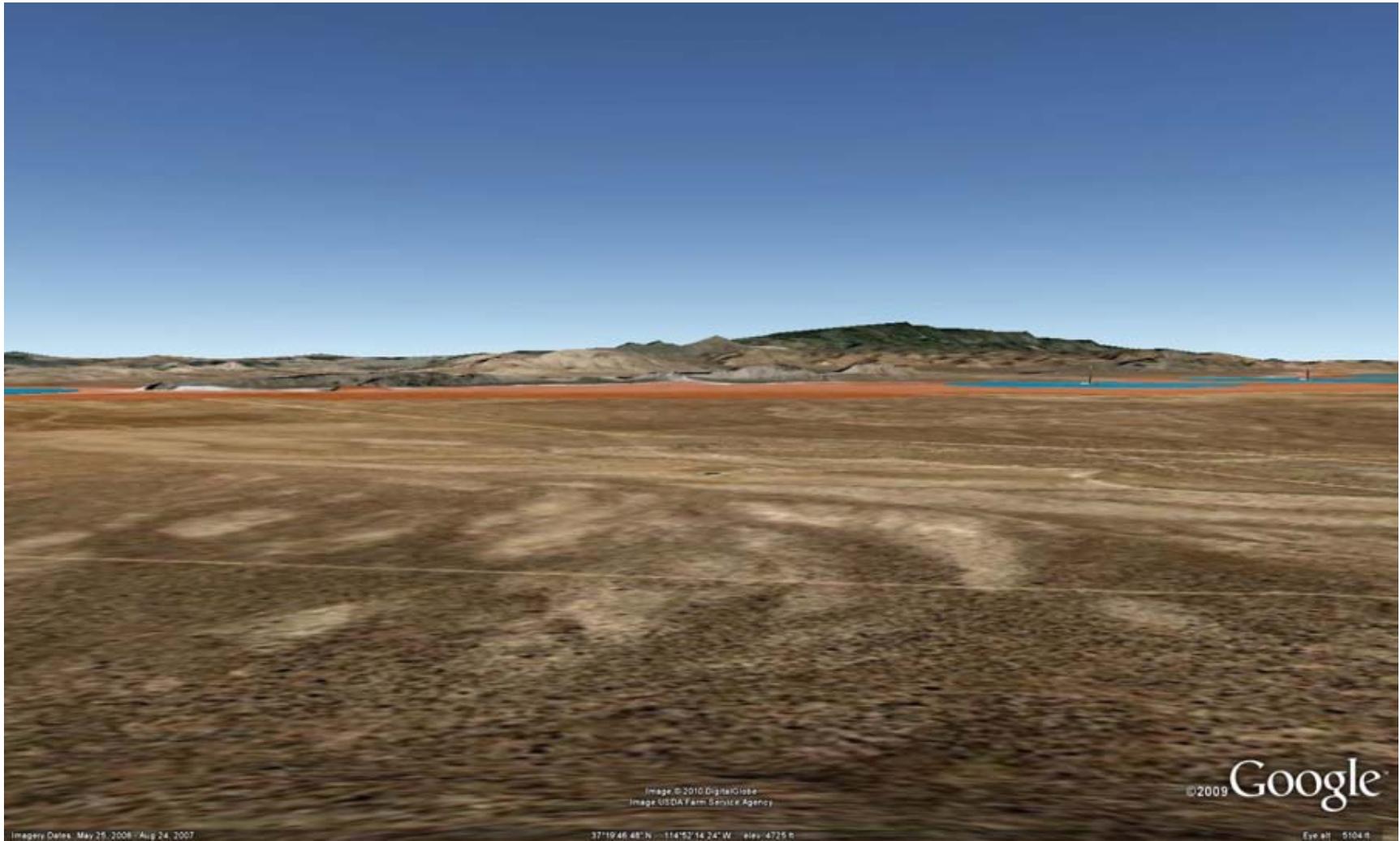
1 Dry Lake North SEZ would be visible in the far distance north of the Delamar
2 Lake SEZ. The tops of solar collector/reflector arrays associated with solar
3 facilities within the SEZ would be visible, increasing the facilities' apparent
4 sizes and making the strong regular geometry of the collector/reflector arrays
5 more apparent, and thus introducing form, texture, and color contrasts to an
6 otherwise natural-appearing setting. Under the 80% development scenario
7 analyzed in the PEIS, a variety of solar facilities within the SEZ would likely
8 be visible, and the contrasting project layouts and associated infrastructure
9 could appear cluttered and lacking in visual unity.

10
11 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, and
12 cooling towers; and plumes (if present) would likely be visible projecting
13 above the collector/reflector arrays, and their structural details could be
14 evident, at least for nearby facilities. The ancillary facilities could create form
15 and line contrasts with the strongly horizontal, regular, and repeating forms
16 and lines of the collector/reflector arrays. Color and texture contrasts would
17 also be likely, but their extent would depend on the materials and surface
18 treatments utilized in the facilities.

19
20 When operating, the receivers of power towers within the SEZ would be
21 visible as very bright nonpoint light sources (i.e., having cylindrical or
22 rectangular surface area visible) against the backdrop of the valley floor. The
23 tower structures would likely be visible. At night, if more than 200 ft (61 m)
24 tall, power towers would have navigation warning lights that would likely be
25 visible from this location and could be conspicuous, given the dark night skies
26 typical of the area. Other lighting associated with solar facilities could be
27 visible as well.

28
29 Visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ would depend
30 on the numbers, types, sizes and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and
31 other visibility factors. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the
32 PEIS, Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar
33 facilities and their designs, and other visibility factors, strong visual contrasts
34 from solar energy development within the SEZ would be expected at this
35 viewpoint.

36
37 Figure 11.2.14.2-5 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
38 orange) as seen from the side slope of a much lower elevation ridge in the
39 northeastern portion of the WA (elevation approximately 5,100 ft [1,560 m]),
40 approximately 3.1 mi (5.0 km) from the southeastern boundary of the SEZ.
41 The visualization suggests that from this viewing angle and short distance to
42 the SEZ, the SEZ would be too large to be encompassed in one view, and
43 viewers would need to turn their heads to scan across the whole SEZ. The
44 relatively low elevation (approximately 500 ft [150 m] above the nearest point
45 in the SEZ) would reduce the vertical angle of view, and the SEZ would be



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FIGURE 11.2.14.2-5 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from an Unnamed Peak within the Far Northeastern Portion of the Delamar Mountains WA

1 visible as a narrow band across the valley floor. The tops of solar collector/
2 reflector arrays associated with solar facilities within the SEZ would be
3 visible, increasing the facilities' apparent sizes slightly and making the strong
4 regular geometry of the collector/reflector arrays somewhat more apparent.
5

6 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, and
7 cooling towers; and plumes (if present) would likely be visible, and their
8 structural details could be evident. The ancillary facilities could create form
9 and line contrasts with the strongly horizontal, regular, and repeating forms
10 and lines of the collector/reflector arrays, with color and texture contrasts
11 dependent on the materials and surface treatments utilized in the facilities.
12

13 The receivers of operating power towers within the SEZ would be visible as
14 very bright nonpoint light sources against the backdrop of the mountains
15 across the Delamar Valley during the day and, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall,
16 would have navigation warning lights at night that could be conspicuous from
17 this location. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS,
18 strong levels of visual contrast would be expected.
19

20 Overall, under the 80% development scenario, strong visual contrasts would
21 be expected from solar energy facilities within the SEZ, as viewed from
22 portions of the Delamar Mountains WA within the SEZ 25 mi (40 km)
23 viewshed. The highest contrast levels would be expected at the highest
24 elevations in the northwest portions of the WA, with slightly lower levels of
25 contrast expected for lower elevations within the WA, where the lower
26 viewing angle would decrease the apparent size and visual contrast of solar
27 facilities within the SEZ.
28

- 29 • *Mount Irish*—Mount Irish Wilderness is a 22,283-acre (90.176-km²)
30 congressionally designated WA located 22 mi (35 km) northwest of the
31 SEZ at the point of closest approach. Opportunities for recreation in this
32 area include hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, photography, nature
33 study, and hunting.
34

35 As shown in Figure 11.2.14.2-2, within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar
36 energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible from the far eastern portion
37 of the WA. Visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi (40-km) radius of
38 analysis total approximately 198 acres (0.801 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m)
39 viewshed, or 0.7% of the total WA acreage. None of the WA is within the
40 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. The area of the WA with potential visibility of solar
41 facilities in the SEZ extends to beyond 25 mi (40 km) from the northwestern
42 corner of the SEZ.
43

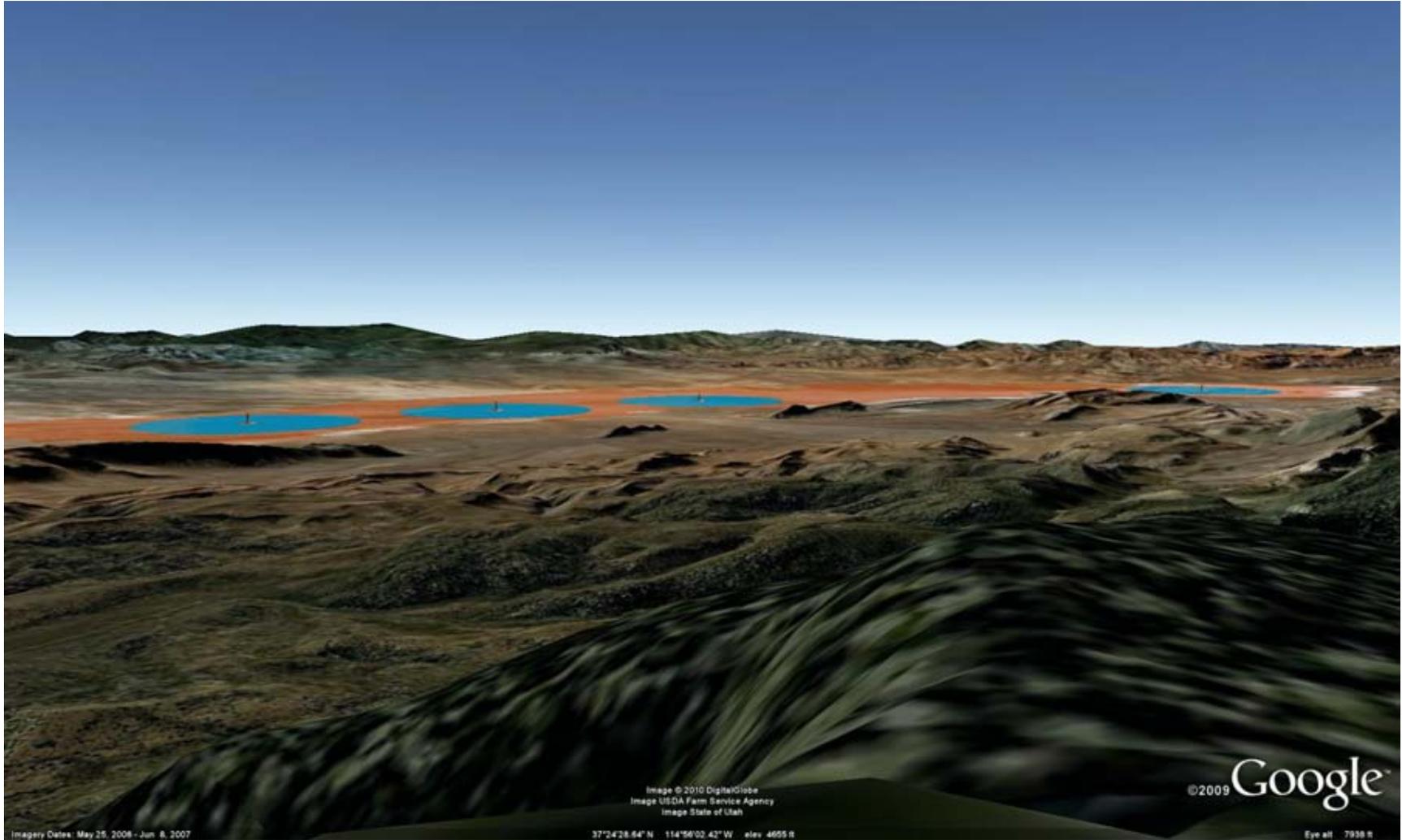
44 The South Pahroc Range entirely screens the ground surface of the SEZ from
45 view from the WA. Only the upper portions of sufficiently tall power towers
46 within the SEZ would be visible from a very small area within the WA. From

1 within this area, if power tower receivers were located at specific locations
2 within the SEZ, the light atop the receiver towers might be visible as distant
3 points of light just over the tops of the South Pahroc Range east–southeast of
4 the WA. At night hazard warning lights on taller power towers might be
5 visible. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, expected
6 visual contrasts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ
7 would be minimal.

- 8
9 • *South Pahroc Range*—South Pahroc Range Wilderness is a 25,674-acre
10 (103.90-km²) congressionally designated wilderness area (WA) located 3.6 mi
11 (5.8 km) west of the SEZ at the point of closest approach. Hiking,
12 backpacking, horseback riding, camping, and rock climbing are popular
13 activities in the WA, with scenic overlooks and wide vistas available; the WA
14 provides vantage points for views of vast desert valleys, interrupted by chains
15 of distant mountains.

16
17 Within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar energy facilities within the SEZ could
18 be visible from the eastern edge of the mountain range within the WA
19 (approximately 6,448 acres [26.09 km²] in the 650-ft [198.1-m] viewshed, or
20 25% of the total WA acreage, and 5,007 acres [20.26 km²] in the 24.6-ft
21 [7.5-m] viewshed, or 20% of the total WA acreage). The visible area of the
22 WA extends from the point of closest approach to approximately 6.5 mi
23 (10.5 km) from the western boundary of the SEZ.

24
25 Figure 11.2.14.2-6 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
26 orange) as seen from Hyko Benchmark (elevation approximately 7,950 ft
27 [2,420 m]) in the south central portion of the South Pahroc Range,
28 approximately 6.5 mi (10.4 km) from the western boundary of the SEZ. The
29 visualization suggests that almost the entire SEZ would be visible, and it
30 would stretch across the horizontal field of view. Because of the relatively
31 short distance to the SEZ and the large elevation difference, the vertical angle
32 of view is relatively high. The SEZ would be visible as a broad band across
33 the valley floor. The tops of solar collector/reflector arrays associated with
34 solar facilities within the SEZ would be visible, increasing the facilities'
35 apparent sizes and making the strong regular geometry of the collector/
36 reflector arrays more apparent, and thus introducing form, texture, and color
37 contrasts to an otherwise natural-appearing setting. Under the 80%
38 development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, a variety of solar facilities within
39 the SEZ would likely be visible, and the contrasting project layouts and
40 associated infrastructure could appear cluttered and lacking in visual unity.
41 Taller solar facility components, such as transmission towers, cooling towers,
42 STG components, and plumes (if present) would likely be visible, and if so,
43 could contrast substantially with the strongly horizontal and regular geometry
44 of the collector/reflector arrays. The receivers of operating power towers
45 within the SEZ would be visible as very bright nonpoint or point light sources
46 against the backdrop of the valley floor during the day and, if more than 200 ft



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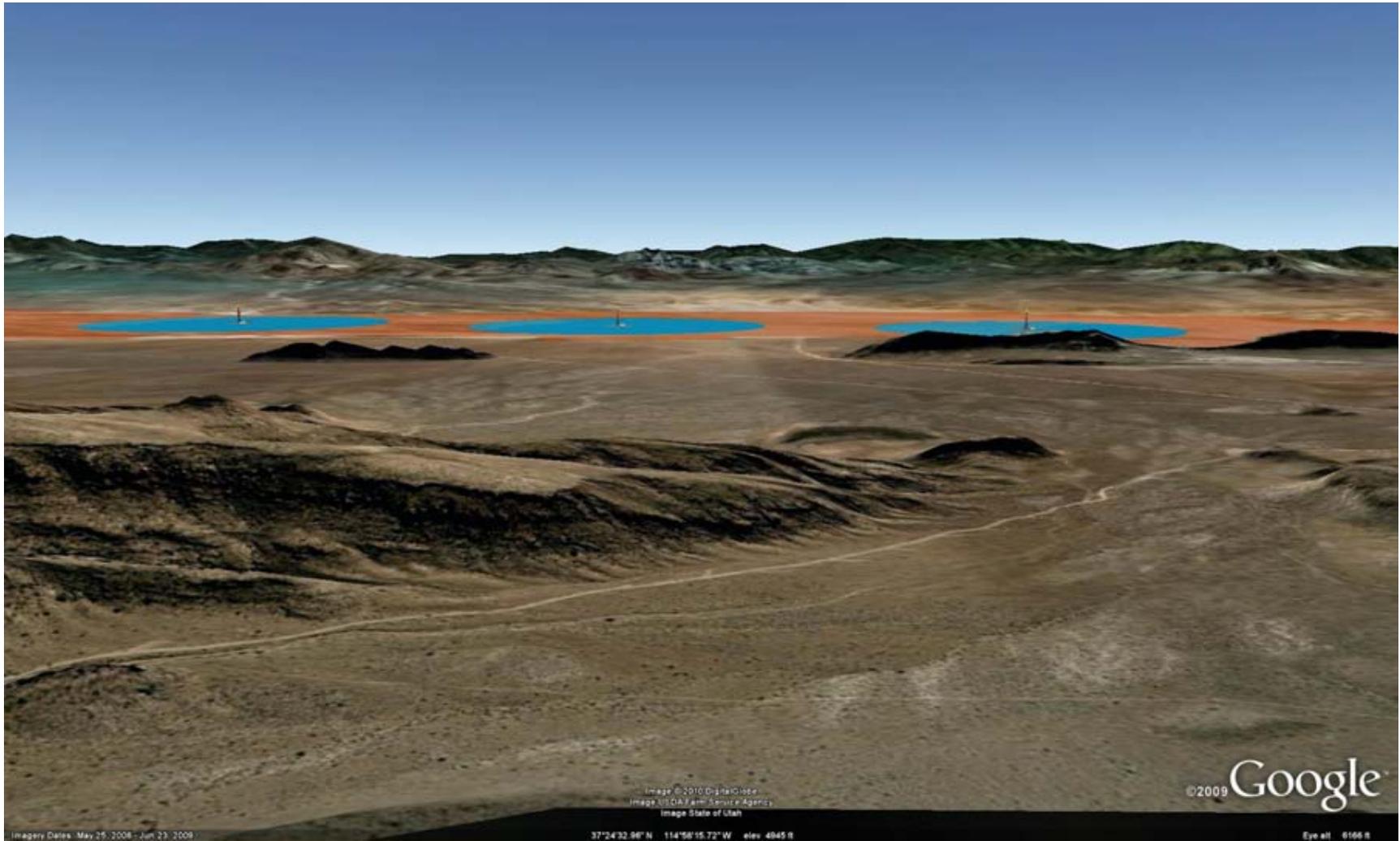
FIGURE 11.2.14.2-6 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Hyko Benchmark within the South Pahroc Range WA

1 (61 m) tall, would have navigation warning lights at night that could be
2 conspicuous from this location. Under the 80% development scenario
3 analyzed in this PEIS, strong levels of visual contrast would be expected.
4

5 Figure 11.2.14.2-7 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
6 orange) as seen from an unnamed ridge in the far southern end of the WA
7 (elevation approximately 6,160 ft [1,880 m]), approximately 4.5 mi (7.2 km)
8 from the western boundary of the SEZ. This distance is within the BLM VRM
9 program's foreground–middleground viewing distance. The visualization
10 suggests that from this viewpoint the SEZ would be too large to be
11 encompassed in one view, and viewers would need to turn their heads to scan
12 across the whole SEZ. The SEZ would be visible as a band across the valley
13 floor. The tops of solar collector/reflector arrays associated with solar
14 facilities within the SEZ would be visible, increasing the facilities' apparent
15 sizes and making the strong regular geometry of the collector/reflector arrays
16 more apparent, and thus introducing form, texture, and color contrasts to an
17 otherwise natural-appearing setting. Under the 80% development scenario
18 analyzed in this PEIS, a variety of solar facilities within the SEZ would likely
19 be visible, and the contrasting project layouts and associated infrastructure
20 could appear cluttered and lacking in visual unity. Taller ancillary facilities,
21 such as buildings, transmission structures, and cooling towers; and plumes (if
22 present) would likely be visible projecting above the collector/reflector arrays,
23 and could contrast substantially with the strongly horizontal and regular
24 geometry of the collector/reflector arrays. The receivers of operating power
25 towers within the SEZ would be visible as very bright nonpoint light sources
26 against the backdrop of the valley floor, and if sufficiently tall, would have
27 hazard warning lighting that could be conspicuous from this viewpoint, given
28 the dark night skies typical in the vicinity of the SEZ. Under the 80%
29 development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, strong levels of visual contrast
30 would be expected.
31

32 At lower elevations within the WA, intervening mountains screen much of the
33 SEZ from view. Viewing angles are lower, further reducing the apparent size
34 of solar facilities within the SEZ. Weak visual contrast would be expected for
35 many of these locations.
36

37 In general, visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ
38 would depend on viewer location in the WA, the numbers, types, sizes and
39 locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and other project- and site-specific
40 factors. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, where
41 there were unobstructed views, contrasts would be expected to be weak to
42 strong, as viewed from portions of the South Pahroc WA within the SEZ
43 viewshed. The highest contrast levels would be expected at the highest
44 elevations in the central and southern portions of the WA, with lower levels of
45 contrast expected for lower elevations within the WA, where the lower
46



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FIGURE 11.2.14.2-7 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from an Unnamed Peak within the Southern Portion of the South Pahroc Range WA

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1 viewing angle and proximity of intervening mountains would decrease
2 visibility of the SEZ.

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5 ***National Wildlife Range***

- 6
7 • *Desert*—The 1,626,903-acre (6,583.843-km²) Desert National Wildlife Range
8 is located 8.7 mi (14.0 km) west of the SEZ at the point of closest approach.
9 The Wildlife Range contains six major mountain ranges, the highest rising
10 from 2,500-ft (762-m) valleys to nearly 10,000 ft (3,048 m). Camping, hiking,
11 backpacking, horseback riding, hunting, and bird watching are all popular
12 activities enjoyed by refuge visitors.

13
14 Approximately 19,411 acres (78.554 km²), or 1% of the Wildlife Range, are
15 within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ, and 2,836 acres
16 (11.477 km²), 0.2% of the Wildlife Range, are within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m)
17 viewshed. The portions of the Wildlife Range that would potentially have
18 views of solar facilities within the SEZ extend from approximately 8.7 mi
19 (14.0 km) from the SEZ to scattered locations within 24 mi (39 km) of the
20 SEZ.

21
22 Visibility of the SEZ ground surface from the Wildlife Range would be
23 limited to the highest elevations within the range. From these viewpoints, the
24 closest of which is approximately 17 mi (27 km) from the SEZ, the South
25 Pahroc Range partially screens views of the SEZ and, in addition, the
26 horizontal angle of view is along the narrow southwest-northeast axis of the
27 SEZ, so the SEZ occupies a very small portion of the horizontal field of view.
28 In addition, because of the long distance to the SEZ, the angle of view is very
29 low, further decreasing visibility of the SEZ and any solar facilities within it.
30 Weak visual contrasts from solar development within the SEZ would be
31 expected for these viewpoints.

32
33 The upper portions of sufficiently tall power tower receivers could be visible
34 from a much greater area of the Wildlife Range, and from lower elevations,
35 but views of the SEZ are partially screened by the South Pahroc Range, so
36 views of power tower receivers would be limited to gaps in the intervening
37 mountain range. Because the viewing direction is along the narrow
38 southwest–northeast axis of the southern portion of the SEZ, the likelihood of
39 seeing a power tower receiver within a gap is very low, and therefore expected
40 visual contrasts would be minimal.

41
42
43 ***National Wildlife Refuge***

- 44
45 • *Pahranagat*—The 5,540-acre (22.42-km²) Pahranagat NWR is located 8.2 mi
46 (13.2 km) southwest of the SEZ at the closest point of approach. Pahranagat

1 NWR was established to provide habitat for migratory birds, especially
2 waterfowl.

3
4 Approximately 10 acres (0.04 km²), or 0.2% of the NWR, are within the
5 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ. None of the NWR is visible within the
6 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. Visibility is limited to two very small areas on the
7 slopes of low hills on the far western edge of the NWR. The areas of visibility
8 do not include trails or other user facilities. From these areas, the tops of
9 sufficiently tall power towers might just be visible over the mountains of the
10 South Pahroc Range, but the area of the SEZ within view is so small as to
11 make this very unlikely. Visual impacts on the NWR would not be expected.
12
13

14 *SRMAs*

- 15
16 • *Chief Mountain*—The 111,151 acre (449.812 km²) Chief Mountain SRMA is
17 located approximately 10 mi (16 km) northeast of the SEZ, and portions of the
18 SRMA are within the SEZ 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed. Approximately
19 1,771 acres (7.167 km²), or 2% of the SRMA, are within the 650-ft (198.1-m)
20 viewshed of the SEZ, and 73 acres (0.30 km²), 0.1% of the SRMA, are within
21 the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. The portions of the SRMA within the viewshed
22 extend from approximately 12 mi (19.0 km) from the SEZ to scattered
23 locations within 24 mi (39 km) of the SEZ.
24

25 Areas within the SRMA with potential visibility of solar facilities within the
26 SEZ are limited to small, scattered locations on the western slopes and peaks
27 of the Burnt Springs Range. Within all but 73 acres of these areas, potential
28 visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ would be limited to the upper
29 portions of power towers located in a very small portion of the northern end of
30 the SEZ, as nearly the entire SEZ is screened from view by mountains in the
31 Burnt Springs Range south of the SRMA. Expected visual contrast levels
32 observed from within the SRMA are likely to be minimal, based primarily on
33 the extensive screening of the SEZ, but also the distance to the SEZ and the
34 very low angle of view between viewpoints in the SRMA and the SEZ.
35

36 *North Delamar*—The 202,839 acre (820.860 km²) North Delamar SRMA is
37 located approximately 3.3 mi (5.3 km) east of the SEZ at the point of closest
38 approach, and much of the western portion of the SRMA is within the SEZ
39 viewshed. The primary recreational values for the North Delamar SRMA
40 include non-motorized recreation, equestrianism, hiking, and mountain biking
41 (BLM 2007d).
42

43 As shown in Figure 11.2.14.2-2, approximately 37,647 acres (152.35 km²), or
44 19% of the SRMA, are within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ, and
45 32,966 acres (133.41 km²), 16% of the SRMA, are within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m)

1 viewed. The portions of the SRMA within the viewshed extend from the
2 point of closest approach to within 11 mi (18 km) of the SEZ.

3
4 Figure 11.2.14.2-8 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
5 orange) as seen from a road in the SRMA (elevation approximately 5,350 ft
6 [1,630 m]) on a low ridge on the western slopes of the Delamar Mountains,
7 approximately 4.8 mi (7.7 km) from the eastern boundary of the SEZ. The
8 view is perpendicular to the SEZ's relatively long north-south axis. The
9 visualization suggests that from this viewing angle and short distance to the
10 SEZ, the SEZ would be too large to be encompassed in one view, and viewers
11 would need to turn their heads to scan across the whole SEZ. The relatively
12 low elevation (approximately 740 ft [230 m] above the SEZ) would reduce the
13 vertical angle of view, and the SEZ would be visible as a narrow band across
14 the valley floor. The tops of solar collector/reflector arrays associated with
15 solar facilities within the SEZ would be visible, increasing the facilities'
16 apparent sizes slightly and making the strong regular geometry of the
17 collector/reflector arrays somewhat more apparent.

18
19 Taller solar facility components, such as transmission towers, cooling towers,
20 STG components, and plumes (if present) would likely be visible, and if so,
21 could contrast substantially with the strongly horizontal and regular geometry
22 of the collector/reflector arrays. The receivers of operating power towers
23 within the SEZ would be visible as very bright nonpoint light sources against
24 the backdrop of the valley floor or the mountains west of the SEZ during the
25 day and, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, would have navigation warning lights
26 at night that could be conspicuous from this location.. Under the 80%
27 development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, strong levels of visual contrast
28 would be expected at this location.

29
30 Figure 11.2.14.2-9 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
31 orange) as seen from a peak farther north and east than the viewpoint shown
32 in Figure 11.2.14.2-8. The viewpoint is about 2,600 ft (793 m) higher in elevation
33 than the SEZ, and about 7.5 mi (12.1 km) east of the northernmost point in the
34 SEZ. The view is oblique to the SEZ's relatively long north-south axis. The
35 visualization demonstrates that moving further east into the SRMA, while
36 increasing distance to the SEZ also increases the vertical angle of view as the
37 viewpoints are closer to the peaks of the Delamar Mountains. From this
38 viewpoint, the SEZ could be encompassed in one view, but would still cross
39 much of the visible horizon, and the vertical angle of view is sufficiently high
40 that the tops of solar collector/reflector arrays associated with solar facilities
41 within the SEZ would be visible, increasing the facilities' apparent sizes
42 slightly and making the strong regular geometry of the collector/reflector
43 arrays somewhat more apparent.



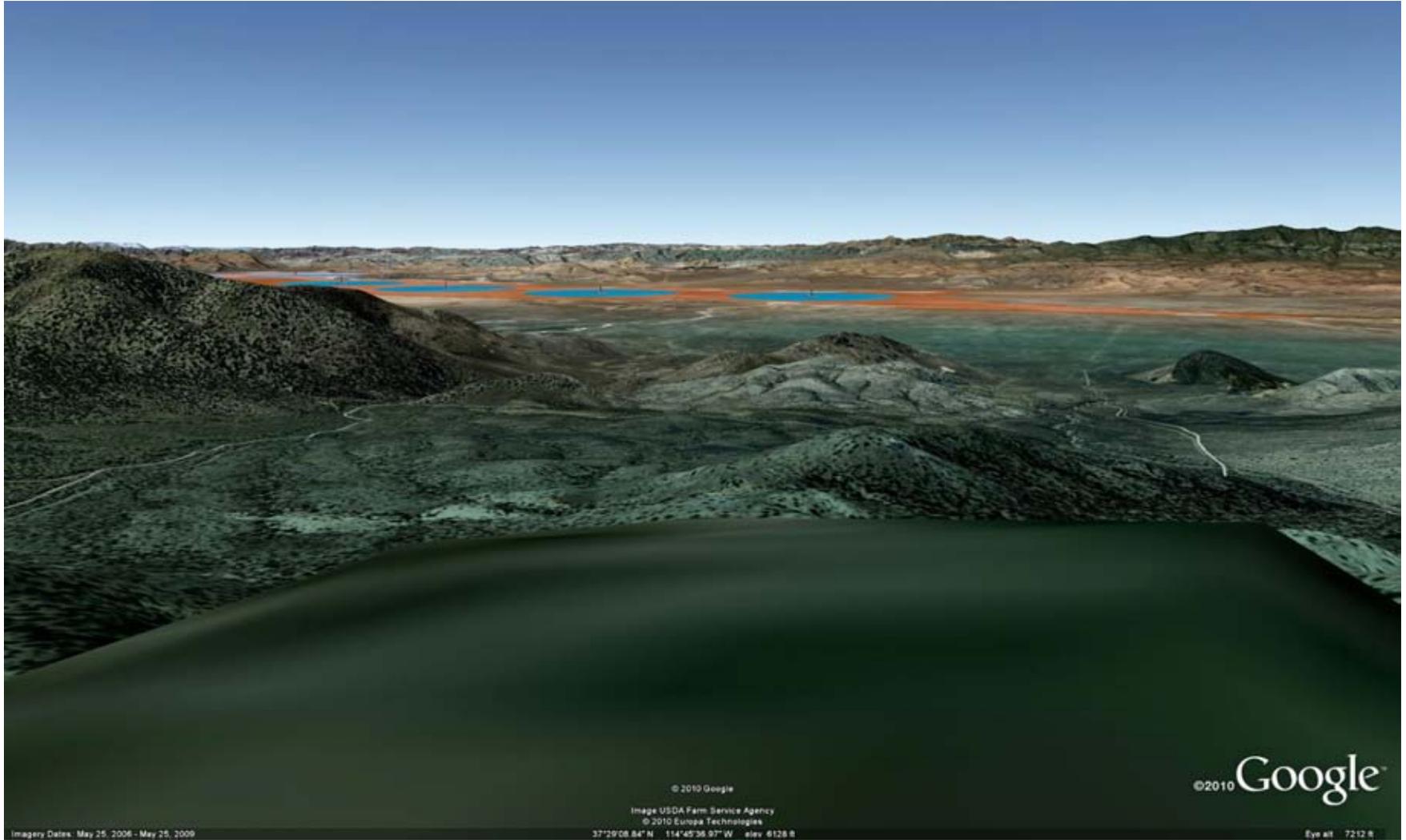
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FIGURE 11.2.14.2-8 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Road within the North Delamar SRMA



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FIGURE 11.2.14.2-9 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from an Unnamed Peak within the Northern Portion of the North Delamar SRMA

1 Taller solar facility components, such as transmission towers, cooling towers,
2 STG components, and plumes (if present) would likely be visible, and if so,
3 could contrast with the strongly horizontal and regular geometry of the
4 collector/reflector arrays. The receivers of operating power towers within the
5 SEZ would be visible as very bright light sources against the backdrop of the
6 valley floor during the day and, if sufficiently tall, would have navigation
7 warning lights at night that could be conspicuous from this location. Under the
8 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, strong levels of visual
9 contrast would be expected at this location.

10
11 In general, visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ
12 would depend on viewer location within the SRMA, the numbers, types, sizes
13 and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and other project- and site-specific
14 factors. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, where
15 there were unobstructed views, contrasts would be expected to be strong for
16 many viewpoints within the western portion of the SEZ, with contrasts not
17 diminishing substantially until the viewpoints were far enough east in the
18 SRMA that intervening mountains screened large portions of the SEZ from
19 view.

- 20
21 • *Pahranagat*—The 298,567-acre (1,208.26-km²) Pahranagat SRMA is located
22 approximately 2.7 mi (4.4 km) west of the SEZ at the point of closest
23 approach, and some areas within the eastern and southeastern portion of the
24 SRMA are within the SEZ viewshed. The primary recreational values for
25 Pahranagat SRMA include heritage tourism and motorized recreation
26 (BLM 2007d).

27
28 As shown in Figure 11.2.14.2-2, approximately 52,619 acres (212.94 km²), or
29 18% of the SRMA, are within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ, and
30 11,970 acres (48.441 km²), 4% of the SRMA, are within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m)
31 viewshed. The portions of the SRMA within the viewshed extend from the
32 point of closest approach to within 24 mi (39 km) of the SEZ. Within the
33 SRMA, visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ would be primarily from
34 the eastern slopes of the South Pahroc Range, but with some visibility from
35 the western slopes of the southern end of the South Pahroc Range, as well as
36 the highest elevations in the Hiko, East Pahranagat and Pahranagat Ranges
37 further to the west.

38
39 Figures 11.2.14.2-6 and 11.2.14.2-7 (see above under South Pahroc Range WA
40 impact discussion) are Google Earth visualizations of the SEZ as seen from two
41 viewpoints in the eastern portion of the SRMA. As discussed above, because of the short
42 distance to the SEZ and the relatively high vertical angles of view from these elevated
43 viewpoints, strong visual contrasts would be expected for portions of the SRMA with
44 open views close to the SEZ. Lower contrast levels would be expected for viewpoints
45 farther north in the SRMA, because the views would be oblique to the long north-south
46 axis of the SEZ; and substantially lower contrast levels would be expected for viewpoints

1 much farther west in the SRMA in the Hiko and especially the East Pahrnagat and
2 Pahrnagat Ranges.

3 4 5 *Scenic Highways*

- 6
7 • *U.S. 93*—U.S. 93 is a nationally designated scenic byway that runs within
8 8.4 mi (13.5 km) north of the SEZ. It is 149 mi (240 km) long, with some
9 of the highlights located between Caliente and Crystal Springs, Nevada.
10 Approximately 8.8 mi (14.2 km) are within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed
11 of the SEZ, and 2.6 mi (4.2 km) of the byway are within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m)
12 viewshed.

13
14 For travelers approaching the SEZ from Caliente, north of the SEZ, the tops of
15 sufficiently tall power tower receivers located in the northern portion of the
16 SEZ would come into view about 20 mi (32 km) west of Caliente, and about
17 8.8 mi (14.2 km) from the SEZ. After the first appearance of power tower
18 receiver lights, lower height facilities might become visible about 1 minute
19 later and could remain in view for several minutes as travelers moved
20 westward. Clear views would be interrupted periodically by low hills and rises
21 between the highway and the SEZ, and eventually only the tops of power
22 towers would be visible; they would disappear when westbound travelers
23 reached Pahroc Summit Pass, 11 mi (17 km) northwest of nearest point in the
24 SEZ, and approximately 29 mi (47 km) west of Caliente.

25
26 Eastbound travelers on U.S. 93 would have a similar visual experience to
27 westbound travelers, but might first see power tower receivers within the SEZ
28 as they passed just east of Pahroc Summit Pass, about 14 mi (23 km) east of
29 the intersection of U.S. 93 with State Route 375 south of Hiko. Similarly to
30 westbound travelers, eastbound travelers might see lower height solar
31 facilities within the SEZ briefly, then power tower receiver lights only, before
32 leaving the SEZ viewshed about 13 mi (21 km) west of Caliente, and about
33 9 mi (14 km) north of the SEZ.

34
35 Within the SEZ viewshed, U.S. 93 is slightly elevated with respect to the
36 northern portion of the SEZ, and the angle of view between the highway and
37 the SEZ is very low. Because U.S. 93 travelers would be looking down the
38 relatively narrow north–south axis of the SEZ, the SEZ would occupy a very
39 small portion of the horizontal field of view, with weak visual contrasts
40 expected for travelers on U.S. 93.

- 41
42 • *Silver State Trail*—The Silver State Trail is a congressionally and BLM-
43 designated scenic byway that passes within about 10 mi (16 km) of the SEZ.
44 About 13 mi (21 km) of the byway are within the SEZ 650-ft (198.1-m)
45 viewshed, and about 4 mi are within the 24.6 (7.5 m) viewshed.
- 46

1 The elevation of the Silver State Trail within the SEZ viewshed is generally
2 between 400-600 ft (120-180 m) higher than the SEZ, and at 10 mi (16 km) or
3 greater distance, the vertical angle of view from the trail to the SEZ is very
4 low. Furthermore, the view from the trail to the SEZ is parallel to the SEZ's
5 long and very narrow north-south axis, so that the SEZ would occupy a very
6 small portion of the horizontal field of view as seen from the trail.

7
8 Because of the relatively long distance to the SEZ, the vertical angle of view
9 would be low, and solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen edge-on,
10 which would reduce their apparent size, conceal their strong regular geometry,
11 and cause them to appear to repeat the strong line of the horizon, all of which
12 would tend to reduce associated visual contrasts. Taller solar facility
13 components, such as transmission towers, could be visible, but some ancillary
14 facilities might not be noticed by casual observers.

15
16 If power towers were located in the visible portions of the SEZ, when
17 operating, they would likely appear as points of light under the southern
18 horizon, against a backdrop of the valley floor. At night, if more than 200 ft
19 (61 m) tall, power towers would have navigation warning lights that could
20 potentially be visible from this location in the WA, and could be prominent in
21 the dark night skies of this remote area.

22
23 Because of the small apparent size of the SEZ and the low angle of view from
24 the trail to the SEZ, under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this
25 PEIS, weak levels of visual contrast would be expected from solar
26 development within the SEZ, as seen from the Silver State Trail.

27
28 Additional scenic resources exist at the national, state, and local levels, and impacts may
29 occur on both federal and nonfederal lands, including sensitive traditional cultural properties
30 important to Tribes. Note that in addition to the resource types and specific resources analyzed
31 in this PEIS, future site-specific NEPA analyses would include state and local parks, recreation
32 areas, other sensitive visual resources, and communities close enough to the proposed project to
33 be affected by visual impacts.

34
35 In addition to impacts associated with the solar energy facilities themselves, sensitive
36 visual resources could be affected by facilities that would be built and operated in conjunction
37 with the solar facilities. With respect to visual impacts, the most important associated facilities
38 would be access roads and transmission lines, the precise location of which cannot be determined
39 until a specific solar energy project is proposed. There is currently a 69-kV transmission line
40 within the proposed SEZ, so construction and operation of a transmission line outside the
41 proposed SEZ would not be required; however, transmission lines to connect facilities to the
42 existing line would be required. For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of
43 transmission lines outside of the SEZ were not assessed, based on the assumption that the
44 existing 69-kV transmission line might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load
45 centers, and that additional project-specific analysis would be done for new transmission
46 construction or line upgrades. Note that, depending on project- and site-specific conditions,

1 visual impacts associated with access roads, and particularly transmission lines, could be large.
2 Detailed information about visual impacts associated with transmission lines is presented in
3 Section 5.7.1. A detailed, site-specific NEPA analysis would be required to determine visibility
4 and associated impacts precisely for any future solar projects, based on more precise knowledge
5 of facility location and characteristics.
6
7

8 **Other Impacts.** In addition to the impacts described for the resource areas above, nearby
9 residents and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities
10 located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) from their
11 residences, or as they travel area roads. The range of impacts experienced would be highly
12 dependent on viewer location, project types, locations, sizes, and layouts, as well as the presence
13 of screening, but under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, from some
14 locations, strong visual contrasts from solar development within the SEZ could potentially be
15 observed.
16
17

18 ***11.2.14.2.3 Summary of Visual Resource Impacts for the Proposed Delamar Valley*** 19 ***SEZ*** 20

21 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, the SEZ would contain
22 multiple solar facilities utilizing differing solar technologies, as well as a variety of roads and
23 ancillary facilities. The array of facilities could create a visually complex landscape that would
24 contrast strongly with the strongly horizontal, relatively uncluttered, and generally natural
25 appearing landscape of the flat valley in which the SEZ is located. Large visual impacts on the
26 SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed would be associated with solar energy
27 development due to major modification of the character of the existing landscape. There is the
28 potential for additional impacts from construction and operation of transmission lines and access
29 roads within the SEZ.
30

31 The SEZ is in an area of low scenic quality, with some cultural disturbances already
32 present. Local residents, workers, and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from
33 solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and
34 transmission lines) as they travel area roads.
35

36 Utility-scale solar energy development within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is likely
37 to result in strong visual contrasts for views from some locations within the Delamar Mountains
38 and South Pahrac Range WAs, and the Pahrnagat and North Delamar SRMAs. Minimal to weak
39 visual contrasts would be expected for other highly sensitive visual resource areas within 25 mi
40 (40 km) of the SEZ.
41
42

43 **11.2.14.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Features Effectiveness** 44

45 The presence and operation of large-scale solar energy facilities and equipment would
46 introduce major visual changes into non-industrialized landscapes and could create strong visual

1 contrasts in line, form, color, and texture that could not easily be substantially mitigated.
2 Implementation of programmatic design features intended to reduce visual impacts (described in
3 Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would be expected to reduce visual impacts associated with utility-
4 scale solar energy development within the SEZ; however, the degree of effectiveness of these
5 design features could be assessed only at the site- and project-specific level. Given the large
6 scale, reflective surfaces, strong regular geometry of utility-scale solar energy facilities, and the
7 lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities away
8 from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive viewing areas is the primary means of
9 mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other visual impact mitigation measures would
10 generally be limited.

11
12 While the applicability and appropriateness of some design features would depend on
13 site- and project-specific information that would be available only after a specific solar energy
14 project had been proposed, some SEZ-specific design features can be identified for the proposed
15 Delamar Valley SEZ at this time, as follows:

- 16
17 • Within the SEZ, in areas visible from and within 3 mi (4.8 km) of the
18 boundary of the Delamar Mountains WA, visual impacts associated with solar
19 energy project operation should be consistent with VRM Class II management
20 objectives (see Table 12.2.14.3-1), as experienced from KOPs (to be
21 determined by the BLM) within the WA, and in areas visible from between
22 3 and 5 mi (4.8 and 8 km), visual impacts should be consistent with VRM
23 Class III management objectives. The VRM Class II consistency mitigation
24 would affect approximately 2,080 acres (8.417 km²) within the western
25 portion of the SEZ. The VRM Class III consistency mitigation would affect
26 approximately 5,485 additional acres (22.2 km²).
27
- 28 • Within the SEZ, in areas visible from between 3 and 5 mi (4.8 and 8 km) of
29 the boundary of the South Pahroc Range WA, visual impacts associated with
30 solar energy project operation should be consistent with VRM Class III
31 management objectives, as experienced from KOPs (to be determined by the
32 BLM) within the WA. The VRM Class III consistency mitigation would affect
33 approximately 4,921 acres (19.9 km²).
34

35 Because of the overlap in areas affected by the design features specified above, the total
36 acreage affected by the design features is approximately 10,821 acres (43.79 km²), or 65% of the
37 total SEZ acreage. The acreage affected by VRM Class II consistency mitigation is 2,080 acres
38 (8.417 km²), or 13% of the total SEZ acreage. The acreage affected by VRM Class III
39 consistency mitigation is 8,741 acres (35.37 km²), or 53% of the total SEZ acreage. The areas
40 subject to SEZ-specific design features requiring consistency with VRM Class II and Class III
41 management objectives are shown in Figure 11.2.14.3-1.
42
43
44

TABLE 11.2.14.3-1 VRM Class Objectives

Class I	The objective of this class is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. This class provides for natural ecological changes; however, it does not preclude very limited management activity. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.
Class II	The objective to this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
Class III	The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should both dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
Class IV	The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

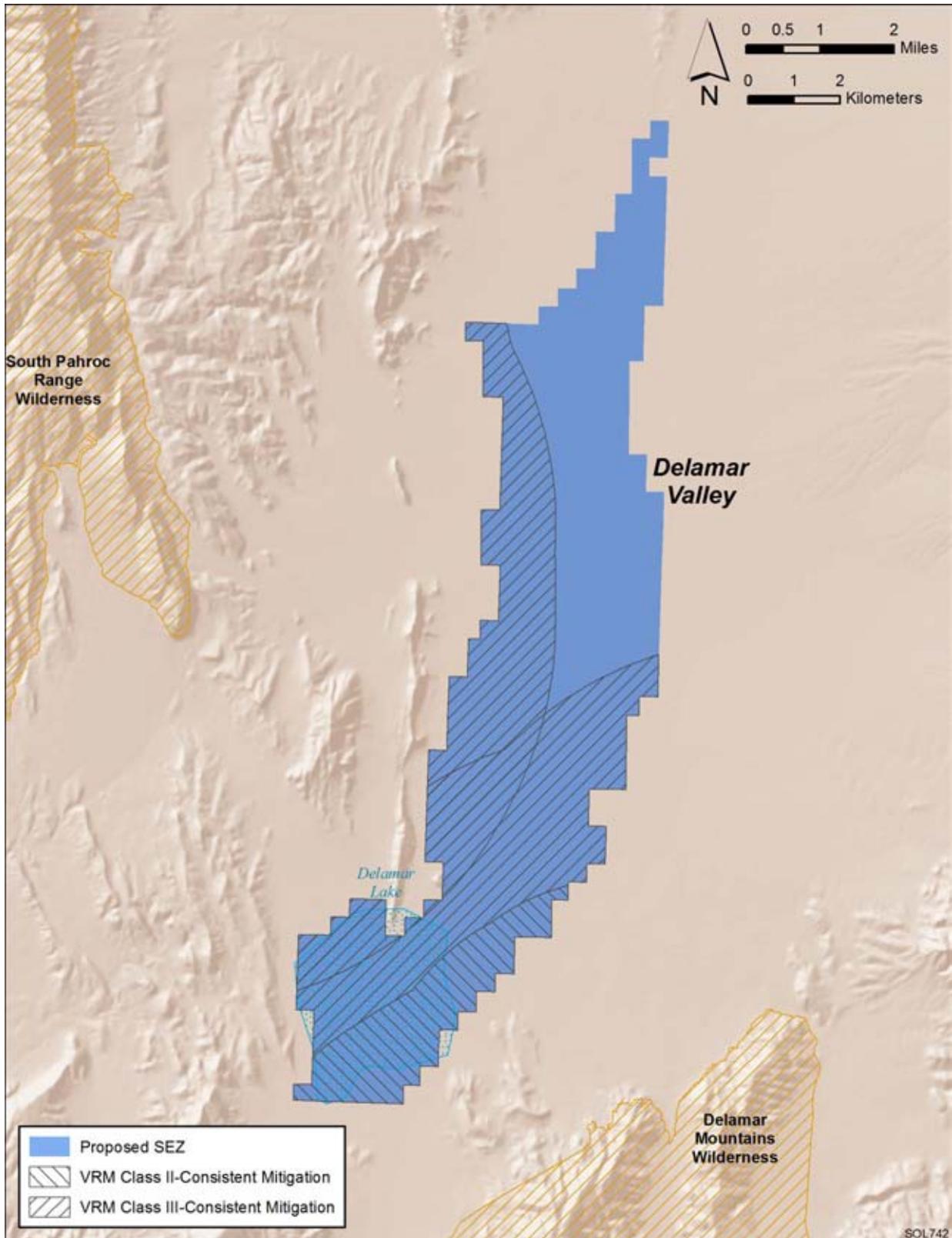
Source: BLM (1986b).

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Application of the SEZ-specific design features above would substantially reduce visual impacts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ, as well as on sensitive visual resource areas outside the SEZ but within the SEZ viewshed.

Application of the distance-based design feature to restrict allowable visual impacts associated with solar energy project operations within 5 mi (8 km) of the Delamar Mountains WA would substantially reduce potential visual impacts on the WA by limiting impacts within the BLM-defined foreground of the viewshed of this area, where potential visual impacts would be greatest. This design feature would also reduce impacts on the South Pahroc Range WA, the Pahrangat SRMA, and the North Delamar SRMA.

Application of the distance-based design feature to restrict allowable visual impacts associated with solar energy project operations between 3 and 5 mi (4.8 and 8 km) of the South Pahroc Range WA would substantially reduce potential visual impacts on the WA by limiting impacts within the BLM-defined foreground of the viewshed of this area, where potential visual impacts would be greatest. This design feature would also reduce impacts on the South Delamar Mountains WA, the Pahrangat SRMA, and the North Delamar SRMA.



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.2.14.3-1 Areas within the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ Affected by SEZ-Specific**
 3 **Distance-Based Visual Impact Design Features**

1 **11.2.15 Acoustic Environment**

2
3
4 **11.2.15.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located in southeastern Nevada, in the south central
7 portion of Lincoln County. Neither the State of Nevada nor Lincoln County has established
8 quantitative noise-limit regulations.
9

10 U.S. 93 runs east–west as close as about 8 mi (13 km) to the north of the proposed
11 Delamar Valley SEZ and runs north–south as close as about 8 mi (13 km) to the west. State
12 Route 317 runs north–south as close as 16 mi (26 km) to the east of the SEZ. There are numerous
13 dirt roads that cross the SEZ or that access livestock facilities in the area. The nearest railroad
14 runs about 16 mi (26 km) to the east of the SEZ. Nearby airports include Alamo Landing Field in
15 Alamo and Lincoln County Airport in Panaca, which are located about 12 mi (19 km) west and
16 32 mi (51 km) northeast of the SEZ, respectively. No industrial activities other than grazing are
17 located around the SEZ. Large-scale irrigated agricultural lands are situated in small agricultural
18 towns along the Pahrnagat Valley, which runs as close as about 8 mi (13 km) to the west of the
19 SEZ, and at nearby towns such as Caliente and Panaca, which are more than 19 mi (31 km)
20 northeast of the SEZ boundary. No sensitive receptors (e.g., residences, hospitals, schools, or
21 nursing homes) exist around the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The nearest human receptors are
22 located along U.S. 93, about 9 mi (14 km) west-southwest of the SEZ. Nearby population centers
23 with schools include Alamo, about 11 mi (18 km) west of the SEZ; Caliente, about 22 mi
24 (35 km) northeast of the SEZ; and Panaca, about 33 mi (53 km) northeast of the SEZ.
25 Accordingly, noise sources around the SEZ include road traffic, aircraft flyover, and cattle
26 grazing. Other noise sources are associated with current land use for various recreational
27 activities around the SEZ, including OHV use, racing, setting off pyrotechnics, and model rocket
28 launching. The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is isolated and undeveloped; its overall character
29 is considered wilderness to rural. To date, no environmental noise survey has been conducted
30 around the SEZ. On the basis of the population density, the day-night average noise level (L_{dn} or
31 DNL) is estimated to be 18 dBA for Lincoln County, well below the level typical of a rural area
32 in the range of 33 to 47 dBA L_{dn} (Eldred 1982; Miller 2002).¹¹
33
34

35 **11.2.15.2 Impacts**

36
37 Potential noise impacts associated with solar projects in the Delamar Valley SEZ would
38 occur during all phases of the projects. During the construction phase, potential noise impacts
39 associated with operation of heavy equipment on the nearest residences (about 9 mi [14 km] to
40 the west-southwest of the SEZ) would be anticipated to be minimal due to considerable
41 separation distances. During the operations phase, potential noise impacts on the nearest
42 residences would be anticipated to be minimal as well. However, if the Delamar Valley SEZ

¹¹ Rural and undeveloped areas have sound levels in the range of 33 to 47 dBA as L_{dn} (Eldred 1982). Typically, the nighttime level is 10 dBA lower than daytime level, and it can be interpreted as 33 to 47 dBA (mean 40 dBA) during the daytime hours and 23 to 37 dBA (mean 30 dBA) during nighttime hours.

1 were fully developed, potential noise impacts on residences along the roads would likely be due
2 to commuter, visitor, support, and delivery vehicular traffic to and from the SEZ. Noise impacts
3 shared by all solar technologies are discussed in detail in Section 5.13.1, and technology-specific
4 impacts are presented in Section 5.13.2. Impacts specific to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ
5 are presented in this section. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation
6 of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through
7 the application of any additional SEZ-specific design features (see Section 11.2.15.3 below).
8 This section primarily addresses potential noise impacts on humans, although potential impacts
9 on wildlife at nearby sensitive areas are discussed. Additional discussion on potential noise
10 impacts on wildlife is presented in Section 5.10.2

11 12 13 **11.2.15.2.1 Construction** 14

15 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ has a relatively flat terrain; thus, minimal site
16 preparation activities would be required, and associated noise levels would be lower than those
17 during general construction (e.g., erecting building structures and installing equipment, piping,
18 and electrical).
19

20 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, the highest construction noise
21 levels would occur at the power block area, where key components (e.g., steam turbine/
22 generator) needed to generate electricity are located; a maximum of 95 dBA at a distance of 50 ft
23 (15 m) is assumed, if impact equipment such as pile drivers or rock drills is not being used.
24 Typically, the power block area is located in the center of the solar facility, at a distance of more
25 than 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from the facility boundary. Noise levels from construction of the solar array
26 would be lower than 95 dBA. When geometric spreading and ground effects are considered, as
27 explained in Section 4.13.1, noise levels would attenuate to about 40 dBA at a distance of 1.2 mi
28 (1.9 km) from the power block area. This noise level is typical of daytime mean rural
29 background level. In addition, mid- and high-frequency noise from construction activities is
30 significantly attenuated by atmospheric absorption under the low-humidity conditions typical of
31 an arid desert environment and by temperature lapse conditions typical of daytime hours; thus
32 noise attenuation to a 40-dBA level would occur at distances somewhat shorter than 1.2 mi
33 (1.9 km). If a 10-hour daytime work schedule is considered, the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA
34 L_{dn} for residential areas (EPA 1974) would occur at about 1,200 ft (370 m) from the power block
35 area, which would be well within the facility boundary. For construction activities occurring near
36 the southern SEZ boundary, estimated noise levels at the nearest residences would be
37 about 17 dBA, which is well below a typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. In
38 addition, an estimated 40-dBA L_{dn} ¹² at these residences (i.e., no contribution from construction
39 activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.
40

41 It is assumed that a maximum of two projects would be developed at any one time for
42 SEZs greater than 10,000 acres (40.47 km²) but less than 30,000 acres (121.4 km²), such as the
43 Delamar Valley SEZ. If two projects were to be built in the southern portion of the SEZ near the

¹² For this analysis, background levels of 40 and 30 dBA for daytime and nighttime hours, respectively, are assumed, which result in day-night average noise level (L_{dn}) of 40 dBA.

1 nearest residences, noise levels would be about 3 dBA higher than the above-mentioned values.
2 These levels would be still well below the typical daytime mean rural background level, and thus
3 their contribution to the existing L_{dn} would be minimal.
4

5 In addition, noise levels are estimated at the specially designated areas within 5-mi
6 (8-km) range from the Delamar Valley SEZ, which is the farthest distance that noise, except
7 extremely loud noise, can be discernable. There are two specially designated areas within the
8 range where noise might be an issue: Delamar Mountains WA, which is located as close as about
9 2 mi (3 km) south of the SEZ; and South Pahroc Range WA, which is located about 4 mi (6 km)
10 northwest of the SEZ. For construction activities occurring near the SEZ boundary close to the
11 specially designated areas, noise levels are estimated to be about 35 and 28 dBA at the
12 boundaries of the Delamar Mountains WA and South Pahroc Range WA, respectively, which
13 are lower than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. As discussed in
14 Section 5.10.2, sound levels above 90 dB are likely to adversely affect wildlife
15 (Manci et al. 1988). Thus, construction noise from the SEZ is not likely to adversely affect
16 nearby specially designated areas.
17

18 Depending on the soil conditions, pile driving might be required for installation of
19 solar dish engines. However, the pile drivers used, such as vibratory or sonic drivers, would be
20 relatively small and quiet rather than the impulsive impact pile drivers frequently seen at large-
21 scale construction sites. Potential impacts on the nearest residences would be anticipated to be
22 negligible, considering the distance to the nearest residences (about 9 mi [14 km] from the
23 SEZ boundary).
24

25 It is assumed that most construction activities would occur during the day, when noise is
26 better tolerated than at night because of the masking effects of background noise. In addition,
27 construction activities for a utility-scale facility are temporary in nature (typically a few years).
28 Construction within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ would cause negligible unavoidable but
29 localized short-term noise impacts on neighboring communities, even when construction
30 activities would occur near the southern SEZ boundary, close to the nearest residences.
31

32 Construction activities could result in various degrees of ground vibration, depending
33 on the equipment used and construction methods employed. All construction equipment causes
34 ground vibration to some degree, but activities that typically generate the most severe vibrations
35 are high-explosive detonations and impact pile driving. As is the case for noise, vibration would
36 diminish in strength with distance. For example, vibration levels at receptors beyond 140 ft
37 (43 m) from a large bulldozer (87 VdB at 25 ft [7.6 m]) would diminish below the threshold of
38 perception for humans, which is about 65 VdB (Hanson et al. 2006). During the construction
39 phase, no major construction equipment that can cause ground vibration would be used, and no
40 residences or sensitive structures are located in close proximity. Therefore, no adverse vibration
41 impacts are anticipated from construction activities, including pile driving for dish engines.
42

43 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
44 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 69-kV transmission line might
45 be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-specific
46 analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However, some

1 construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ. Potential noise impacts on nearby
2 residences would be a negligible component of construction impacts and would be temporary in
3 nature.

6 ***11.2.15.2.2 Operations***

8 Noise sources common to all or most types of solar technologies include equipment
9 motion from solar tracking, maintenance and repair activities (e.g., washing mirrors or replacing
10 broken mirrors) at the solar array area, commuter/visitor/support/delivery traffic within and
11 around the solar facility, and control/administrative buildings, warehouses, and other auxiliary
12 buildings/structures. Diesel-fired emergency power generators and fire-water pump engines
13 would be additional sources of noise, but their operations would be limited to several hours per
14 month (for preventive maintenance testing).

16 With respect to the main solar energy technologies, noise-generating activities in the
17 PV solar array area would be minimal, related mainly to solar tracking, if used. On the other
18 hand, dish engine technology, which employs collector and converter devices in a single unit,
19 generally has the strongest noise sources.

21 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, most noise sources during
22 operations would be in the power block area, including the turbine generator (typically in an
23 enclosure), pumps, boilers, and dry- or wet-cooling systems. The power block is typically
24 located in the center of the facility. On the basis of a 250-MW parabolic trough facility with a
25 cooling tower (Beacon Solar, LLC 2008), simple noise modeling indicates that noise levels
26 around the power block would be more than 85 dBA, but about 51 dBA at the facility boundary,
27 about 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from the power block area. For a facility located near the southern SEZ
28 boundary, the predicted noise level would be about 23 dBA at the nearest residences, located
29 about 9 mi (14 km) from the SEZ boundary, which is much lower than typical daytime mean
30 rural background level of 40 dBA. If TES were not used (i.e., if the operation were limited to
31 daytime, 12 hours only¹³), the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA (as L_{dn} for residential areas)
32 would occur at about 1,370 ft (420 m) from the power block area and thus would not be
33 exceeded outside of the proposed SEZ boundary. At the nearest residences, about 40 dBA L_{dn}
34 (i.e., no contribution from facility operation) would be estimated, which is well below the EPA
35 guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. As for construction, if two parabolic trough and/or
36 power tower facilities were operating around the nearest residences, combined noise levels
37 would be about 3 dBA higher than the above-mentioned values. These levels are still well below
38 the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA, and their contribution to existing
39 L_{dn} level would be minimal. However, day-night average noise levels higher than those
40 estimated above using simple noise modeling would be anticipated if TES were used during
41 nighttime hours, as explained below and in Section 4.13.1.

43 On a calm, clear night typical of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ setting, the
44 air temperature would likely increase with height (temperature inversion) because of strong

¹³ Maximum possible operating hours at the summer solstice, but limited to 7 to 8 hours at the winter solstice.

1 radiative cooling. Such a temperature profile tends to focus noise downward toward the ground.
2 There would be little, if any, shadow zone¹⁴ within 1 or 2 mi (1.6 or 3 km) of the noise source in
3 the presence of a strong temperature inversion (Beranek 1988). In particular, such conditions
4 add to the effect of noise being more discernable during nighttime hours, when the background
5 noise levels are the lowest. To estimate the day-night average noise level (L_{dn}), 6-hour nighttime
6 generation with TES is assumed after 12-hour daytime generation. For nighttime hours under
7 temperature inversion, 10 dB is added to noise levels estimated from the uniform atmosphere
8 (see Section 4.13.1). On the basis of these assumptions, the estimated nighttime noise level at the
9 nearest residence (about 9 mi [14 km] from the SEZ boundary) would be 33 dBA, which is
10 slightly higher than the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. However,
11 noise level would be much lower than this value if considering an air absorption algorithm
12 among other attenuation mechanisms. The day-night average noise level is estimated to be about
13 41 dBA L_{dn} , which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. The
14 assumptions are conservative in terms of operating hours, and no credit was given to other
15 attenuation mechanisms, so it is likely that noise levels would be lower than 41 dBA L_{dn} at the
16 nearest residences, even if TES were used at a solar facility. In consequence, operating parabolic
17 trough or power tower facilities using TES and located near the southern SEZ boundary could
18 result in minimal adverse noise impacts on the nearest residences, depending on background
19 noise levels and meteorological conditions.

20
21 Associated with operation of solar facilities located near the southern SEZ boundary and
22 using TES, the estimated daytime level of 37 dBA at the boundary of the Delamar Mountains
23 WA is lower than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA, while the
24 estimated nighttime level of 47 dBA is much higher than the typical nighttime mean rural
25 background level of 30 dBA. For a facility near the west-central SEZ boundary, daytime and
26 nighttime noise levels at the Big Dune ACEC are estimated to be 31 and 41 dBA, respectively.
27 As discussed in Section 5.10.2, sound levels above 90 dB are likely to adversely affect wildlife
28 (Manci et al. 1988). Thus, operation noise from the SEZ is not likely to adversely affect the
29 nearby specially designated areas.

30
31 In the permitting process, refined noise propagation modeling would be warranted along
32 with measurement of background noise levels.

33
34 The solar dish engine is unique among CSP technologies because it generates electricity
35 directly and does not require a power block. A single, large solar dish engine has relatively low
36 noise levels, but a solar facility might employ tens of thousands of dish engines, which would
37 cause high noise levels around such a facility. For example, the proposed 750-MW SES Solar
38 Two dish engine facility in California would employ as many as 30,000 dish engines (SES Solar
39 Two, LLC 2008). At the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, on the basis of the assumption of dish
40 engine facilities of up to 1,471 MW total capacity (covering 80% of the total area, or
41 13,242 acres [53.6 km²]), up to 58,850 25-kW dish engines could be employed. For a large
42 dish engine facility, about a thousand step-up transformers would be embedded in the dish
43 engine solar field, along with a substation; however, the noise from these sources would be
44 masked by dish engine noise.

45

¹⁴ A shadow zone is defined as the region in which direct sound does not penetrate because of upward diffraction.

1 The composite noise level of a single dish engine would be about 88 dBA at a distance of
2 3 ft (0.9 m) (SES Solar Two, LLC 2008). This noise level would be attenuated to about 40 dBA
3 (typical of the mean rural daytime environment) within 330 ft (100 m). However, the combined
4 noise level from tens of thousands of dish engines operating simultaneously would be high in the
5 immediate vicinity of the facility, for example, about 50 dBA at 1.0 mi (1.6 km) and 47 dBA at
6 2 mi (3 km) from the boundary of the squarely-shaped dish engine solar field, both of which are
7 higher than typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. However, these levels
8 would occur at somewhat shorter distance than the aforementioned distances, considering noise
9 attenuation by atmospheric absorption and temperature lapse during daytime hours. To estimate
10 noise levels at the nearest residences, it was assumed dish engines were placed all over the
11 Delamar Valley SEZ at intervals of 98 ft (30 m). Under these assumptions, the estimated noise
12 level at the nearest residences, about a 9-mi (14-km) distance from the SEZ boundary, would be
13 about 34 dBA, which is below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA.
14 Assuming 12-hour daytime operation, the estimated 41 dBA L_{dn} at these residences is well
15 below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. Considering other noise
16 attenuation mechanisms, noise levels at the nearest residences would be lower than estimated
17 values in the above and thus potential impacts on nearby residences would be anticipated to be
18 minimal.

19
20 For dish engines placed all over the SEZ, estimated noise levels would be about 44 and
21 43 dBA at the boundaries of the Delamar Mountains WA and South Pahroc Range WA,
22 respectively, which are a little higher than the typical daytime mean rural background level of
23 40 dBA. However, dish engine noise from the SEZ is not likely to adversely affect wildlife at the
24 nearby specially designated areas (Manci et al. 1988).

25
26 During operations, no major ground-vibrating equipment would be used. In addition,
27 no sensitive structures are located close enough to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ to
28 experience physical damage. Therefore, during operation of any solar facility, potential vibration
29 impacts on surrounding communities and vibration-sensitive structures would be negligible.

30
31 Transformer-generated humming noise and switchyard impulsive noises would be
32 generated during the operation of solar facilities. These noise sources would be located near the
33 power block area, typically near the center of a solar facility. Noise from these sources would
34 generally be limited within the facility boundary and not be heard at the nearest residence,
35 assuming a 9.5-mi (15-km) distance (at least 0.5 mi [0.8 km] to the facility boundary and 9 mi
36 [14 km] to the nearest residences). Accordingly, potential impacts of these noise sources on the
37 nearest residences would be negligible.

38
39 For impacts from transmission line corona discharge noise during rainfall events
40 (discussed in Section 5.13.1.5), the noise level at 50 ft (15 m) and 300 ft (91 m) from the
41 center of 230-kV transmission line towers would be about 39 and 31 dBA (Lee et al. 1996),
42 respectively, typical of daytime and nighttime mean background noise levels in rural
43 environments. Corona noise includes high-frequency components, considered to be more
44 annoying than low-frequency environmental noise. However, corona noise would not likely
45 cause impacts unless a residence was located close to it (e.g., within 500 ft [152 m] of a 230-kV
46 transmission line). The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located in an arid desert environment,

1 and incidents of corona discharge are infrequent. Therefore, potential impacts on nearby
2 residences from corona noise along transmission lines within the SEZ would be negligible.
3

4 5 **11.2.15.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation** 6

7 Decommissioning/reclamation requires many of the same procedures and much of the
8 same equipment used in traditional construction. Decommissioning/reclamation would include
9 dismantling of solar facilities and support facilities such as buildings/structures and mechanical/
10 electrical installations, disposal of debris, grading, and revegetation as needed. Activities for
11 decommissioning would be similar to those for construction but more limited. Potential noise
12 impacts on surrounding communities would be correspondingly lower than those for
13 construction activities. Decommissioning activities would be of short duration, and their
14 potential impacts would be minimal and temporary in nature. The same mitigation measures
15 adopted during the construction phase could also be implemented during the decommissioning
16 phase.
17

18 Similarly, potential vibration impacts on surrounding communities and vibration-
19 sensitive structures during decommissioning of any solar facility would be lower than those
20 during construction and thus negligible.
21

22 23 **11.2.15.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness** 24

25 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
26 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for noise impacts from
27 development and operation of solar energy facilities. Due to the considerable separation
28 distances, activities within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ during construction and operation
29 would be anticipated to cause only minimal increases in noise levels at the nearest residences and
30 specially designated areas. Accordingly, no SEZ-specific design features are required.
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1 **11.2.16 Paleontological Resources**

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4 **11.2.16.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The surface geology of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is composed predominantly of
7 thick alluvial deposits (over 100 ft thick) ranging in age from Pliocene to Holocene, with playa
8 deposits of similar age in the southern portion of the SEZ. The total acreage of the alluvial
9 deposits within the SEZ is 7,894 acres (32 km²) or nearly 73% of the SEZ; there are 2,992 acres
10 (12 km²) of playa deposits that constitute 27% of the SEZ. In the absence of a PFYC map for
11 Nevada, a preliminary classification of PFYC Class 3b is assumed for the playa deposits.
12 Class 3b indicates that the potential for the occurrence of significant fossil materials is unknown
13 and needs to be investigated further (see Section 4.8 for a discussion of the PFYC system). A
14 preliminary classification of PFYC Class 2 is assumed for the young Quaternary alluvial
15 deposits, similar to that assumed for the proposed Amargosa Valley SEZ (Section 11.1.16).
16 Class 2 indicates that the potential for the occurrence of significant fossil material is low.
17

18
19 **11.2.16.2 Impacts**

20
21 Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely to occur in 73% of
22 the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of
23 the SEZ is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted. If the geological
24 deposits are determined to be as described above and are classified as PFYC Class 2, further
25 assessment of paleontological resources in most of the SEZ is not likely to be necessary.
26 Important resources could exist; if identified, they would need to be managed on a case-by-case
27 basis. The potential for impacts on significant paleontological resources in the remaining 27% of
28 the SEZ is unknown. A more detailed investigation of the playa deposits is needed prior to
29 project approval. A paleontological survey will likely be needed following consultation with the
30 BLM. The appropriate course of action would be determined as established in BLM IM2008-009
31 (BLM 2007e) and IM2009-011 (BLM 2008c). Section 5.14 discusses the types of impacts that
32 could occur on any significant paleontological resources found to be present within the Delamar
33 Valley SEZ. Impacts will be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic
34 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
35

36 Indirect impacts on paleontological resources outside of the SEZ, such as those that could
37 occur through looting or vandalism, are unknown but unlikely because any such resources would
38 be below the surface and not readily accessed. Programmatic design features for controlling
39 water runoff and sedimentation would prevent erosion-related impacts on buried deposits outside
40 of the SEZ.
41

42 Approximately 8 mi (13 km) of access road is anticipated to connect to U.S. 93 to the
43 north of the SEZ, resulting in approximately 58 acres (0.23 km²) of disturbance in areas
44 predominantly composed of alluvial sediments (preliminarily classified as PFYC Class 2). Direct
45 impacts during construction are not anticipated in PFYC Class 2 areas, and new areas of high
46 paleontological potential are not likely to be made more accessible as a result of this new access

1 pathway. Although it is assumed elsewhere in this document that 8 mi (13 km) of access road is
2 anticipated to connect to U.S. 93 in the southwest portion of the SEZ, this alternative route
3 would cross a portion of the Hiko Range in an area of increased elevation and rock outcrops. The
4 amount of disturbance is essentially the same (58 acres [0.23 km²]), but the disturbance would
5 occur in both alluvial sediments (PFYC Class 2) and areas of residual deposits in igneous and
6 metamorphic rocks (volcanics are typically classified as PFYC Class 2 areas). Direct impacts
7 during construction are not anticipated in PFYC Class 2 areas. No new transmission lines are
8 currently anticipated for the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Impacts on paleontological
9 resources related to the creation of new corridors not assessed in this PEIS would be evaluated at
10 the project-specific level if new road or transmission construction or line upgrades are to occur.
11

12 A programmatic design feature requiring a stop work order in the event of an inadvertent
13 discovery of paleontological resources would reduce impacts by preserving some information
14 and allowing excavation of the resource, if warranted. Depending on the significance of the find,
15 it could also result in some modification to the project footprint. Since the SEZ is located in an
16 area partially classified as PFYC Class 3b, a stipulation would be included in permitting
17 documents to alert solar energy developers of the possibility of a delay if paleontological
18 resources were uncovered during surface-disturbing activities.
19
20

21 **11.2.16.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

22

23 Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic
24 design features, including a stop-work stipulation in the event that paleontological resources are
25 encountered during construction, as described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
26

27 If the geological deposits are determined to be as described above and are classified as
28 PFYC Class 2, mitigation of paleontological resources within 73% of the proposed Delamar
29 Valley SEZ and the access road corridor is not likely to be necessary. The need for and the
30 nature of any SEZ-specific design features for the remaining 27% of the SEZ would depend on
31 the results of future paleontological investigations.
32
33

1 **11.2.17 Cultural Resources**

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4 **11.2.17.1 Affected Environment**

5
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7 **11.2.17.1.1 Prehistory**

8
9 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located in the Great Basin region. The earliest
10 known use of the area was likely during the Paleoindian Period, sometime between 12,000 and
11 10,000 years B.P. Surface finds of Paleoindian fluted projectile points, the hallmark of the Clovis
12 culture, have been found in the area, but no sites with any stratigraphic context have been
13 excavated. The Clovis culture is characterized by the aforementioned fluted projectile point and
14 a hunting and gathering subsistence economy that followed migrating herds of Pleistocene
15 mega fauna. The ambiguity of Paleoindian occupation in the Great Basin has given rise to the
16 assumption that the people of this time period may have been inclined to subsist off of the lake
17 and marsh habitats provided by the ancient Pleistocene pluvial lakes that occupied large portions
18 of the Great Basin; consequently, these sites are difficult to find because they have been buried
19 by the ebb and flow of the pluvial lakes. The cultural material associated with the pluvial lake
20 habitations is referred to as the Western Pluvial Lakes Tradition. It is likely that these people did
21 not rely entirely on the marshland habitats, but were nomadic hunters and gatherers who relied
22 on both wetland resources and resources located away from the pluvial lakes. The archaeological
23 assemblage associated with this cultural tradition is characterized by stemmed projectile points,
24 leaf-shaped bifaces, scrapers, crescents, and in some cases ground stone tools for milling plant
25 material. Often, projectile points and tools were made from locally procured obsidian, sources of
26 which are not far from the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ; South Pahroc is just 5 mi (8 km) to
27 the northwest of the SEZ, and Kane Springs Wash and Meadow Valley Wash are about 15 mi
28 (24 km) to the southeast. Exploiting these sources of obsidian and collecting raw materials for
29 tool manufacture were a part of a larger resource exploitation system in which groups moved in
30 seasonal rounds to take advantage of resources in different localities (Haarklau et al. 2005;
31 Fowler and Madsen 1986; Hockett et al. 2008).

32
33 The Archaic Period in the region began with the recession of most of the pluvial lakes in
34 the area around about 8,000 to 6,000 B.P. and extended until about 4,000 B.P. Archaic period
35 groups likely still congregated around marsh areas but also utilized the vast system of caves that
36 can be found in the mountains of the Great Basin. The settlement system in some areas was
37 likely based around a central base camp, with temporary extractive camps located on the margins
38 of the territory to exploit resources that were not in the immediate vicinity of the base camp.
39 Some of the key Archaic Period sites in the area near the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are
40 Stuart Rockshelter in the lower Meadow Valley Wash area, and Etna Cave, Conway Shelter, and
41 O'Malley Shelter in the upper portions of the Meadow Valley Wash area, just northeast of the
42 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The Lake Lahontan Basin, the site of a large Pleistocene pluvial
43 lake that was located northeast of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, was also a place where
44 several early Archaic period sites have been documented; the Archaic archaeological assemblage
45 from these sites maintains some cultural continuity with the previous period, consisting of large

1 notched points, leaf-shaped bifaces, scrapers, drills, gravers, and manos and metates (Fowler and
2 Madsen 1986; Neusius and Gross 2007).

3
4 The Middle Archaic Period, from 4,000 to 1,500 B.P., saw the climatic shift known as
5 the Little Pluvial, a wetter and cooler climate that caused some of the pluvial lakes to fill back
6 up. The cultural material of this time period is similar to the Early Archaic, with an increased
7 concentration of milling stones and mortars and pestles, and the appearance of normally
8 perishable items that become well preserved in the arid Great Basin climate, such as wicker
9 baskets, split-twig figurines, duck decoys, and woven sandals (Neusius and Gross 2007).

10
11 In the vicinity of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, the Late Archaic Period began
12 around 1,500 B.P. and extended until about 800 B.P. This period saw major technological shifts,
13 evidenced by smaller projectile points that were more useful because groups began using bow-
14 and-arrow technology instead of atlatl and dart technology, and changes in subsistence
15 techniques, particularly in the use of horticulture. In some areas, the Formative Era began around
16 1,500 B.P., and the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is situated in an area that borders both the
17 Formative Fremont and Virgin Anasazi cultures. In areas where these Formative cultures were
18 not present, the Late Archaic lifeways persisted. The Fremont culture was located in most of
19 Utah, north of the Colorado, Escalante, and Virgin Rivers, and in portions of eastern Nevada
20 and western Colorado. The culture is characterized by the use of horticulture and hunting and
21 gathering subsistence practices, distinctive gray-ware pottery, rod-and-bundle basketry,
22 anthropomorphic rock art, and leather moccasins. The Virgin Anasazi culture was an extension
23 of the Puebloan groups from the American Southwest into the Great Basin region. These groups
24 brought with them the knowledge of horticulture, which they utilized on the floodplains of the
25 river valleys they inhabited. Pueblo Grande de Nevada, located south of the proposed Delamar
26 Valley SEZ near Overton, Nevada, is a prime example of the extensive settlements of the Virgin
27 Anasazi culture in the vicinity of the SEZ. Characteristic of this period are gray-ware ceramics
28 (sometimes decorated), rock art and intaglios, bedrock milling features, and turquoise mining.
29 Both the Fremont and Virgin Anasazi groups had left the region by about 800 to 1,000 B.P., at
30 which time Numic-speaking groups migrated into the region; however, the exact timing of these
31 events are unclear and are a subject for further research in the region. These Numic-speaking
32 people were the antecedents of the Southern Paiute, and the archaeological assemblage
33 associated with this time period consists of Desert series projectile points, brown-ware ceramics,
34 unshaped manos and millingstones, incised stones, mortars and pestles, and shell beads. The
35 expression of a Numic period is questioned by contemporary Native American groups in the
36 region because they see themselves as being descents of the Anasazi, having occupied the area
37 since the beginning of time, and do not perceive of a disconnect between Virgin Anasazi and
38 Numic periods (Fowler and Madsen 1986).

39 40 41 ***11.2.17.1.2 Ethnohistory***

42
43 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located within the traditional use area of the
44 Southern Paiute. Southern Paiute groups tended to be wide ranging and often shared resources.
45 The SEZ lies between the core areas of the Panaca and Pahrangat Bands (Kelly 1934; Kelly and
46 Fowler 1986). The Pahrangat Band was centered on the Pahrangat Valley just to the west of

1 Delamar Valley, but Pahranaagat people are reported to have lived at the southern end of the
2 Delamar Valley. The Panaca Band was centered in Meadow Valley, about 34 mi (55 km) to the
3 northeast. Delamar Valley and its surroundings appear to be more important to Pahranaagat
4 descendants than Panaca descendants (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Close to the northwestern
5 boundary of Southern Paiute territory, the area may also have been known to the Western
6 Shoshone.
7
8

9 **Southern Paiute**

10
11 A more general account of the Southern Paiutes is given in Section 11.1.17.1.2. This
12 section deals primarily with those Southern Paiutes associated with the Delamar Valley. The
13 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ falls within *Paranayi*, the western subdivision of the Southern
14 Paiute Nation (Stoffle et al. 1997). Situated in the Delamar Valley and on Delamar Flat, it is just
15 under 9 mi (14 km) northeast of the springs, lakes, and wetlands of the Pahranaagat Valley.
16

17 The Pahranaagat Band was a relatively small division of the Southern Paiutes. Like other
18 Southern Paiute bands, it was centered on a spring-fed ribbon oasis. In Pahranaagat Valley, they
19 planted crops along lake margins and practiced some irrigation. They were also known to burn
20 plots and scatter seeds in the burnt areas. They supplemented their food supply by fishing and by
21 hunting in the surrounding mountains and hills. Hunters appealed for supernatural aid using
22 means including a special mountain sheep song (Kelly and Fowler 1986). The Panaca Band base
23 camps planted crops in Meadow Valley near present-day Panaca and Pioche and harvested pine
24 nuts in the surrounding hills (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983).
25

26 The arrival of Europeans in the New World initially had indirect, although serious,
27 effects on the Southern Paiutes. The Southern Paiute bands suffered from the spread of Old
28 World diseases and the depredations of the slave trade that supplied Spanish and Mexican
29 markets. The development of mining in the 1860s brought Euro-Americans to this part of
30 Nevada in earnest. Mining communities, and the farming communities to support them, sprang
31 up. The newcomers deprived the Paiutes of their traditional water sources and reduced the game
32 and other wild foods they depended on. As Euro-American settlements grew and traditional
33 resources declined, the Southern Paiute were drawn into the new economy, often serving as
34 transient wage labor (Kelly and Fowler 1986). The 1889 discovery of gold in the hills east of the
35 valley resulted in the excavation of extensive mines and the founding of the town of Ferguson,
36 later renamed Delamar, about 6 mi (9 km) east of the proposed SEZ (Paher 1970).
37

38 In 1865, an initial attempt by the U.S. government to settle the Southern Paiutes in
39 northeastern Utah among their traditional enemies, the Utes, failed. The Moapa River
40 Reservation was established in 1875, and many members of the Pahranaagat Band eventually
41 found a home there. Members of the Panaca Band were more likely to settle among the Indian
42 Peaks and Cedar Bands in Utah. The Utah reservations were terminated in 1954, but the bands
43 were restored to a federal trust relationship in 1980 (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983; Kelly and
44 Fowler 1986).
45
46
47

1 **Western Shoshone**
2

3 The Western Shoshone are ethnically similar Central Numic speakers who traditionally
4 occupied the northwestern flank of Southern Paiute territory—stretching from eastern California
5 through central Nevada into northwestern Utah and southern Idaho. They interacted peacefully
6 with the Southern Paiutes, with whom they were on good terms and may have shared the
7 resources of the Paharangat Valley and its environs (Thomas et al. 1986). For more information
8 on the Western Shoshone see Section 11.1.17.1.2.
9

10
11 **11.2.17.1.3 History**
12

13 The Great Basin was one of the last areas of the continental United States to be fully
14 explored. The harsh and rugged landscape deterred most European and American explorers until
15 the late 18th century. The earliest documented European presence in the Great Basin region was
16 the Dominguez-Escalante Expedition that began in July of 1776. Two Catholic priests, Fathers
17 Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante were looking for a route from
18 the Spanish capital city of Santa Fe to the Spanish settlement of Monterey on the California
19 coast. Due to poor weather the group did not end up completing their intended journey, but the
20 maps and journals describing their travels and encounters would prove valuable to later explorers
21 who traversed the area, such as Spanish/New Mexican traders and Anglo-American fur trappers
22 traveling the Old Spanish Trail in the 1820s and 1830s (BLM 1976).
23

24 Further exploration of the Great Basin occurred in 1826 with fur-trapping expeditions,
25 one conducted by Peter Ogden of the Hudson Bay Company, and the other by Jedediah Smith of
26 the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Both men were seeking new beaver fields; Ogden took a
27 more northerly route through Elko, Pershing, and Humbolt Counties, and Smith entered near the
28 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ at Mesquite and traveled into California. When Smith entered
29 California he was detained by Mexican authorities and ordered to go back the way he came;
30 however, he decided instead to travel farther north in California and cut across central Nevada,
31 further exploring the Nevada region. Fur trapping never became a lucrative enterprise in Nevada;
32 however, these trailblazers paved the way for later explorers and mappers, such as John C.
33 Frémont. Frémont was a member of the Topographical Engineers, and was commissioned to map
34 and report on the Great Basin area in 1843 and 1844. The results of his work gained wide
35 circulation and were of great importance in understanding the topography of the Great Basin,
36 both for official use and by those moving westward to seek new homes and fortunes
37 (Elliott 1973).
38

39 Nevada and the larger Great Basin region provided a corridor of travel for those seeking
40 to emigrate west. Several heavily traveled trails crossed the region, although none were
41 particularly close to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The Old Spanish Trail was an evolving
42 trail system generally established in the early 19th century, but it tended to follow earlier
43 established paths used by earlier explorers and Native Americans. The 2,700 mi (4,345 km)
44 network of trails passes through six states, beginning in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and ending in
45 Los Angeles, California. The closest portion of the congressionally designated Old Spanish
46 National Historic Trail to the proposed SEZ is where it follows the Virgin River, about 50 mi

1 (80 km) to the southeast. Mormons also frequently used the Old Spanish Trail in emigrating
2 farther west to Nevada, Arizona, and California, and the trail is often referred to as the Old
3 Spanish Trail/Mormon Road. Another notable trail that crossed Nevada was the California Trail,
4 a trail that followed portions of the notable Oregon Trail farther east of Nevada, then broke off
5 from that trail and continued through the northern portion of Nevada along the Humbolt River
6 until it reached California. The Pony Express Trail, a mail route that connected Saint Joseph,
7 Missouri, to Sacramento, California, entered Nevada northeast of Ely and exited just south of
8 Lake Tahoe (von Till Warren 1980).

9
10 With the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 closing out the
11 Mexican-American War, the area came under American control. In 1847, the first American
12 settlers arrived in the Great Basin, among them Mormon immigrants under the leadership of
13 Brigham Young, who settled in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. They sought to bring
14 the entire Great Basin under their control, establishing an independent State of Deseret. From its
15 center in Salt Lake City, the church sent out colonists to establish agricultural communities in
16 surrounding valleys and missions to acquire natural resources such as minerals and timber.
17 Relying on irrigation to support their farms, the Mormons often settled in the same places the
18 Fremont and Virgin Anasazi had centuries before. The result was a scattering of planned
19 agricultural communities from northern Arizona to southern Idaho and parts of Wyoming,
20 Nevada, and southern California. Mormon settlements near the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ
21 were located at Crystal Springs, about 18 mi (29 km) to the northwest of the SEZ, and Clover
22 Valley, about 28 mi (45 km) to the east of the SEZ (Paher 1970; Fehner and Gosling 2000).

23
24 Nevada's nickname is the "Silver State;" it is so named for the Comstock Lode strike in
25 1859 in Virginia City, about 400 mi (643 km) north of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. This
26 was the first major silver discovery in the United States, and with the news of the strike hopeful
27 prospectors flocked to the area in an effort to capitalize on the possible wealth under the surface
28 of the earth. The discovery of the Comstock Lode led to the creation of Virginia City and other
29 nearby towns that served the population influx. The population increase due to mining was so
30 dramatic that in 1850 there were less than a dozen non-native persons in the state of Nevada;
31 by 1860 there were 6,857, and by 1875 an estimated 75,000 people had settled within the
32 boundaries of the Nevada territory. The Comstock Lode strike is important to the history of
33 Nevada not just because of the population growth and significant amount of money that was
34 consequently brought to the area, but also because of several technological innovations that were
35 created and employed in the mines, including the use of square-set timbering. This technique
36 kept loose soil from collapsing on miners, a concept that was eventually employed around the
37 world in other mines (Paher 1970).

38
39 Mining for valuable deposits occurred in all regions of the state of Nevada, including in
40 the vicinity of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The closest mining district to the proposed
41 SEZ was the Delamar Mine. Gold was initially discovered by farmers from Pahrnagat in 1890
42 and 1891, leading to the formation of the Ferguson District in 1892. It is surmised that Native
43 Americans may have been mining for the gold over a dozen years prior to the whites. Captain
44 John C. De Lamar of Montana purchased the principal claim, renamed it Delamar and stepped up
45 the development of the mine. During the years 1895 to 1900 the Delamar Mine was the most
46 prosperous mine in Nevada, as most of the state was in a mining decline. The Delamar mining

1 camp was known as “the maker of widows” due to the high frequency of deaths caused by
2 silicosis, a lung disease brought about by the inhalation of high amounts of silica dust or
3 “Delamar dust.” A small cemetery associated with the mine overlooks the Delamar Valley within
4 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ. Despite the prevalence of the disease, people continued to work this rich
5 mine until the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Pioche Mine was one of the most notorious
6 mining districts in Lincoln County. Located in the Highland Range, to the northeast of the
7 Delamar Valley SEZ, Pioche was a violent Wild West town that was also one of the most
8 prosperous districts in the county. Other nearby mines included the Highland Mine and the
9 Bristol Mine, both to the north of the SEZ, and Hiko to the west of the SEZ (Paher 1970).

10
11 The construction of railroads in Nevada was often directly related to mining activities in
12 the state. It was necessary to construct intrastate rail lines to move ore from mines to mills; the
13 Pioche to Bullionville Railroad was the closest line to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, but
14 interstate railroads were also critical to the development of the economy. The San Pedro–
15 Los Angeles–Salt Lake Railroad was constructed in 1905, connecting two of the most populous
16 cities in the American West, Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. This still-used rail line is located to
17 the east of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, as it passes through Caliente through the Meadow
18 Valley Wash on its way to Las Vegas. The infamous Transcontinental Railroad was constructed
19 between 1863 and 1869, connecting Sacramento, California, and Omaha, Nebraska, passing
20 through the Nevada towns of Reno, Wadsworth, Winnemucca, Battle Mountain, Elko, and
21 Wells, and changing the manner in which people traversed the United States.

22
23 Nevada’s desert-mountain landscape has made it a prime region for use by the
24 U.S. military for several decades. Beginning in October 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt
25 established the Las Vegas Bombing and Gunnery Range, a 3.5-million-acre (14,000-km²) parcel
26 of land northwest of Las Vegas, near Indian Springs, Nevada. The main purpose of the range was
27 to serve as air-to-air gunnery practice, but at the end of WWII the gunnery range was closed. It
28 was reopened at the start of the Cold War in 1948, recommissioned as the Las Vegas Air Force
29 Base, and later renamed Nellis Air Force Base in 1950 (Fehner and Gosling 2000).

30
31 Prior to dropping the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the
32 only testing of nuclear weapons on U.S. soil was at the Trinity site, near Los Alamos Laboratory
33 in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Tests of nuclear weapons had been conducted at the newly
34 acquired Marshall Islands in the Pacific, but due to logistical constraints, financial expenditures,
35 and security reasons, a test site for nuclear weapons was needed in a more convenient region.
36 Project Nutmeg commenced in 1948 as a study to determine the feasibility and necessity of a test
37 site in the continental U.S. It was determined that due to public relations issues, radiological
38 safety, and security issues a continental test site should only be pursued in the event of a national
39 emergency. In 1949, that emergency occurred when the Soviet Union conducted their first test of
40 a nuclear weapon and the Korean War started in the summer of 1950. Five initial test sites were
41 proposed: Alamogordo/White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico, Camp LeJeune in North
42 Carolina, the Las Vegas–Tonopah Bombing and Gunnery Range in Nevada, a site in central
43 Nevada near Eureka, and Utah’s Dugway Proving Ground/Wendover Bombing Range. Several
44 factors were considered when making the final decision, including fallout patterns, prevailing
45 winds and predictability of weather, terrain, downwind populations, security, and public

1 awareness and relations, with the Las Vegas–Tonopah Bombing and Gunnery Range being
2 chosen as the NTS by President Truman in December 1950.

3
4 Covering 1,375 mi² (2213 km²), the NTS is a part of the Las Vegas–Tonopah Bombing
5 and Gunnery Range; it stretches from Mercury, Nevada, in the southeast to Pahute Mesa in the
6 northwest. The first set of nuclear tests was conducted in January 1951; originally named
7 FAUST (First American Drop United States Test) and later renamed Ranger, these bombs were
8 detonated over Frenchman Flat, an area about 45 mi (72 km) southwest of the proposed Delamar
9 Valley SEZ. Tests were also later conducted at Yucca Flat, an area located northwest of
10 Frenchman Flat, in an effort to minimize the effect of the blasts on the population of Las Vegas,
11 which reported some disturbances (non-radiological in nature) from the series of tests conducted
12 at Frenchman Flat. Tests were also conducted at Jackass Flats, to the west of the proposed
13 Delamar Valley SEZ, and Pahute Mesa, located to the north and west of the proposed Delamar
14 Valley SEZ. Nuclear tests were conducted in an effort to test new weapons concepts, proof-test
15 existing weapons, test the impact of nuclear weapons on manmade structures and the physical
16 environment, and conduct experimental testing in search of possible peaceful uses, specifically
17 the Pluto ramjet, Plowshare, and Rover rocket programs. The Pluto ramjet project was funded by
18 the Air Force to design a system that could propel a vehicle at supersonic speeds and low
19 altitudes, while the Rover rocket was a design for a nuclear-powered rocket for space travel. The
20 Plowshare project was an attempt to show that nuclear weapons could be effective in moving
21 large amounts of earth for canal and harbor construction. None of these three projects resulted in
22 any sustained results in terms of the goals they were seeking, but they were important in their
23 contribution to the overall work done at the NTS. In the fall of 1958, President Dwight
24 Eisenhower declared a moratorium on nuclear testing, with the Soviet Union following suit until
25 1961 when testing resumed on both behalves. However, this testing was performed mostly
26 underground at the NTS, with most atmospheric tests being conducted in the Pacific. The last
27 atmospheric test at the NTS was on July 17, 1962, with the Limited Test Ban Treaty signed by
28 the U.S. and Soviet Union on August 5, 1963, ending nuclear testing in the atmosphere, ocean,
29 and space. The last underground nuclear detonation at the NTS was on September 23, 1992,
30 after which Congress declared a moratorium on nuclear testing. In 1996, a Comprehensive Test
31 Ban Treaty was proposed by an international organization, but it has yet to be ratified by the
32 U.S. Senate; however, nuclear tests have not been conducted since. In total, 1,021 of the
33 1,149 nuclear detonations performed by the U.S. during the Cold War were conducted at the
34 NTS (Fehner and Gosling 2000).

35
36 Within the proposed Delamar SEZ are a landing strip and two drop zones used by Nellis
37 Air Force Base and the DoD, an area encompassing about 2,590 acres (10 km²). The 15,000-ft
38 (4,600-m) long landing strip is located in the southern portion of the SEZ on the dry lake bed; the
39 drop zones are located on the southeast and northwest sides of the dry lake. Through use permits
40 obtained from the BLM, the United States Air Force conducted landing and takeoff operations,
41 refueling exercises, reloading exercises, and search-and-rescue training support exercises in
42 periodic increments from the 1960s through the 1980s. Edwards Air Force Base also used the
43 airstrip for an emergency landing strip for the X-15 aircraft flight test program (Scott 1994).

1 **11.2.17.1.4 Traditional Cultural Properties—Landscape**
2

3 The Southern Paiutes have traditionally taken a holistic view of the world, in which the
4 sacred and profane are inextricably intertwined. According to their traditions, they were created
5 in their traditional use territory and have a divine right to the land along with a responsibility to
6 manage and protect it. Landscapes as a whole are often culturally important. An adverse effect
7 on one part diminishes the rest (Stoffle 2001). From a Southern Paiute perspective, landscapes
8 include places of power. Among the most important such places are sources of water; peaks,
9 mountains, and elevated features; caves; distinctive rock formations; and panels of rock art.
10 Places of power are important to the religious beliefs of the Southern Paiute. They may be sought
11 out for individual vision quests or healing and may likewise be associated with culturally
12 important plant and animal species. The view from such a point of power or the ability to see
13 from one important place to another can be an important element of its integrity (Stoffle and
14 Zedeño 2001b). Landscapes as a whole are tied together by a network of culturally important
15 trails (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983; Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a).
16

17 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is situated close to the Paharangat Valley ribbon
18 oasis, which includes lakes and spring-fed wetlands. It was an area of traditional Southern Paiute
19 base camps and gardens. Located less than 10 mi (16 km) from Paharangat Valley, the southern
20 end of Delamar Valley was likewise the site of Paharangat base camps (Stoffle and Dobyns
21 1983). These are reflected in the rock art panels and rock shelters located on the eastern face of a
22 rocky ridge along the western boundary of proposed SEZ. Caves, rock art panels, and former
23 dwelling places are all culturally significant features for the Southern Paiutes.
24

25 The southern end of the proposed SEZ appears to be at the center of a culturally
26 important landscape. A potential access road linking the SEZ to U.S. 93, which follows the
27 Pahrangat Valley, would pass through this area. In the past, Pahrangat descendents from the
28 Moapa River Reservation identified the southern Pahrangat Valley and the Delamar Mountains
29 as places of greatest concern. They ranked Kane Springs Wash, located just east of the Delamar
30 Mountains, Delamar Dry Lake, and the historic town of Delamar as only slightly less important
31 (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983).
32
33

34 **11.2.17.1.5 Cultural Surveys and Known Archaeological and Historical Resources**
35

36 In the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, 9 surveys have been conducted within the
37 boundaries of the SEZ, covering approximately 3.4% of the SEZ, and 17 additional surveys
38 have been conducted within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ. Of the nine surveys conducted within the
39 boundaries of the SEZ, five have been linear surveys, and the other four were block surveys. A
40 total of eight sites have been documented in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, six prehistoric
41 sites and two historic sites. Another 47 sites have been documented within 5 mi (8 km) of the
42 proposed SEZ; of these, 39 are prehistoric, and 8 are historic (de DuFour 2009).
43

44 The Delamar Valley SEZ has the potential to yield significant cultural resources,
45 especially prehistoric sites in the areas around the dry lake at the south end of the SEZ, as well as
46 in alluvial fans located on the outer portions of the SEZ and within a 5 mi (8 km) radius

1 (Drews and Ingbar 2004). Around the dry lake bed in the SEZ is a site that has significant
2 potential for eligibility for inclusion on the NRHP. This site is a small lithic scatter of obsidian
3 flakes and projectile points, possible metate fragments, and fire-cracked rock, with the possibility
4 of subsurface deposits. Another potentially eligible site is located on an alluvial fan in the eastern
5 portion of the SEZ. This site is also a lithic scatter of obsidian flakes, likely dating to the Archaic
6 period, and its potential subsurface deposits could provide information about Archaic settlement
7 patterns. The other prehistoric sites in the Delamar SEZ are isolated projectile points (Rose
8 Spring and Archaic points), grinding stone fragments, and dispersed lithic scatters. Two historic
9 sites, one an isolated bottle, the other an historic telegraph line, are likely not eligible for
10 inclusion on the NRHP; the telegraph line connected Delamar Mine to Bullfrog Mine, but has
11 been previously vandalized and may not retain sufficient integrity. The Delamar Mine itself is
12 within 6 mi (10 km) of the SEZ, and its associated cemetery is within 5 mi (8 km) overlooking
13 the valley and the northern section of the SEZ from the northeast in the Delamar Mountains.
14 Numerous rock art sites are in close proximity to the western edge of the SEZ boundary, and
15 artifacts were noted in the western portion of the SEZ during an initial visit to the valley.
16

17 The BLM has designated several locations within relatively close proximity to the
18 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ as ACECs because of their significant cultural value. The Pahroc
19 Rock Art ACEC is located about 10 mi (16 km) to the north of the proposed Delamar Valley
20 SEZ, at the south end of the North Pahroc Range. The Shooting Gallery ACEC is located about
21 15 mi (24 km) to the west of the SEZ, just west of Alamo. The name “Shooting Gallery” was
22 applied to the district because there is evidence that prehistoric people created hunting blinds and
23 a system of channels made of rocks to corral and hunt large game. The Mount Irish ACEC is
24 located about 30 mi (48 km) to the northwest of the proposed Delamar SEZ, near Hiko, and is
25 noted for its rock art and prehistoric camp sites. There are several other areas that contain
26 culturally sensitive material and meet the criteria for ACEC designation, but in the interest of
27 protecting the resources the BLM has not designated other ACECs, since it is presumed that
28 ACEC designation could bring unwanted attention to the sites, including increased potential for
29 vandalism.
30
31

32 ***National Register of Historic Places***

33

34 Two sites within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ have the potential to be eligible for
35 inclusion in the NRHP, as mentioned above, and are associated with the dry lake area and
36 alluvial fan areas. Within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ are 10 sites that exhibit potential significance
37 for inclusion in the NRHP. These sites, eight of which are rock shelters, are all prehistoric in
38 nature. All of the potentially eligible sites within the 5-mi (8-km) buffer are located to the west
39 of the SEZ in the South Pahroc Range and surrounding area; most also consist of petroglyphs
40 and/or pictographs. Several of the sites have diagnostic pottery; two of the sites contain Paiute
41 ceramics, two others contain both Fremont and Paiute style ceramics, and one of those two sites
42 could possibly contain Virgin Anasazi ceramic sherds. The other two sites include the largest
43 single concentration of patterned-body anthropomorphs and peanut-bodied anthropomorphs (also
44 referred to as Pahrnagat Man) and a hunting camp and chipping station.
45

1 In addition, nine other properties are listed in the NRHP within Lincoln County. Three of
2 these properties are prehistoric sites: the White River Narrows Archaeological District, located
3 about 30 mi (48 km) northwest of the proposed SEZ; the Black Canyon Petroglyph Site in the
4 Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge, south of Alamo, about 7 mi (11 km) southwest of the
5 Delamar Valley SEZ; and the Panaca Summit Archaeological District, about 40 mi (64 km)
6 northwest of the SEZ. The other properties listed in the NRHP in Lincoln County are historic
7 sites near the towns of Caliente and Pioche, both located to the northeast of the SEZ.
8
9

10 **11.2.17.2 Impacts**

11
12 Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed Delamar
13 Valley SEZ; however, further investigation is needed at the project-specific level. A cultural
14 resource survey of the entire area of potential effect, including consultation with affected Native
15 American Tribes, would first need to be conducted to identify archaeological sites, historic
16 structures and features, and traditional cultural properties, and an evaluation would need to
17 follow to determine whether any are eligible for listing in the NRHP as historic properties. The
18 Delamar Valley SEZ has a high potential for containing prehistoric sites, especially in the dry
19 lake area at the southern end of the SEZ; a potential for historic sites also exists. The largest
20 potential for direct impacts on significant cultural values is in the dry lake area and the alluvial
21 fans, located on the southern and outer portions of the SEZ. At least two of the sites recorded in
22 these portions of the SEZ have been determined to be potentially eligible for listing in the
23 NRHP. The history of the landing strip should also be investigated further. Section 5.15
24 discusses the types of impacts that could occur on any significant cultural resources found to be
25 present in the Delamar Valley SEZ. Impacts will be minimized through the implementation of
26 required programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Programmatic
27 design features assume that the necessary surveys, evaluations, and consultations will occur.
28

29 Indirect impacts on cultural resources outside of the SEZ boundary, such as through
30 looting or vandalism, are possible in the rock shelter and petroglyph sites immediately west of
31 the SEZ and also to the east toward the old mining town of Delamar. Visual impacts on
32 traditional cultural properties identified either in the Pahroc Range or in the Delamar Mountains
33 would occur. Subsurface sites would likely not be impacted because programmatic design
34 features for controlling water runoff and sedimentation would prevent erosion-related impacts on
35 buried deposits outside of the SEZ.
36

37 Approximately 8 mi (13 km) of access road is anticipated to connect to U.S. 93 to the
38 north of the SEZ, resulting in approximately 58 acres (0.23 km²) of disturbance. Impacts on
39 cultural resources are possible in areas related to the access ROW, since new areas of potential
40 cultural significance could be directly impacted by construction or opened to increased access
41 from road use. Indirect impacts, such as vandalism or theft, could occur if significant resources
42 are located in close proximity to the ROW. Programmatic design features assume that the
43 necessary surveys, evaluations, and consultation will occur for the ROW, as with the project
44 footprint within the SEZ. In this particular area, a couple of small surveys have been conducted
45 that traverse the potential corridor. One site, a lithic scatter, has been recorded. The site consists
46 of metate fragment and a stone tool fragment (either a projectile point or a blade fragment) and

1 was not evaluated for eligibility for listing in the NRHP (de DuFour 2009). Although it is
2 assumed elsewhere in this document that 8 mi (13 km) of access road is assumed to connect to
3 U.S. 93 to the southwest of the SEZ, this alternative route could result in a greater potential for
4 impacts on cultural resources. The amount of disturbance is essentially the same (58 acres
5 [0.23 km²]), but the disturbance would occur in an area of higher elevation, higher cultural
6 sensitivity, and increased potential for rock shelters and rock art. No surveys have been
7 previously conducted in the vicinity of this potential corridor (de DuFour 2009). No needs for
8 new transmission have currently been identified, assuming existing lines would be used;
9 therefore, no additional areas of cultural concern would be made accessible as a result of
10 transmission development within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. However, impacts on
11 cultural resources related to the creation of new corridors not assessed in this PEIS would be
12 evaluated at the project-specific level if new road or transmission construction or line upgrades
13 are to occur.

14 15 16 **11.2.17.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

17
18 Programmatic design features to mitigate adverse effects on significant cultural
19 resources, such as avoidance of significant sites and features, cultural awareness training for the
20 workforce, and measures for addressing possible looting/vandalism issues through formalized
21 agreement documents, are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.

22
23 SEZ-specific design features would be determined in consultation with the Nevada SHPO
24 and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations.

- 25
26 • Avoidance of significant resources clustered in specific areas, such as those in
27 the vicinity of the dry lake, is recommended.

28
29 Impacts on the viewsheds of areas of traditional cultural importance either in the west
30 side of the Delamar Mountains to the east or the east side of the Pahroc Range to the west, if they
31 are identified as such by the affected Tribes, would not be fully mitigable other than through
32 avoidance of the valley. However, some mitigation options for visual impacts are provided in
33 Section 11.2.14.

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1 **11.2.18 Native American Concerns**

2
3 Native Americans share many environmental and socioeconomic concerns with other
4 ethnic groups. This section focuses on concerns that are specific to Native Americans or to which
5 Native Americans bring a distinct perspective. For a discussion of issues of possible Native
6 American concern shared with the population as a whole, several sections in this PEIS should be
7 consulted. General topics of concern are addressed in Section 4.16. Specifically for the proposed
8 Delamar Valley SEZ, Section 11.2.17 discusses archaeological sites, structures, landscapes, and
9 traditional cultural properties; Section 11.2.8 discusses mineral resources; Section 11.2.9.1.3
10 discusses water rights and water use; Section 11.2.10 discusses plant species; Section 11.2.11
11 discusses wildlife species, including wildlife migration patterns; Section 11.2.13 discusses air
12 quality; Section 11.2.14 discusses visual resources; Sections 11.2.19 and 11.2.20 discuss
13 socioeconomics and environmental justice, respectively; and issues of human health and safety
14 are discussed in Section 5.21.

15
16
17 **11.2.18.1 Affected Environment**

18
19 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ falls within the Tribal traditional use area generally
20 attributed to the Southern Paiute (Kelly and Fowler 1986), although the Paiutes often shared
21 resources with the Western Shoshone, and the Western Shoshone may have been familiar with
22 this border region. All federally recognized Tribes with Southern Paiute or Western Shoshone
23 roots have been contacted and provided an opportunity to comment or consult regarding this
24 PEIS. They are listed in Table 11.2.18.1-1. Details of government-to-government consultation
25 efforts are presented in Chapter 14; a listing of all federally recognized Tribes contacted for this
26 PEIS is found in Appendix K.

27
28
29 **11.2.18.1.1 Territorial Boundaries**

30
31
32 **Southern Paiutes**

33
34 The traditional territory of the Southern Paiutes lies mainly in the Mojave Desert,
35 stretching from California to the Colorado Plateau. It generally follows the right bank of the
36 Colorado River (heading downstream), including its tributary streams and canyons in southern
37 Nevada and Utah, including most of Clark and Lincoln Counties in Nevada and extending as
38 far north as Beaver County in Utah (Kelly and Fowler 1986). This area has been judicially
39 recognized as the traditional use area of the Southern Paiute by the Indian Claims Commission
40 (Clemmer and Stewart 1986; Royster 2008).

41
42
43 **Western Shoshone**

44
45 The Western Shoshone traditionally occupied a swath of the central Great Basin
46 stretching from Death Valley in California through central Nevada and northwestern Utah to

TABLE 11.2.18.1-1 Federally Recognized Tribes with Traditional Ties to the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Tribe	Location	State
Chemehuevi Indian Tribe	Havasu Lake	California
Colorado River Indian Tribes	Parker	Arizona
Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation	Ibapah	Utah
Duckwater Shoshone Tribe	Duckwater	Nevada
Ely Shoshone Tribe	Ely	Nevada
Kaibab Paiute Tribe	Fredonia	Arizona
Las Vegas Paiute Tribe	Las Vegas	Nevada
Moapa Band of Paiutes	Moapa	Nevada
Pahrump Paiute Tribe	Pahrump	Nevada
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah	Cedar City	Utah
Cedar Band	Cedar City	Utah
Indian Peak Band	Cedar City	Utah
Kanosh Band	Kanosh	Utah
Koosharem Band	Cedar City	Utah
Shivwits Band	Ivins	Utah
San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe	Tuba City	Arizona
Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians	Grantsville	Utah

southeastern Idaho (Thomas et al. 1986). The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ lies within the northern margins of Southern Paiute territory in an area of shared use (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983).

11.2.18.1.2 Plant Resources

Native Americans continue to make use of a wide range of indigenous plants for food, medicine, construction materials, and other uses. The vegetation present at the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is described in Section 11.2.10. The cover types present at the proposed SEZ are mostly in the Inter-Mountain Basins series. Mixed Salt Desert Scrub predominates. There is a substantial area of Playa in the southern end of the proposed SEZ and areas of Greasewood Flat, Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe, and Mojave Mid-elevation Desert Scrub (USGS 2005a). The proposed SEZ is sparsely vegetated. As shown in Table 11.2.18.1-2, the proposed SEZ is likely to contain some plants used by Native Americans for food and/or medicinal purposes (Stoffle et al. 1999; Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Project-specific analyses will be needed to determine their presence at any proposed building site.

11.2.18.1.3 Other Resources

Southern Paiutes with ties to the area of the proposed SEZ rate springs as one of the most important resources in their cultural landscape. Water is an essential prerequisite for life in the arid areas of the Great Basin. As a result, water holds a key place in the religion of native

TABLE 11.2.18.1-2 Plant Species Important to Native Americans Observed or Likely To Be Present in the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Food		
Buckhorn Cholla	<i>Cylindropuntia acanthocarpa</i>	Possible
Buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum inflatum</i>	Observed
Cholla Cactus	<i>Cylindropuntia</i> spp.	Observed
Dropseed	<i>Sporobolus</i> spp.	Possible
Greasewood	<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>	Likely
Indian Rice Grass	<i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>	Observed
Iodine Bush	<i>Allenrolfea occidentalis</i>	Possible
Juniper	<i>Juniperus</i> spp.	Possible
Muhly	<i>Muhlenbergis porteri</i>	Possible
Wolfberry	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	Possible
Yucca	<i>Yucca</i> spp.	Observed
Medicine		
Greasewood	<i>Sacarbatus vermiculatus</i>	Likely
Mormon Tea	<i>Ephedra</i> spp.	Observed
Sagebrush	<i>Artemesia tridentate</i>	Possible
Saltbush	<i>Atriplex</i> spp.	Observed

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005a); Stoffle and Dobyns (1983); Stoffle et al. (1999).

1
2
3 cultures. Great Basin cultures consider all water sacred and purifying. Springs are often
4 associated with powerful beings, and hot springs in particular figure in Southern Paiute creation
5 stories. Water sources are often associated with rock art. Water sources are seen as connected, so
6 damage to one damages all (Fowler 1991; Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a). There are springs located
7 to the west of the proposed SEZ. Tribes are also sensitive regarding the use of scarce local water
8 supplies for the benefit of far distant communities and recommend that the determination of
9 adequate water supplies should be a primary consideration in determining whether a site is
10 suitable for the development of a utility-scale solar energy facility (Moose 2009).

11
12 Wildlife likely to be found in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is described in
13 Section 11.2.11. Mountain sheep, deer, and rabbit are the animals of concern most often
14 mentioned by Native Americans with local ties (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). The proposed SEZ
15 provides suitable habitat for mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus
16 californicus*), and desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*). The mountains on either side of the
17 valley provide suitable habitat for mountain sheep (*Ovis canadensis*), which may sometimes be
18 present on the valley floor. Other animals traditionally important to the Southern Paiute include
19 lizards, which are likely to occur in the proposed SEZ, and the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*).
20 The proposed SEZ falls within the range of the wide-ranging eagle (USGS 2005b). Animals

1 important to affected Native American tribes likely to be found within the proposed SEZ are
2 listed in Table 11.2.18.1-3.

3
4 Other natural resources traditionally important to Native Americans include salt, clay for
5 pottery, and naturally occurring mineral pigments for the decoration and protection of the skin
6 (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Of these, clay beds are possible in the dry lake within the proposed
7 SEZ (see Section 11.2.7).

8 9 10 **11.2.18.2 Impacts**

11
12 In the past, when energy projects have been proposed, Great Basin Native Americans
13 have expressed concern over project impacts on a variety of resources. They tend to take a
14 holistic view of their traditional homeland. For them, cultural and natural features are
15 inextricably bound together. Effects on one part have ripple effects on the whole. Western
16 distinctions between the sacred and the secular have no meaning in their traditional worldview
17 (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). While no comments specific to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ
18 have been received from Native American Tribes to date, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah has
19 asked to be kept informed of PEIS developments. When commenting on past projects in the
20 Delamar Valley, the Southern Paiute have expressed concern over adverse effects on a wide
21 range of resources. Geophysical features and physical cultural remains are discussed in
22 Section 11.2.17.1.4. Such features are often seen as important because they are the location of
23 or have ready access to a range of plant, animal, and mineral resources (Stoffle et al. 1997).
24 Resources considered important include food plants, medicinal plants, plants used in basketry,
25 and plants used in construction; large game animals, small game animals, and birds; and sources
26 of clay, salt, and pigments (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Those likely to be found within the
27 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are discussed in Section 11.2.18.1.2.

28
29 The southern end of Delamar Valley has been identified as an area where the Paharangat
30 Band of Southern Paiutes resided. In this area, there is likely a cultural landscape important to
31 the Southern Paiute that would include the rockshelters and petroglyphs panels just beyond the
32 western boundary of the proposed SEZ, the Delamar Lake playa, Delamar Mountains, the
33 historic town of Delamar, and Kane Spring Wash. Associated with these features are plants and
34 animals of traditional cultural importance. Although the proposed SEZ is sparsely vegetated,
35 its proximity to a traditionally settled area suggests that the area was used historically by the
36 Southern Paiute. An access road approaching the southern end of the proposed SEZ from the
37 west is more likely to affect this potential cultural landscape than routes that follow Delamar
38 Valley northward from the SEZ to U.S. 93. Any construction of solar energy facilities has the
39 potential to disturb this landscape and its viewshed. Consultation with the affected Tribes should
40 be undertaken to determine the aspects of the culturally important features that render them
41 significant.

42
43 As consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it
44 is possible that there will be Native American concerns expressed over potential visual and other
45 effects on specific resources and any culturally important landscapes within or adjacent to the
46 proposed SEZ. Since solar energy facilities cover large tracts of land, even taking into account

TABLE 11.2.18.1-3 Animal Species used by Native Americans as Food whose Range Includes the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Mammals		
Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	All year
Black-tailed jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>	All year
Bobcat	<i>Lynx rufus</i>	All year
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	All year
Cottontails	<i>Silvilagus</i> spp.	All year
Woodrats	<i>Neotoma</i> spp.	All year
Gray fox	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	All year
Kangaroo rats	<i>Dipodomys</i> spp.	All year
Kit fox	<i>Vulpes macotis</i>	All year
Mule deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	All year
Pocket gopher	<i>Thomomys bottae</i>	All year
Pocket mice	<i>Perognathus</i> spp.	All year
Porcupine	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>	All year
Pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana</i>	All year
Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	All year
Rock squirrel	<i>Spermophilus variegatus</i>	All year
White-tailed antelope squirrel	<i>Amмосpermophilus leucurus</i>	All year
White-tailed jackrabbit	<i>Lepus townsendii</i>	All year
Birds		
Burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicular</i>	Summer
Common raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	All year
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	All year
Great horned owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	All year
Mourning Dove	<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>	All year
Northern mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	All year
Sage grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	All year
Sandhill crane	<i>Grus Canadensis</i>	Spring/fall
Swainson's hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Summer
Reptiles		
Desert horned-lizard	<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>	All year
Desert tortoise	<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	Possible
Large lizards	Various species	All year

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005b); Fowler (1986).

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2

1 the implementation of programmatic design features, it is unlikely that avoidance of all resources
2 important to Native Americans would be possible.

3
4 Implementation of programmatic design features, as discussed in Appendix A,
5 Section A.2.2, should eliminate impacts on Tribes' water rights and the potential for groundwater
6 contamination issues.

9 **11.2.18.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

10
11 Programmatic design features to mitigate impacts of potential concern to Native
12 Americans, such as avoidance of sacred sites, water resources, and tribally important plant and
13 animal species are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Mitigation of impacts on
14 archaeological sites and traditional cultural properties is discussed in Section 11.2.17.3, in
15 addition to programmatic design features for historic properties discussed in Appendix A,
16 Section A.2.2.

17
18 The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features addressing issues of potential
19 concern would be determined during government-to-government consultation with the affected
20 Tribes listed in Table 11.2.18.1-1.

1 **11.2.19 Socioeconomics**

2
3
4 **11.2.19.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section describes current socioeconomic conditions and local community services
7 within the ROI surrounding the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The ROI is a three-county area
8 comprising Clark and Lincoln Counties in Nevada and Iron County in Utah. It encompasses the
9 area in which workers are expected to spend most of their salaries and in which a portion of site
10 purchases and non-payroll expenditures from the construction, operation, and decommissioning
11 phases of the proposed SEZ facility are expected to take place.

12
13
14 **11.2.19.1.1 ROI Employment**

15
16 In 2008, employment in the ROI stood at 944,909 (Table 11.2.19.1-1). Over the period
17 1999 to 2008, the annual average employment growth rate was higher in Lincoln County (5.1%)
18 than in Iron County (3.4%) and Clark County (3.2%). At 3.2%, growth rates in the ROI as a
19 whole were higher than the average rate for Nevada (2.7%).

20
21 In the ROI in 2006, the services sector provided the highest percentage of employment
22 at 59.3%, followed by wholesale and retail trade at 14.9% and construction (11.7%)
23 (Table 11.2.19.1-2). Within the three counties in the ROI, the distribution of employment across
24
25

TABLE 11.2.19.1-1 ROI Employment in the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Location	1999	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999–2008 (%)
Clark County, Nevada	675,693	922,878	3.2
Lincoln County, Nevada	1,114	1,731	5.1
Iron County, Utah	14,571	20,300	3.4
ROI	691,582	944,909	3.2
Nevada	978,969	1,282,012	2.7
Utah	1,080,441	1,336,556	2.1

26 Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a,b).

TABLE 11.2.19.1-2 ROI Employment in the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ by Sector, 2006

Industry	Clark County		Lincoln County		Iron County		ROI	
	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total
Agriculture ^a	213	0.0	130	16.1	934	7.0	1,277	0.1
Mining	522	0.1	38	4.7	10	0.1	570	0.1
Construction	100,817	11.6	60	7.4	1,829	13.8	102,706	11.7
Manufacturing	25,268	2.9	0	0.0	1,732	13.1	27,000	3.1
Transportation and public utilities	38,529	4.4	70	8.7	363	2.7	38,962	4.4
Wholesale and retail trade	128,498	14.8	309	38.3	2,650	20.0	131,407	14.9
Finance, insurance, and real estate	56,347	6.5	24	3.0	646	4.9	57,044	6.5
Services	516,056	59.6	343	42.6	5,068	38.2	521,500	59.3
Other	105	0.0	0	0.0	10	0.1	115	0.0
Total	866,093		806		13,250		880,149	

^a Agricultural employment includes 2007 data for hired farmworkers.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a); USDA (2009a,b).

1 sectors is different from that of the ROI as a whole, with employment in services (59.6%) higher
2 in Clark County than in the ROI as a whole, while employment in wholesale and retail trade
3 (14.8%), and agriculture (0.0%) were lower than in other counties in the ROI.
4
5

6 ***11.2.19.1.2 ROI Unemployment*** 7

8 The average rate in Lincoln County over the period over the period 1999 to 2008 was
9 5.2%, slightly higher than the rate in Clark County (5.0%), and higher than the rate for Iron
10 County (Table 11.2.19.1-3). The average rate in the ROI over this period was 5.0%, the same as
11 the average rate for Nevada. Unemployment rates for the first 11 months of 2009 contrast with
12 rates for 2008 as a whole; in Clark County, the unemployment rate increased to 11.1%, while in
13 Lincoln County the rate reached 8.0%, and it increased to 6.4% in Iron County. The average
14 rates for the ROI (11.0%) and for Nevada as a whole (11.0%) were also higher during this period
15 than the corresponding average rates for 2008.
16
17

18 ***11.2.19.1.3 ROI Urban Population*** 19

20 The population of the ROI in 2006 to 2008 was 57% urban. The largest city, Las Vegas,
21 had an estimated 2008 population of 562,849; other large cities in Clark County include
22 Henderson (253,693) and North Las Vegas (217,975) (Table 11.2.19.1-4). In addition, there are
23 two smaller cities in the county, Mesquite (16,528) and Boulder City (14,954). There are a
24 number of unincorporated urban areas in Clark County that are not included in the urban
25 population, meaning that the percentage of the county population not living in urban areas is
26 overstated. The largest urban area in Iron County, Cedar City, had an estimated 2008 population
27 of 28,439; other urban areas in the county include Enoch (5,076) and Parowan (2,606)
28 (Table 11.2.19.1-4). In addition, there are three other urban areas in the county, Paragonah (477),
29 Kanaraville (314) and Brian Head (126). Most of these cities and towns are less than 100 mi
30 (160 km) from the site of the proposed SEZ.
31

32 Population growth rates in the ROI have varied over the period 2000 to 2008
33 (Table 11.2.19.1-4). North Las Vegas grew at an annual rate of 8.3% during this period, with
34 higher than average growth also experienced in Mesquite (7.3%), Enoch (4.9%), and Henderson
35 (4.7%). Las Vegas (2.1%), Brian Head (0.8%), Caliente (0.7%) and others experienced a lower
36 growth rate between 2000 and 2008, while Boulder City (0.0%), experienced a static growth rate
37 during this period.
38
39

40 ***11.2.19.1.4 ROI Urban Income*** 41

42 Median household incomes vary across urban areas in the ROI. Of the four cities for
43 which data are available for 2006 to 2008, Henderson (\$67,886) and North Las Vegas (\$60,506)
44 had median incomes in 2006 to 2008 that were higher than the average for Nevada (\$56,348) and
45 Utah (\$56,484), while median incomes in Las Vegas (\$55,113) and Cedar City (\$41,318) were
46 slightly lower than both state averages (Table 11.2.19.1-4).

TABLE 11.2.19.1-3 ROI Unemployment Rates for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (%)

Location	1999–2008	2008	2009 ^a
Clark County, Nevada	5.0	6.6	11.1
Lincoln County, Nevada	5.2	5.4	8.0
Iron County, Utah	4.1	4.2	6.4
ROI	5.0	6.5	11.0
Nevada	5.0	6.7	11.0
Utah	4.1	3.4	5.2

^a Rates for 2009 are the average for January through November.

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a–c).

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TABLE 11.2.19.1-4 ROI Urban Population and Income for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

City	Population			Median Household Income (\$ 2008)		
	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000–2008 (%)	1999	2006–2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999 and 2006–2008 (%) ^a
Boulder City, Nevada	14,966	14,954	0.0	65,049	NA ^b	NA
Brian Head, Utah	118	126	0.8	56,732	NA	NA
Caliente, Nevada	1,123	1,191	0.7	33,260	NA	NA
Cedar City, Nevada	20,527	28,439	4.2	41,719	41,318	–0.1
Enoch, Utah	3,467	5,076	4.9	48,112	NA	NA
Henderson, Nevada	175,381	253,693	4.7	72,035	67,886	–0.7
Kanarraville, Utah	311	314	0.1	44,258	NA	NA
Las Vegas, Nevada	478,434	562,849	2.1	56,739	55,113	–0.3
Mesquite, Utah	9,389	16,528	7.3	52,005	NA	NA
North Las Vegas, Nevada	115,488	217,975	8.3	56,299	60,506	0.2
Paragonah, Utah	470	477	0.2	43,721	NA	NA
Parowan, Utah	2,565	2,606	0.2	41,749	NA	NA

^a Data are averages for the period 2006 to 2008.

^b NA = data not available.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b–d).

3
4

1 Growth rates between 1999 and 2006 to 2008 were small in North Las Vegas (0.2%),
 2 and negative in Henderson (-0.7%), Las Vegas (-0.3%), and Cedar City (-0.1%). The average
 3 median household income growth rate as a whole over this period was -0.2% for Nevada, and -
 4 0.5% in Utah.

5
6
7 **11.2.19.1.5 ROI Population**
8

9 Table 11.2.19.1-5 presents recent and projected populations in the ROI and for the two
 10 states as a whole. Population in the ROI stood at 1,927,930 in 2008, having grown at an average
 11 annual rate of 4.0% since 2000. Growth rates for ROI were higher than those in Nevada (3.4%)
 12 over the same period.

13
14 Both counties in the ROI experienced growth in population between 2000 and 2008;
 15 population in Clark County grew at an annual rate of 4.0%, while population grew by 3.4% in
 16 Iron County and 1.4% in Lincoln County. The ROI population is expected to increase to
 17 2,782,449 by 2021 and to 2,865,746 by 2023.

18
19
20 **11.2.19.1.6 ROI Income**
21

22 Total personal income in the ROI stood at \$75.2 billion in 2007 and has grown at an
 23 annual average rate of 4.9% over the period 1998 to 2007 (Table 11.2.19.1-6). Per-capita income
 24 also rose over the same period at a rate of 1.0%, increasing from \$36,099 to \$39,847. Per-capita
 25 incomes were higher in Clark County (\$40,307) than in Lincoln County (\$26,858) and Iron
 26 County (\$21,922) in 2007. Growth rates in total personal income have been higher in Clark
 27 County than in Iron County and Lincoln County. Personal income growth rates in the ROI were
 28
29

TABLE 11.2.19.1-5 ROI Population for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Location	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000–2008 (%)	2021	2023
Clark County, Nevada	1,375,765	1,879,093	4.0	2,710,303	2,791,161
Lincoln County, Nevada	4,165	4,643	1.4	5,350	5,412
Iron County, Utah	33,779	44,194	3.4	66,796	69,173
ROI	1,413,709	1,927,930	4.0	2,782,449	2,865,746
Nevada	1,998,257	2,615,772	3.4	3,675,890	3,779,745
Utah	2,233,169	2,727,343	2.5	3,546,228	3,666,248

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009e,f); Nevada State Demographers Office (2008).

TABLE 11.2.19.1-6 ROI Personal Income for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Location	1998	2007	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1998–2007 (%)
Clark County, Nevada			
Total income ^a	45.7	74.1	5.0
Per-capita income	36,509	40,307	1.0
Lincoln County, Nevada			
Total income ^a	0.1	0.1	0.7
Per-capita income	24,711	24,121	-0.2
Iron County, Utah			
Total income ^a	0.7	0.9	3.5
Per-capita income	21,352	21,922	0.3
ROI			
Total income ^a	46.5	75.2	4.9
Per-capita income	36,099	39,847	1.0
Nevada			
Total income ^a	68.9	105.3	4.3
Per-capita income	37,188	41,022	1.0
Utah			
Total income ^a	61.9	82.4	2.9
Per-capita income	28,567	31,003	0.8

^a Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ billion 2008.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce (2009); U.S. Bureau of Census (2009e,f).

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higher than the rate for Nevada (4.3%) and Utah (2.9%), but per-capita income growth rates in Clark County were the same as, while rates in Lincoln County and Iron County were lower than in Nevada as a whole (1.0%) and Utah (0.8%) as a whole.

Median household income in 2006 to 2008 varied from \$41,173 in Lincoln County to \$42,687 in Iron County and \$56,954 in Clark County (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009d).

1 **11.2.19.1.7 ROI Housing**
2

3 In 2007, more than 774,400 housing units were located in the three ROI counties, with
4 about 97% of these located in Clark County (Table 11.2.19.1-7). Owner-occupied units compose
5 approximately 60% of the occupied units in the three counties, with rental housing making up
6 40% of the total. Vacancy rates in 2007 were 29.3% in Lincoln County, 23.4% in Iron County,
7 and 12.2% in Clark County; with an overall vacancy rate of 12.5% in the ROI, there were
8 97,010 vacant housing units in the ROI in 2007, of which 39,291 are estimated to be rental
9 units that would be available to construction workers. There were 10,707 units in seasonal,
10 recreational, or occasional use in the ROI at the time of the 2000 Census, with 1.5% of housing
11 units in Clark County, 14.6% in Iron County, and 14.0% in Lincoln County used for seasonal or
12 recreational purposes.
13

14 Housing stock in the ROI as a whole grew at an annual rate of 4.3% over the period 2000
15 to 2007, with 198,818 new units added to the existing housing stock (Table 11.2.19.1-7).
16

17 The median value of owner-occupied housing in 2000 to 2008 varied between \$80,300 in
18 Lincoln County, \$112,000 in Iron County, and \$139,500 in Clark County (U.S. Bureau of the
19 Census 2009g).
20

21
22 **11.2.19.1.8 ROI Local Government Organizations**
23

24 The various local and county government organizations in the ROI are listed in
25 Table 11.2.19.1-8. In addition, three Tribal governments are located in the ROI, with members
26 of other Tribal groups located in the county, but whose Tribal governments are located in
27 adjacent counties or states.
28
29

30 **11.2.19.1.9 ROI Community and Social Services**
31

32 This section describes educational, health-care, law enforcement, and firefighting
33 resources in the ROI.
34
35

36 **Schools**
37

38 In 2007, the three-county ROI had a total of 347 public and private elementary, middle,
39 and high schools (NCES 2009). Table 11.2.19.1-9 provides summary statistics for enrollment
40 and educational staffing and two indices of educational quality—student-teacher ratios and levels
41 of service (number of teachers per 1,000 population). The student-teacher ratio in Iron County
42 schools (21.2) is higher than that in Clark County (19.0) and Lincoln County schools (13.3),
43 while the level of service is much higher in Lincoln County (18.2) than elsewhere in the ROI,
44 where there are fewer teachers per 1,000 population (Iron County 9.3, Clark County 8.7).
45
46

**TABLE 11.2.19.1-7 ROI Housing
Characteristics for the Proposed Delamar
Valley SEZ**

Parameter	2000	2007 ^a
Clark County, Nevada		
Owner-occupied	302,834	393,453
Rental	209,419	268,572
Vacant units	47,546	92,144
Seasonal and recreational use	8,416	NA
Total units	559,799	754,169
Lincoln County, Nevada		
Owner-occupied	1,156	1,204
Rental	384	400
Vacant units	638	664
Seasonal and recreational use	305	NA
Total units	2,178	2,268
Iron County, Utah		
Owner-occupied	7,040	8,387
Rental	3,587	5,387
Vacant units	2,991	4,202
Seasonal and recreational use	1,986	NA
Total units	13,618	17,976
ROI		
Owner-occupied	311,030	403,044
Rental	213,390	274,359
Vacant units	51,175	97,010
Seasonal and recreational use	10,707	NA
Total units	575,595	774,413

^a NA = data not available.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009h-j).

TABLE 11.2.19.1-8 ROI Local Government Organizations and Social Institutions in the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Governments

City

Boulder City, Nevada	Kanaraville, Utah
Brian Head, Utah	Las Vegas, Nevada
Caliente, Nevada	Mesquite, Utah
Cedar City, Nevada	North Las Vegas
Enoch, Utah	Paragonah, Utah
Henderson, Nevada	Parowan, Utah

County

Clark County, Nevada	Iron County, Utah
Lincoln County, Nevada	

Tribal

- Las Vegas Tribe of Paiute Indians of the Las Vegas Indian Colony, Nevada
- Moapa Band of Paiute Indians of the Moapa River Indian Reservation, Nevada
- Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b); U.S. Department of the Interior (2010).

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TABLE 11.2.19.1-9 ROI School District Data for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, 2007

Location	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Student-Teacher Ratio	Level of Service ^a
Clark County, Nevada	303,448	15,930	19.0	8.7
Lincoln County, Nevada	1,074	81	13.3	18.2
Iron County, Utah	8,522	402	21.2	9.3
ROI	313,044	16,413	19.1	8.7

^a Number of teachers per 1,000 population.

Source: NCES (2009).

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1 **Health Care**

2
3 The total number of physicians (4,220) and the number of physicians per
4 1,000 population (2.3) in Clark County is higher than in Iron County (55, 1.3) and in
5 Lincoln County (2, 0.4) (Table 11.2.19.1-10).

6
7
8 **Public Safety**

9
10 Several state, county, and local police departments provide law enforcement in the
11 ROI (Table 11.2.19.1-11). Lincoln County has 26 officers and would provide law enforcement
12 services to the SEZ; there are 3,214 officers in Clark County and 31 officers in Iron County.
13 Levels of service of police protection per 1,000 population are 5.8 in Lincoln County, 1.7 in
14 Clark County, and 0.7 in Iron County. Currently, there are 1,000 professional firefighters in the
15 ROI (Table 11.2.19.1-11).

16
17
18 ***11.2.19.1.10 ROI Social Structure and Social Change***

19
20 Community social structures and other forms of social organization within the ROI are
21 related to various factors, including historical development, major economic activities and
22 sources of employment, income levels, race and ethnicity, and forms of local political
23 organization. Although an analysis of the character of community social structures is beyond the
24 scope of the current programmatic analysis, project-level NEPA analyses would include a
25 description of ROI social structures, contributing factors, their uniqueness, and consequently, the
26 susceptibility of local communities to various forms of social disruption and social change.

27
28 Various energy development studies have suggested that once the annual growth in
29 population is between 5 and 15% in smaller rural communities, alcoholism, depression, suicide,
30 social conflict, divorce, and delinquency would increase and levels of community satisfaction
31
32

**TABLE 11.2.19.1-10 Physicians in the
Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ ROI, 2007**

Location	Number of Primary Care Physicians	Level of Service ^a
Clark County, Nevada	4,220	2.3
Lincoln County, Nevada	2	0.4
Iron County, Utah	55	1.3
ROI	4,277	2.3

^a Number of physicians per 1,000 population.

Source: AMA (2009).

TABLE 11.2.19.1-11 Public Safety Employment in the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ ROI

Location	Number of Police Officers ^a	Level of Service ^b	Number of Firefighters ^c	Level of Service
Clark County, Nevada	3,214	1.7	991	0.5
Lincoln County, Nevada	26	5.8	1	0.2
Iron County, Utah	31	0.7	8	0.2
ROI	3,271	1.7	1,000	0.5

^a 2007 data.

^b Number per 1,000 population.

^c 2008 data; number does not include volunteers.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2008); Fire Departments Network (2009).

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would deteriorate (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996). Data on violent crime and property crime rates and on alcoholism and illicit drug use, mental health, and divorce, which might be used as indicators of social change, are presented in Tables 11.2.19.1-12 and 11.2.19.1-13, respectively.

There is some variation in the level of crime across the ROI, with higher rates of violent crime in Clark County (8.0 per 1,000 population) than in Lincoln County (1.3) and Iron County (1.2) (Table 11.2.19.1-12). Property-related crime rates are also higher in Clark County (34.5) than in Iron County (23.7) and Lincoln County (7.3); overall crime rates in Clark County (42.5) were higher than in Iron County (24.9) and Lincoln County (8.6).

Other measures of social change—alcoholism, illicit drug use, and mental health—are not available at the county level and thus are presented for the SAHMSA region in which the ROI is located. There is slight variation across the two regions in which the three counties are located; rates for alcoholism and mental health are slightly higher in the region in which Clark County is located (Table 11.2.19.1-13).

11.2.19.1.11 ROI Recreation

Various areas in the vicinity of the proposed SEZ are used for recreational purposes, with natural, ecological, and cultural resources in the ROI attracting visitors for a range of activities, including hunting, fishing, boating, canoeing, wildlife watching, camping, hiking, horseback riding, mountain climbing, and sightseeing. These activities are discussed in Section 11.2.5.

Because the number of visitors using state and federal lands for recreational activities is not available from the various administering agencies, the value of recreational resources in these areas, based solely on the number of recorded visitors, is likely to be an underestimation. In

TABLE 11.2.19.1-12 County and ROI Crime Rates for the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ^a

	Violent Crime ^b		Property Crime ^c		All Crime	
	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate
Clark County, Nevada	15,505	8.0	66,905	34.5	82,410	42.5
Lincoln County, Nevada	6	1.3	34	7.3	40	8.6
Iron County, Utah	56	1.2	1,085	23.7	1,141	24.9
ROI	15,567	8.1	68,024	35.3	83,591	43.4

^a Rates are the number of crimes per 1,000 population.

^b Violent crime includes murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

^c Property crime includes burglary, larceny, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2009a,b).

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TABLE 11.2.19.1-13 Alcoholism, Drug Use, Mental Health, and Divorce in the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ ROI^a

Geographic Area	Alcoholism	Illicit Drug Use	Mental Health ^b	Divorce ^c
Nevada Clark	8.2	2.7	10.5	— ^d
Nevada Rural (includes Lincoln County)	8.0	2.7	9.5	—
Utah Southwest Region (includes Iron County)	5.6	2.5	11.3	—
Nevada				6.5
Utah				3.6

^a Data for alcoholism and drug use represent percentage of the population over 12 years of age with dependence on or abuse of alcohol or illicit drugs. Data are averages for 2004 to 2006.

^b Data for mental health represent percentage of the population over 18 years of age suffering from serious psychological distress. Data are averages for 2002 to 2004.

^c Divorce rates are the number of divorces per 1,000 population. Data are for 2007.

^d A dash indicates data not available.

Sources: SAMHSA (2009); CDC (2009).

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1 addition to visitation rates, the economic valuation of certain natural resources can also be
 2 assessed in terms of the potential recreational destination for current and future users, that is,
 3 their nonmarket value (see Section 5.17.1.1.1).
 4

5 Another method is to estimate the economic impact of the various recreational activities
 6 supported by natural resources on public land in the vicinity of the proposed solar facilities, by
 7 identifying sectors in the economy in which expenditures on recreational activities occur. Not all
 8 activities in these sectors are directly related to recreation on state and federal lands, with some
 9 activity occurring on private land (e.g., dude ranches, golf courses, bowling alleys, and movie
 10 theaters). Expenditures associated with recreational activities form an important part of the
 11 economy of the ROI. In 2007, 240,631 people were employed in the ROI in the various sectors
 12 identified as recreation, constituting 26.1% of total ROI employment (Table 11.2.19.1-14).
 13 Recreation spending also produced almost \$9,455 million in income in the ROI in 2007. The
 14 primary sources of recreation-related employment were hotels and lodging places and eating and
 15 drinking places.
 16
 17

18 11.2.19.2 Impacts

19
 20 The following analysis begins with a description of the common impacts of solar
 21 development, including common impacts on recreation and on social change. These impacts
 22 would occur regardless of the solar technology developed in the SEZ. The impacts of facilities
 23 employing various solar energy technologies are analyzed in detail in subsequent sections.
 24
 25

**TABLE 11.2.19.1-14 Recreation Sector Activity in
 the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ ROI, 2007**

ROI	Employment	Income (\$ million)
Amusement and recreation services	4,681	147.6
Automotive rental	2,909	118.3
Eating and drinking places	105,589	3,230.5
Hotels and lodging places	116,751	5,620.2
Museums and historic sites	285	17.8
Recreational vehicle parks and campsites	352	10.1
Scenic tours	5,448	221.7
Sporting goods retailers	4,436	88.4
Total ROI	240,631	9,454.7

Source: MIG, Inc. (2010).

1 **11.2.19.2.1 Common Impacts**

2
3 Construction and operation of a solar energy facility at the proposed Delamar Valley
4 SEZ would produce direct and indirect economic impacts. Direct impacts would occur as a
5 result of expenditures on wages and salaries, procurement of goods and services required for
6 project construction and operation, and the collection of state sales and income taxes. Indirect
7 impacts would occur as project wages and salaries, procurement expenditures, and tax
8 revenues subsequently circulate through the economy of each state, thereby creating additional
9 employment, income, and tax revenues. Facility construction and operation would also require
10 in-migration of workers and their families into the ROI surrounding the site, which would
11 affect population, rental housing, health service employment, and public safety employment.
12 Socioeconomic impacts common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in detail
13 in Section 5.17. These impacts will be minimized through the implementation of programmatic
14 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.

15
16
17 **Recreation Impacts**

18
19 Estimating the impact of solar facilities on recreation is problematic because it is not
20 clear how solar development in the SEZ would affect recreational visitation and nonmarket
21 values (i.e., the value of recreational resources for potential or future visits; see
22 Section 5.17.1.2.3). While it is clear that some land in the ROI would no longer be accessible
23 for recreation, the majority of popular recreational locations would be precluded from solar
24 development. It is also possible that solar facilities in the ROI would be visible from popular
25 recreation locations, and that construction workers residing temporarily in the ROI would occupy
26 accommodations otherwise used for recreational visits, thus reducing visitation and consequently
27 affecting the economy of the ROI.

28
29
30 **Social Change**

31
32 Although an extensive literature in sociology documents the most significant components
33 of social change in energy boomtowns, the nature and magnitude of the social impact of energy
34 development in small rural communities are still unclear (see Section 5.17.1.1.4). While some
35 degree of social disruption is likely to accompany large-scale in-migration during the boom
36 phase, there is insufficient evidence to predict the extent to which specific communities are
37 likely to be affected, which population groups within each community are likely to be most
38 affected, and the extent to which social disruption is likely to persist beyond the end of the boom
39 period (Smith et al. 2001). Accordingly, because of the lack of adequate social baseline data, it
40 has been suggested that social disruption is likely to occur once an arbitrary population growth
41 rate associated with solar energy development projects has been reached, with an annual rate of
42 between 5 and 10% growth in population assumed to result in a breakdown in social structures,
43 with a consequent increase in alcoholism, depression, suicide, social conflict, divorce, and
44 delinquency, and deterioration in levels of community satisfaction (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996).

1 In overall terms, the in-migration of workers and their families into the ROI would
2 represent an increase of 0.1% in regional population during construction of the trough
3 technology, with smaller increases for the power tower, dish engine and PV technologies, and
4 during the operation of each technology. While it is possible that some construction and
5 operations workers will choose to locate in communities closer to the SEZ, because of the lack
6 of available housing to accommodate all in-migrating workers and families in smaller rural
7 communities in the ROI and insufficient range of housing choices to suit all solar occupations,
8 many workers are likely to commute to the SEZ from larger communities elsewhere in the ROI,
9 thereby reducing the potential impact of solar projects on social change. Regardless of the pace
10 of population growth associated with the commercial development of solar resources and the
11 likely residential location of in-migrating workers and families in communities some distance
12 from the SEZ itself, the number of new residents from outside the ROI is likely to lead to some
13 demographic and social change in small rural communities in the ROI. Communities hosting
14 solar facilities are likely to be required to adapt to a different quality of life, with a transition
15 away from a more traditional lifestyle involving ranching and taking place in small, isolated,
16 close-knit, homogenous communities with a strong orientation toward personal and family
17 relationships, toward a more urban lifestyle, with increasing cultural and ethnic diversity and
18 increasing dependence on formal social relationships within the community.

21 **Livestock Grazing Impacts**

23 Cattle ranching and farming supported 95 jobs, and \$1.3 million in income in the ROI in
24 2007 (MIG, Inc. 2010). The construction and operation of solar facilities in the Delamar Valley
25 SEZ could result in a decline in the amount of land available for livestock grazing, resulting in
26 total (direct plus indirect) impacts of the loss of four jobs and \$0.1 million in income in the ROI.
27 There would also be a decline in grazing fees payable to the BLM and to the USFS by individual
28 permittees based on the number of AUMs required to support livestock on public land.
29 Assuming the 2008 fee of \$1.35 per AUM, grazing fee losses would amount to \$1,036 annually
30 on land dedicated to solar facilities in the SEZ.

33 **Access Road Impacts**

35 The impacts of construction of an access road connecting the Delamar Valley SEZ could
36 include the addition of 169 jobs in the ROI (including direct and indirect impacts) in the peak
37 year of construction (Table 11.2.19.2-1). Construction activities in the peak year would
38 constitute less than 1% of total ROI employment. Access road construction would also produce
39 \$6.7 million in ROI income. Direct sales taxes would each be \$0.2 million; direct income taxes
40 in Utah would be less than \$0.1 million.

42 Total operations (maintenance) employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
43 indirect impacts) of an access road would be less than 1 job during the first year of operation
44 (Table 11.2.19.2-1) and would also produce less than \$0.1 million in income. Direct sales taxes
45 would be less than \$0.1 million in the first year, with direct income taxes of less than
46 \$0.1 million.

TABLE 11.2.19.2-1 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts of an Access Road Connecting the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ^a

Parameter	Construction	Operations
Employment (no.)		
Direct	97	<1
Total	169	<1
Income ^b		
Total	6.7	<0.1
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.2	<0.1
Income	<0.1	<0.1
In-migrants (no.)	0	0
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	0	0
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	0	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	0	0

^a Construction impacts assume 8 mi (13 km) of access road is required for the Delamar Valley SEZ. Construction impacts are assessed for the peak year of construction. Although gravel surfacing might be used, the analysis assumes the access road will be paved.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside Utah.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

1
2
3

1 Construction and operation of an access road would not require the in-migration of
2 workers and their families from outside the ROI; consequently, no impacts on housing markets
3 in the ROI would be expected, and no new community service employment would be required in
4 order to meet existing levels of service in the ROI.
5
6

7 **11.2.19.2.2 Technology-Specific Impacts** 8

9 The economic impacts of solar energy development in the proposed SEZ were measured
10 in terms of employment, income, state tax revenues (sales and income), population in-migration,
11 housing, and community service employment (education, health, and public safety). More
12 information on the data and methods used in the analysis are presented in Appendix M.
13

14 The assessment of the impact of the construction and operation of each technology was
15 based on SEZ acreage, assuming 80% of the area could be developed. To capture a range of
16 possible impacts, solar facility size was estimated on the basis of the land requirements of
17 various solar technologies, assuming that 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) would be required for
18 power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies and 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) would be
19 required for solar trough technologies. Impacts of multiple facilities employing a given
20 technology at each SEZ were assumed to be the same as impacts for a single facility with the
21 same total capacity. Construction impacts were assessed for a representative peak year of
22 construction, assumed to be 2021 for each technology. Construction impacts assumed that a
23 maximum of two projects could be constructed within a given year, with a corresponding
24 maximum land disturbance of up to 6,000 acres (24 km²). For operations impacts, a
25 representative first year of operations was assumed to be 2023 for trough and power tower and
26 2022 for the minimum facility size for dish engine and PV, and 2023 was assumed for the
27 maximum facility size for these technologies. The years of construction and operations were
28 selected as representative of the entire 20-year study period because they are the approximate
29 midpoint; construction and operations could begin earlier.
30
31

32 **Solar Trough** 33 34

35 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
36 and indirect impacts) from the use of solar trough technologies would be up to 6,048 jobs
37 (Table 11.2.19.2-2). Construction activities would constitute 0.4% of total ROI employment.
38 A solar facility would also produce \$369.5 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
39 \$2.4 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be \$0.2 million.
40

41 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
42 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
43 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
44 1,486 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
45 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
46 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility

TABLE 11.2.19.2-2 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ with Trough Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	3,488	577
Total	6,048	890
Income ^b		
Total	369.5	33.6
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	2.4	0.3
Income	0.2	<0.1
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA	1.0
Capacity fee ^d	NA	17.4
In-migrants (no.)	1,486	74
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	743	66
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	13	1
Physicians (no.)	3	0
Public safety (no.)	3	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 1,200 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 2,648 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside Utah.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
2 with 743 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
3 1.3% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
4

5 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
6 community service employment (education, health, and public safety). An increase in such
7 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
8 13 new teachers, 3 physicians, and 3 public safety employees (career firefighters and uniformed
9 police officers) would be required in the ROI. These increases would represent 0.1% of total
10 ROI employment expected in these occupations.
11

12
13 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
14 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using solar trough technologies would be 890 jobs
15 (Table 11.2.19.2-2). Such a solar facility would also produce \$33.6 million in income.
16 Direct sales taxes would be \$0.3 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be less than
17 \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy
18 (BLM 2010h), acreage-related fees would be \$1.0 million, and solar generating capacity fees, at
19 least \$17.4 million.
20

21 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
22 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
23 from outside the ROI would be required, with 74 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
24 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
25 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
26 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
27 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 66 owner-occupied units expected to be
28 occupied in the ROI.
29

30 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
31 community service (health, education, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
32 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the provision of these
33 services in the ROI. Accordingly, one new teacher would be required in the ROI.
34
35

36 **Power Tower**

37
38

39 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
40 and indirect impacts) from the use of power tower technologies would be up to 2,409 jobs
41 (Table 11.2.19.2-3). Construction activities would constitute 0.2 % of total ROI employment.
42 Such a solar facility would also produce \$147.2 million in income. Direct sales taxes would
43 be \$0.9 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be \$0.1 million.
44

45 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
46 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
47 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with

TABLE 11.2.19.2-3 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ with Power Tower Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	1,389	298
Total	2,409	405
Income ^b		
Total	147.2	14.0
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.9	<0.1
Income	0.1	<0.1
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA	1.0
Capacity fee ^d	NA	9.7
In-migrants (no.)	592	38
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	296	34
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	5	0
Physicians (no.)	1	0
Public safety (no.)	1	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 667 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 1,471 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside in Utah.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 592 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
2 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
3 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
4 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
5 with 296 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
6 0.5% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

7
8 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
9 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
10 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
11 5 new teachers, 1 physician, and 1 public safety employee would be required in the ROI.
12 These increases would represent less than 0.1% of total ROI employment expected in these
13 occupations.

14
15
16 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
17 indirect impacts) of a build-out using power tower technologies would be 405 jobs
18 (Table 11.2.19.2-3). Such a solar facility would also produce \$14.0 million in income. Direct
19 sales taxes would be less than \$0.1 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be less than
20 \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy
21 (BLM 2010h), acreage-related fees would be \$1.0 million, and solar generating capacity fees, at
22 least \$9.7 million.

23
24 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
25 operation of a solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their families from
26 outside the ROI would be required, with 38 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
27 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
28 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
29 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
30 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 34 owner-occupied units expected to be
31 required in the ROI.

32
33 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
34 service in the ROI.

35 36 37 **Dish Engine**

38
39
40 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
41 and indirect impacts) from the use of dish engine technologies would be up to 979 jobs
42 (Table 11.2.19.2-4). Construction activities would constitute 0.1% of total ROI employment.
43 Such a solar facility would also produce \$59.8 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
44 \$0.4 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be less than \$0.1 million.

TABLE 11.2.19.2-4 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ with Dish Engine Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	565	290
Total	979	394
Income ^b		
Total	59.8	13.6
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.4	<0.1
Income	<0.1	<0.1
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA	1.0
Capacity fee ^d	NA	9.7
In-migrants (no.)	241	37
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	120	33
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	2	0
Physicians (no.)	1	0
Public safety (no.)	1	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 667 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 1,471 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers that would reside in Utah.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
2 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
3 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
4 241 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
5 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
6 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
7 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
8 with 120 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
9 0.2% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

10
11 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
12 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
13 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
14 two new teachers, one physician, and one public safety employee would be required in the
15 ROI. These increases would represent less than 0.1% of total ROI employment expected in
16 these occupations.

17
18
19 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
20 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using dish engine technologies would be 394 jobs
21 (Table 11.2.19.2-4). Such a solar facility would also produce \$13.6 million in income.
22 Direct sales taxes would be less than \$0.1 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be
23 less than \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental
24 Policy (BLM 2010h), acreage-related fees would be \$1.0 million, and solar generating capacity
25 fees, at least \$9.7 million.

26
27 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
28 operation of a dish engine solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their
29 families from outside the ROI would be required, with 37 persons in-migrating into the ROI.
30 Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number
31 of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile
32 home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-
33 occupied housing units would not be expected to be large, with 33 owner-occupied units
34 expected to be required in the ROI.

35
36 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
37 service in the ROI.

38 39 **Photovoltaic**

40
41
42
43 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
44 indirect impacts) from the use of PV technologies would be up to 457 jobs (Table 11.2.19.2-5).
45 Construction activities would constitute less than 0.1 % of total ROI employment. Such solar

TABLE 11.2.19.2-5 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ with PV Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	263	29
Total	457	39
Income ^b		
Total	27.9	1.4
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.2	<0.1
Income	<0.1	<0.1
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA	1.0
Capacity fee ^d	NA	7.7
In-migrants (no.)	112	4
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	56	3
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	1	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	0	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 667 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 1,471 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside in Utah.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$5,256 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), assuming full build-out of the site.

1 development would also produce \$27.9 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
2 \$0.2 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be less than \$0.1 million.

3
4 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
5 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
6 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
7 112 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
8 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
9 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
10 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
11 with 56 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
12 0.1% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

13
14 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
15 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
16 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
17 one new teacher would be required in the ROI. This increase would represent less than 0.1%
18 of total ROI employment expected in this occupation.

19
20
21 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
22 indirect impacts) of a build-out using PV technologies would be 39 jobs (Table 11.2.19.2-5).
23 Such a solar facility would also produce \$1.4 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
24 less than \$0.1 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be less than \$0.1 million. Based on fees
25 established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), acreage-related
26 fees would be \$1.0 million, and solar generating capacity fees, at least \$7.7 million.

27
28 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
29 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
30 from outside the ROI would be required, with four persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
31 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
32 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
33 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
34 housing units would not be expected to be large, with three owner-occupied units expected to be
35 required in the ROI.

36
37 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
38 service in the ROI.

39 40 41 **11.2.19.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

42
43 No SEZ-specific design features addressing socioeconomic impacts have been identified
44 for the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features described
45 in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would reduce
46 the potential for socioeconomic impacts during all project phases.

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1 **11.2.20 Environmental Justice**

2
3
4 **11.2.20.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority
7 Populations and Low-Income Populations,” formally requires federal agencies to incorporate
8 environmental justice as part of their missions (*Federal Register*, Volume 59, page 7629,
9 Feb. 11, 1994). Specifically, it directs them to address, as appropriate, any disproportionately
10 high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their actions, programs, or policies on
11 minority and low-income populations.

12
13 The analysis of the impacts of solar energy projects on environmental justice issues
14 follows guidelines described in the CEQ’s *Environmental Justice Guidance under the National*
15 *Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997). The analysis method has three parts: (1) a description
16 of the geographic distribution of low-income and minority populations in the affected area is
17 undertaken; (2) an assessment is conducted to determine whether construction and operation
18 would produce impacts that are high and adverse; and (3) if impacts are high and adverse, a
19 determination is made as to whether these impacts disproportionately affect minority and
20 low-income populations.

21
22 Construction and operation of solar energy projects in the proposed SEZ could affect
23 environmental justice if any adverse health and environmental impacts resulting from either
24 phase of development are significantly high and if these impacts disproportionately affect
25 minority and low-income populations. If the analysis determines that health and environmental
26 impacts are not significant, there can be no disproportionate impacts on minority and low-income
27 populations. In the event impacts are significant, disproportionality would be determined by
28 comparing the proximity of any high and adverse impacts with the location of low-income and
29 minority populations.

30
31 The analysis of environmental justice issues associated with the development of solar
32 facilities considered impacts within the SEZ and an associated 50-mi (80-km) radius around the
33 boundary of the SEZ. A description of the geographic distribution of minority and low-income
34 groups in the affected area was based on demographic data from the 2000 Census (U.S. Bureau
35 of the Census 2009k,1). The following definitions were used to define minority and low-income
36 population groups:

- 37
38 • **Minority.** Persons who identify themselves as belonging to any of the
39 following racial groups: (1) Hispanic, (2) Black (not of Hispanic origin) or
40 African American, (3) American Indian or Alaska Native, (4) Asian, or
41 (5) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

42
43 Beginning with the 2000 Census, where appropriate, the census form allows
44 individuals to designate multiple population group categories to reflect their
45 ethnic or racial origin. In addition, persons who classify themselves as being
46 of multiple racial origins may choose up to six racial groups as the basis of

1 their racial origins. The term minority includes all persons, including those
2 classifying themselves in multiple racial categories, except those who classify
3 themselves as not of Hispanic origin and as White or “Other Race”
4 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009k).

5
6 The CEQ guidance proposed that minority populations should be identified
7 where either (1) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50% or
8 (2) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully
9 greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or
10 other appropriate unit of geographic analysis.

11
12 This PEIS applies both criteria in using the Census data for census block
13 groups, wherein consideration is given to the minority population that is both
14 greater than 50% and 20 percentage points higher than in the state (the
15 reference geographic unit).

- 16
17 • **Low-Income.** Individuals who fall below the poverty line. The poverty line
18 takes into account family size and age of individuals in the family. In 1999,
19 for example, the poverty line for a family of five with three children below
20 the age of 18 was \$19,882. For any given family below the poverty line, all
21 family members are considered as being below the poverty line for the
22 purposes of analysis (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009I).

23
24 The data in Table 11.2.20.1-1 show the minority and low-income composition of the
25 total population located in the proposed SEZ based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines.
26 Individuals identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino are included in the table as a separate
27 entry. However, because Hispanics can be of any race, this number also includes individuals
28 identifying themselves as being part of one or more of the population groups listed in the table.

29
30 Minority and low-income individuals are located in the 50-mi (80-km) area around the
31 boundary of the SEZ. Within the 50-mi (80-km) radius in Nevada, 17.0% of the population is
32 classified as minority, while 10.1% is classified as low-income. However, the number of
33 minority individuals does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area, and the number of
34 minority individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more; thus, in
35 aggregate, there is no minority population in the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ
36 guidelines. The number of low-income individuals does not exceed the state average by
37 20 percentage points or more and does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus,
38 in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the SEZ.

39
40 In the Utah portion of the 50-mi (80-km) radius, 9.3% of the population is classified as
41 minority, while 17.0% is classified as low-income. The number of minority individuals does not
42 exceed 50% of the total population in the area and the number of minority individuals does not
43 exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more; thus, in aggregate, there is no minority
44 population in the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines. The number of low-
45 income individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more and does

TABLE 11.2.20.1-1 Minority and Low-Income Populations within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius Surrounding the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

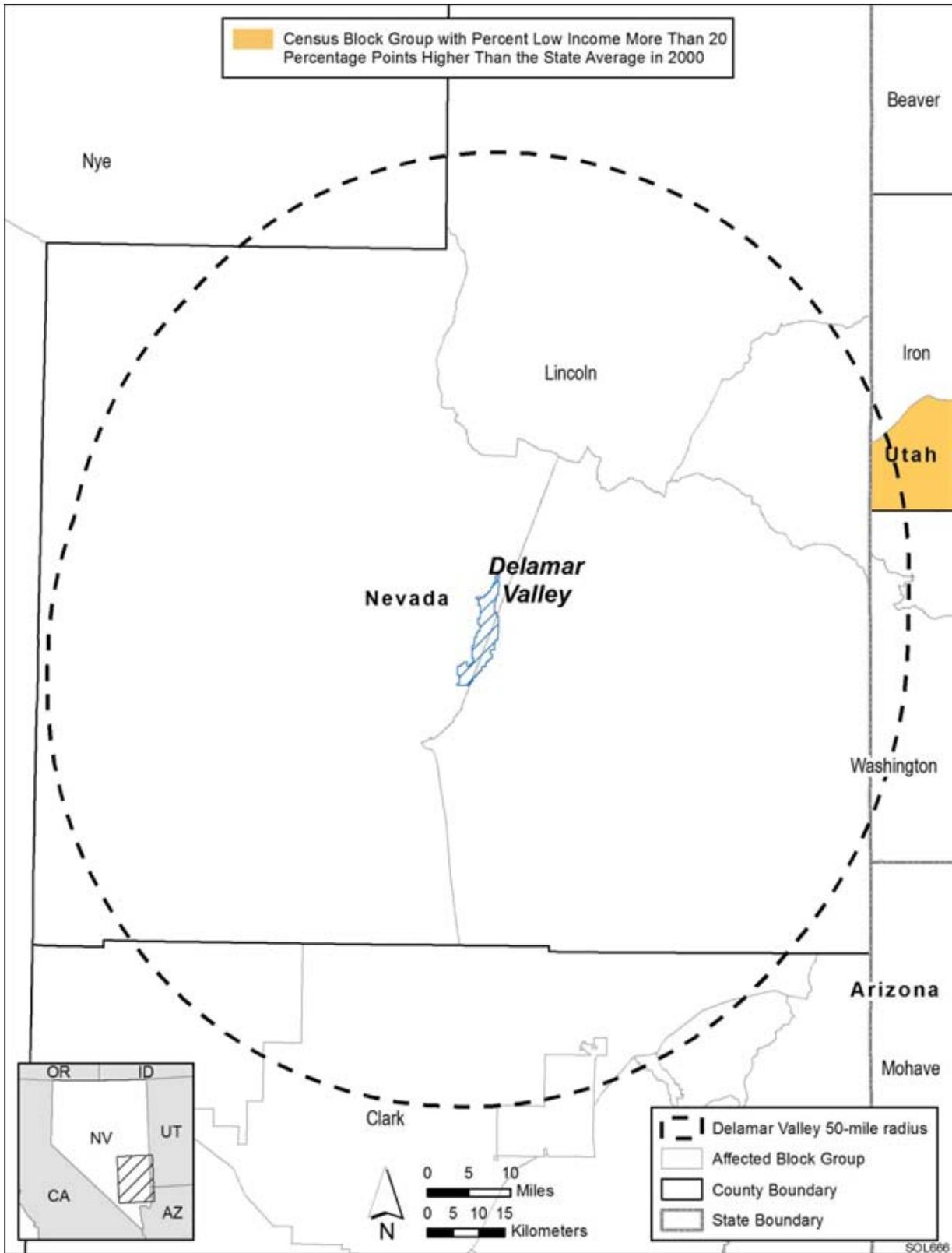
Parameter	Nevada	Utah
Total population	12,838	5,101
White, non-Hispanic	10,659	4,625
Hispanic or Latino	1,353	242
Non-Hispanic or Latino minorities	826	234
One race	593	177
Black or African American	101	7
American Indian or Alaskan Native	393	149
Asian	51	11
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	21	2
Some other race	27	8
Two or more races	233	57
Total minority	2,179	476
Low-income	1,295	865
Percentage minority	17.0	9.3
State percentage minority	17.2	15.9
Percentage low-income	10.1	17.0
State percentage low-income	10.5	9.4

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009k,l).

not exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the SEZ.

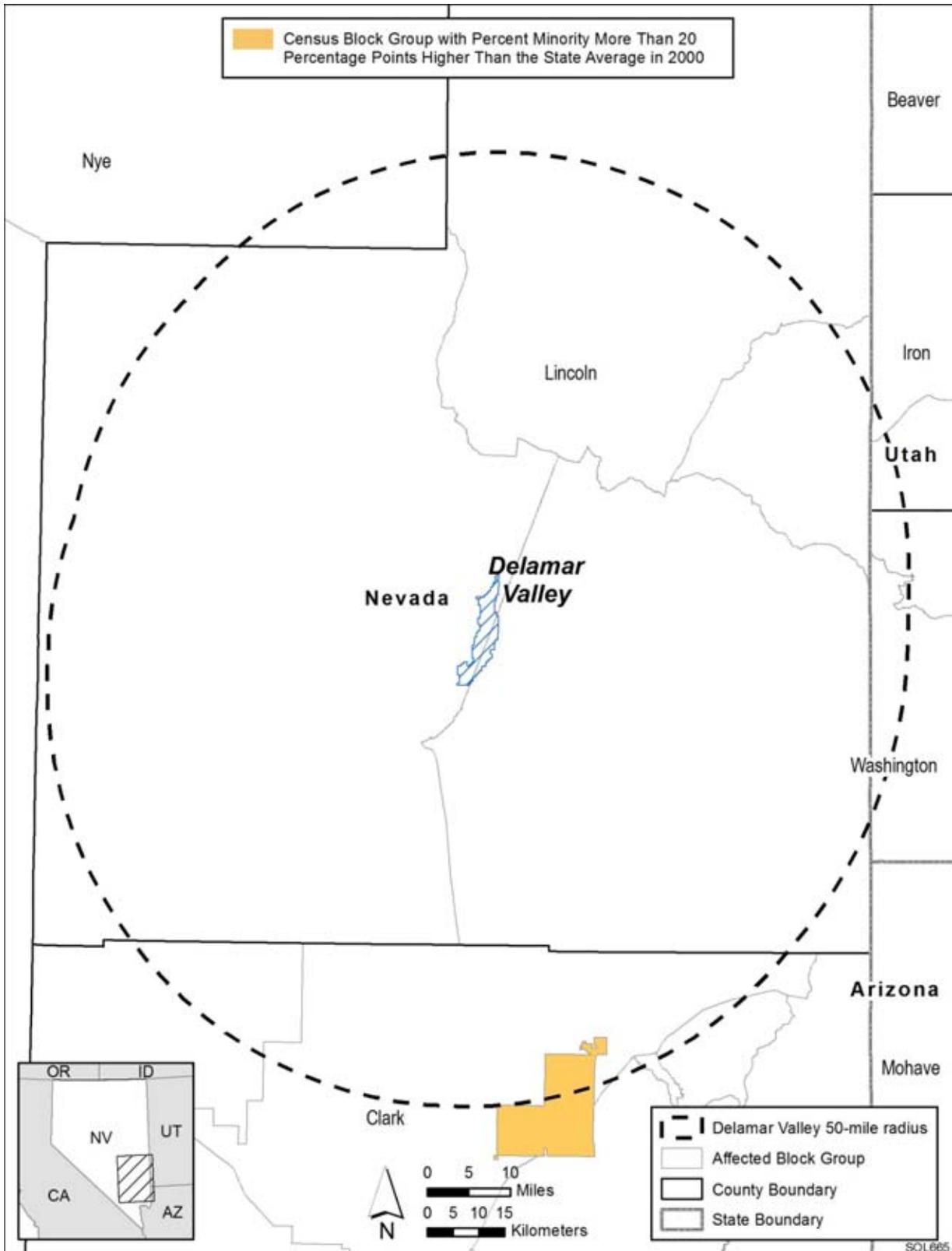
Figures 11.2.20.1-1 and 11.2.20.1-2 show the locations of the low-income and minority population groups, respectively, within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ.

At the individual block group level there are low-income populations in one census block group, located in Iron County to the west of Cedar City, including the towns of Newcastle and Modena, which has a low-income population that is more than 20 percentage points higher than the state average. There are no other block groups exceeding the 20% threshold in the 50-mi (80-km) area, and there are no block groups with low-income or minority populations that exceed 50% of the total population in the block group, and the number of minority individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more at the individual block group level.



1

2 **FIGURE 11.2.20.1-1 Low-Income Population Groups within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius**
 3 **Surrounding the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ**



1

2 **FIGURE 11.2.20.1-2 Minority Population Groups within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius Surrounding**

3 **the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ**

1 A single block group with minority populations more than 20 percentage points higher
2 than the state average is located to the northeast of Las Vegas, associated with the Moapa River
3 Indian Reservation.
4

6 **11.2.20.2 Impacts**

7
8 Environmental justice concerns common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities are
9 described in detail in Section 5.18. These impacts will be minimized through the implementation
10 of the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, which address the
11 underlying environmental impacts contributing to the concerns. The potentially relevant
12 environmental impacts associated with solar facilities within the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ
13 include noise and dust during the construction; noise and EMF effects associated with
14 operations; visual impacts of solar generation and auxiliary facilities, including transmission
15 lines; access to land used for economic, cultural, or religious purposes; and effects on property
16 values as areas of concern that might potentially affect minority and low-income populations.
17

18 Potential impacts on low-income and minority populations could be incurred as a result
19 of the construction and operation of solar facilities involving each of the four technologies.
20 Although impacts are likely to be small, there are minority populations defined by CEQ
21 guidelines (Section 11.2.20.1) within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ;
22 this means that any adverse impacts of solar projects could disproportionately affect minority
23 populations. Because there are low-income populations within the 50-mi (80-km) radius, there
24 could also be impacts on low-income populations.
25

26 **11.2.20.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

27
28
29 No SEZ-specific design features addressing environmental justice impacts have been
30 identified for the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features
31 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would
32 reduce the potential for environmental justice impacts during all project phases.
33
34
35
36
37

1 **11.2.21 Transportation**
2

3 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is accessible by road and rail. One U.S. highway
4 serves the immediate area, and a major railroad is in the vicinity. A small airport with a dirt
5 runway is nearby with major airport facilities farther away in Las Vegas. General transportation
6 considerations and impacts are discussed in Sections 3.4 and 5.19, respectively.
7

8
9 **11.2.21.1 Affected Environment**
10

11 U.S. 93 runs north–south, approximately 8 to 14 mi (13 to 23 km) to the west of the
12 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ and also east–west, approximately 8 mi (13 km) to the north of
13 the SEZ, as shown in Figure 11.2.21.1-1. Approximately 16 to 21 mi (26 to 34 km) east of the
14 SEZ, State Route 317 passes from the north to south, going south from Caliente to Elgin, an
15 abandoned railroad town. The town of Alamo is west of the Delamar Valley SEZ on U.S. 93.
16 The Las Vegas metropolitan area is approximately 90 mi (145 km) to the south of the SEZ
17 along U.S. 93. Several local unimproved dirt roads cross the SEZ from U.S. 93. As listed in
18 Table 11.2.21.1-1, U.S. 93 carries an average traffic volume of about 1,600 to 1,900 vehicles per
19 day west of the SEZ and about 650 to 740 vehicles per day north of the SEZ (NV DOT 2010).
20 State Route 317 carries less than 100 vehicles per day in the vicinity of the Delamar Valley SEZ
21 (NV DOT 2010). OHV use in the SEZ and surrounding area has been designated as “Limited to
22 travel on designated roads and trails” (BLM 2010c).
23

24 The UP Railroad serves the region. The main line passes through Las Vegas on its way
25 between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. The railroad passes west of the proposed Delamar
26 Valley SEZ where it parallels State Route 317. The nearest rail access is in Caliente to the
27 northeast of the SEZ.
28

29 The nearest public airport, owned by the BLM, is the Alamo Landing Field Airport. The
30 airport is west of the SEZ off of U.S. 93 with two dirt runways, 2,500- and 5,000-ft (762- and
31 1,524-m) long, both in fair condition (FAA 2009) as listed in Table 11.2.21.1-2. The second
32 closest public airport is the Lincoln County Airport, a small local airport about a 15-mi (24-km)
33 drive to the north of Caliente in Panaca. The airport has one asphalt runway, 4,260-ft (1,408-m)
34 long, in fair condition (FAA 2009). Alamo Landing Field Airport and Lincoln County Airport do
35 not have any scheduled commercial passenger or freight service.
36

37 North Las Vegas Airport and McCarran International Airport provide the major public
38 air services in the area. North Las Vegas Airport, a regional airport about a 95-mi (153-km)
39 drive to the southwest of Alamo, does not have scheduled commercial passenger service but
40 caters to smaller private and business aircraft (Clark County Department of Aviation 2010).
41 In 2008, 22,643 and 23,950 passengers arrived at and departed from North Las Vegas Airport,
42 respectively (BTS 2008). Farther to the south in Las Vegas, approximately a 102-mi (164-km)
43 drive from Alamo, McCarran International Airport is served by all major U.S. airlines. In 2008,
44 20.43 million and 20.48 million passengers arrived at and departed from McCarran International
45 Airport, respectively (BTS 2008). About 83.2 million lb (37.7 million kg) of freight departed and
46 117 million lb (53.2 million kg) arrived at McCarran in 2008 (BTS 2008).

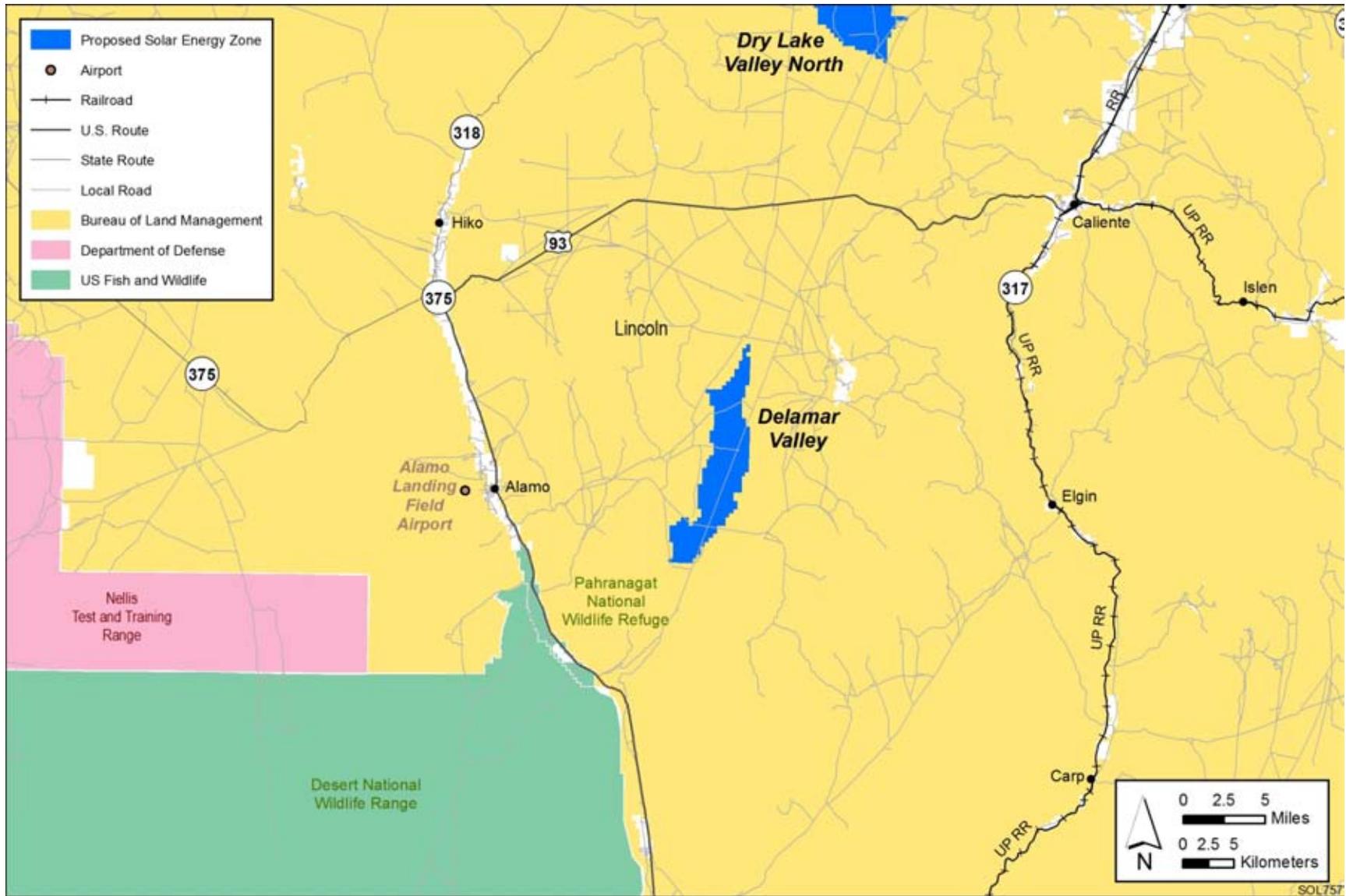


FIGURE 11.2.21.1-1 Local Transportation Network Serving the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

TABLE 11.2.21.1-1 AADT on Major Roads near the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ for 2009

Road	General Direction	Location	AADT (vehicles)
U.S. 93	North–South	North of I-15 Junction (I-15 Exit 64)	2,300
		South of Alamo	1,900
		South of State Route 318	1,600
		North of State Route 375	650
		South of State Route 317 by Caliente	740
		North of Caliente	1,400
State Route 317	North–South	6 mi south of U.S. 93	80
		3 mi south of Elgin	30
State Route 318	North–South	West of junction with U.S. 93	1,100
		1.6 mi north of junction with State Route 375	1,200
State Route 375	East–West	West of junction with State Route 318	200

Source: NV DOT (2010).

Nellis Air Force Base, available only to military aircraft, lies closer to the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ than North Las Vegas Airport on the northwestern edge of the Las Vegas metropolitan area. Nellis Air Force Base is one of the largest fighter bases in the world and is involved in conducting advanced fighter training. Operations occur over the NTTR, which offers 4,700 mi² (12,173 km²) of restricted land (U.S. Air Force 2010). Part of the eastern edge of the NTTR is approximately 18 mi (29 km) to the west–southwest of the southwestern portion of the SEZ.

11.2.21.2 Impacts

As discussed in Section 5.19, the primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day, with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum) or possibly 4,000 vehicle trips per day if two larger projects were to be developed at the same time. The volume of traffic on U.S. 93 to the west of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ would represent an increase in traffic of about 100 or 200% for one or two projects, respectively, should all traffic access the SEZ in that area. Such traffic levels would also represent an increase of about 250 or 500% of the traffic currently encountered on the east–west portion of U.S. 93 to the north of the SEZ for one or two projects, respectively.

Because higher traffic volumes would be experienced during shift changes, traffic on U.S. 93 would experience minor slowdowns during these time periods in the area of exits in the vicinity of the SEZ where projects are located. Local road improvements would be necessary on

TABLE 11.2.21-2 Airports Open to the Public in the Vicinity of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Airport	Location	Owner/Operator	Runway 1 ^a			Runway 2 ^a		
			Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition	Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition
Alamo Landing Field	Directly east of the SEZ on U.S. 93	BLM	2,500 (762)	Dirt	Fair	5,000 (1,524)	Dirt	Fair
Lincoln County	Northeast of the SEZ in Panaca, a 70-mi (113-km) drive from Alamo	Lincoln County	4,620 (1,408)	Asphalt	Fair	NA ^b	NA	NA
North Las Vegas	Near I-15 in North Las Vegas, a 95-mi (34-km) drive from Alamo	Clark County	4,202 (1,281)	Asphalt	Good	5,000 (1,524)	NA	Good
			5,004 (1,525)	Asphalt	Good	NA	NA	NA
McCarran International	Off I-15 in Las Vegas, about 102 mi (164 km)	Clark County	8,985 (2,739)	Concrete	Good	9,775 (2,979)	Concrete	Good
			10,526 (3,208)	Asphalt	Good	14,510 (4,423)	Asphalt	Good
			6,196 (1,889)	Asphalt	Good	7,161 (2,183)	Asphalt	Good

^a Source: FAA (2009).

^b NA = not applicable.

1 any portion of U.S. 93 that might be developed so as not to overwhelm the local access roads
2 near any site access point(s).

3
4 Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes
5 designated open and available for public use. If there are any designated as open within the
6 proposed SEZ, open routes crossing areas issued ROWs for solar facilities would be re-
7 designated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for more details on how routes coinciding with proposed
8 solar facilities would be treated).

9
10
11 **11.2.21.3 Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

12
13 No SEZ-specific design features have been identified related to impacts on transportation
14 systems around the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The programmatic design features described
15 in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, including local road improvements, multiple site access locations,
16 staggered work schedules, and ride-sharing, would all provide some relief to traffic congestion
17 on local roads leading to the site. Depending on the location of solar facilities within the SEZ,
18 more specific access locations and local road improvements could be implemented

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1 **11.2.22 Cumulative Impacts**
2

3 The analysis presented in this section addresses the potential cumulative impacts in the
4 vicinity of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ in Lincoln County, Nevada. The CEQ guidelines
5 for implementing NEPA define cumulative impacts as environmental impacts resulting from the
6 incremental impacts of an action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable
7 future actions (40 CFR 1508.7). The impacts of other actions are considered without regard to
8 the agency (federal or nonfederal), organization, or person that undertakes them. The time frame
9 of this cumulative impacts assessment could appropriately include activities that would occur up
10 to 20 years in the future (the general time frame for PEIS analyses), but little or no information is
11 available for projects that could occur further than 5 to 10 years in the future.
12

13 The land surrounding the Delamar Valley SEZ is undeveloped and no permanent
14 residents live in the area. The nearest population center is the small community of Alamo about
15 9 mi (14 km) from the western boundary of the SEZ. The Pahranaagat NWR and the Desert
16 National Wildlife Range are located southwest of the SEZ. Two WAs are located near the
17 Delamar Valley SEZ: the Delamar Mountains WA is located south of the SEZ, and the South
18 Pahroc Range is northwest of the SEZ. Five other WAs are within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ.
19 The BLM administers approximately 82% of the lands in the Ely District that contains the
20 Delamar SEZ. In addition, the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located about 20 mi
21 (32 km) to the north, the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located about 40 mi (64 km)
22 to the southeast, and the Dry Lake SEZ is located about 51 mi (82 km) to the south of the
23 Delamar Valley SEZ, and for some resources, the geographic extents of impacts from multiple
24 SEZs overlap.
25

26 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
27 resources near the Delamar Valley SEZ is identified in Section 11.2.22.1. An overview of
28 ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions is presented in Section 11.2.22.2. General
29 trends in population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate change are
30 discussed in Section 11.2.22.3. Cumulative impacts for each resource area are discussed in
31 Section 11.2.22.4.
32
33

34 **11.2.22.1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis**
35

36 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
37 resources evaluated near the Delamar Valley SEZ is provided in Table 11.2.22.1-1. These
38 geographic areas define the boundaries encompassing potentially affected resources. Their
39 extent may vary based on the nature of the resource being evaluated and the distance at which
40 an impact may occur (thus, for example, the evaluation of air quality may have a greater regional
41 extent of impact than visual resources). Most of the lands around the SEZ are administered by
42 the BLM, the USFWS, or the DoD; there are also some Tribal lands at the Moapa River
43 Reservation about 44 mi (70 km) south of the SEZ. The BLM administers approximately 78%
44 of the lands within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ.
45
46

TABLE 11.2.22.1-1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis by Resource Area: Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Resource Area	Geographic Extent
Land Use	Central Lincoln County–Delamar Valley
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Central Lincoln County
Rangeland Resources	
Grazing	Central Lincoln County
Wild Horses and Burros	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Delamar Valley SEZ
Recreation	Central Lincoln County
Military and Civilian Aviation	Central Lincoln County
Soil Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Delamar Valley SEZ
Minerals	Central Lincoln County
Water Resources	
Surface Water	Jumbo Wash and another intermittent stream, several ephemeral washes, and the dry Delamar Lake
Groundwater	Delamar Valley, Pahrangat Valley, and Coyote Springs Valley groundwater basins, White River Groundwater Flow System
Air Quality and Climate	A 31-mi (50-km) radius from the center of the Delamar Valley SEZ
Vegetation, Wildlife, and Aquatic Biota, Special Status Species	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Delamar Valley SEZ, including portions of Lincoln, Clark, and Nye Counties in Nevada, and Washington and Iron Counties in Utah
Visual Resources	Viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Delamar Valley SEZ
Acoustic Environment (noise)	Areas adjacent to the Delamar Valley SEZ
Paleontological Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Delamar Valley SEZ
Cultural Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Delamar Valley SEZ for archaeological sites; viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Delamar Valley SEZ for other properties, such as traditional cultural properties.
Native American Concerns	Delamar Valley and surrounding mountain ranges; viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Delamar Valley SEZ.
Socioeconomics	Lincoln and Clark Counties in Nevada, Iron County in Utah
Environmental Justice	Lincoln County
Transportation	U.S. 93; State Routes 317, 318, 375

1 **11.2.22.2 Overview of Ongoing and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions**
2

3 The future actions described below are those that are “reasonably foreseeable;” that is,
4 they have already occurred, are ongoing, are funded for future implementation, or are included
5 in firm near-term plans. Types of proposals with firm near-term plans are as follows:
6

- 7 • Proposals for which NEPA documents are in preparation or finalized;
8
9 • Proposals in a detailed design phase;
10
11 • Proposals listed in formal NOIs published in the *Federal Register* or state
12 publications;
13
14 • Proposals for which enabling legislations has been passed; and
15
16 • Proposals that have been submitted to federal, state, or county regulators to
17 begin a permitting process.
18

19 Projects in the bidding or research phase or that have been put on hold were not included in the
20 cumulative impact analysis.
21

22 The ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions described below are grouped
23 into two categories: (1) actions that relate to energy production and distribution, including
24 potential solar energy projects under the proposed action (Section 11.2.22.2.1); and (2) other
25 ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions, including those related to mining and mineral
26 processing, grazing management, transportation, recreation, water management, and
27 conservation (Section 11.2.22.2.2). Together, these actions have the potential to affect human
28 and environmental receptors within the geographic range of potential impacts over the next
29 20 years.
30

31
32 **11.2.22.2.1 Energy Production and Distribution**
33

34 On February 16, 2007, Governor Jim Gibbons signed an Executive Order to encourage
35 the development of renewable energy resources in Nevada (Gibbons 2007a). The Executive
36 Order requires all relevant state agencies to review their permitting processes to ensure the
37 timely and expeditious permitting of renewable energy projects. On May 9, 2007, and
38 June 12, 2008, the governor signed Executive Orders creating the Nevada Renewable
39 Energy Transmission Access Advisory Committee Phase I and Phase II that will propose
40 recommendations for improved access to the grid system for renewable energy industries
41 (Gibbons 2007b, 2008). In May 28, 2009, the Nevada legislature passed a bill modifying the
42 Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards (Nevada Senate 2009). The bill requires that 25% of
43 the electricity sold to be produced by renewable energy sources by 2025.
44

45 No existing and only one foreseeable energy production facility are located within a
46 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Delamar Valley SEZ. The 50-mi (80-km) area

1 includes portions of Lincoln, Clark, and Nye Counties in Nevada, and Washington and Iron
 2 Counties in Utah. Reasonably foreseeable future actions related to energy distribution are
 3 identified in Table 11.2.22.2-1 and described in the following sections.
 4
 5

6 **Renewable Energy Development**
 7

8 Renewable energy ROW applications on public land are considered in two categories,
 9 fast-track and regular-track applications. Fast-track applications, which apply principally to solar
 10 energy facilities, are those applications on public lands for which the environmental review
 11 and public participation process is under way and the applications could be approved by
 12 December 2010. A fast-track project would be considered foreseeable because the permitting and
 13 environmental review processes would be under way. There are no fast-track projects within
 14 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Regular-track proposals are considered
 15 potential future projects, but not necessarily foreseeable projects, since not all applications would
 16 be expected to be carried to completion. These proposals are considered together as a general
 17 level of interest in development of renewable energy in the region. In addition, foreseeable
 18 projects on private land are considered. One such project, the BrightSource Energy Solar Project,
 19 has been identified and is discussed below.
 20
 21

TABLE 11.2.22.2-1 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions Related to Energy Development and Distribution near the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
<i>Renewable Energy Development</i>			
BrightSource Coyote Springs Project; 960 MW, solar tower	Planning stage	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, visual, cultural, socioeconomics	33 mi (53 km) south of the SEZ
<i>Transmission and Distribution Systems</i>			
Southwest Intertie Project	FONSI issued July 30, 2008 In-service in 2010	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes through the SEZ
One Nevada Transmission Line Project	Draft Supplemental EIS Nov. 30, 2009	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes through the SEZ
Zephyr and Chinook Transmission Line Project	Permit Applications in 2011/2012	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes near or through the SEZ

1 **BrightSource Energy Solar Project.** BrightSource Energy is planning to build a 960 MW
2 solar thermal powered facility on private land at the Coyote Springs Investment Development
3 Project at the junction of US 93 and State Route 168. The facility will utilize the Luz Power
4 Tower, which consists of thousands of mirrors that reflect sunlight onto a boiler filled with water
5 sitting on top of a tower. The high temperature steam produced is piped to a conventional turbine
6 that generates electricity. The station will utilize a dry-cooling system. The site, approximately
7 7,680 acres (31 km²) in size, would be located 33 mi (53 km) south of the SEZ (BrightSource
8 Energy 2009).

9
10
11 ***Pending Solar and Wind ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Lands.***

12 Applications for right-of-way grants that have been submitted to the BLM include two pending
13 solar projects and one pending authorization for wind site testing that would be located within
14 50 mi (80 km) of the Delamar Valley SEZ (BLM 2010d). No applications for geothermal
15 projects have been submitted. Table 11.2.22.2-2 lists these applications and Figure 11.2.22.2-1
16 shows their locations.

17
18 The likelihood of any of the regular-track application projects actually being developed is
19 uncertain, but it is generally assumed to be less than that for fast-track applications. The number
20 and type of projects listed in Table 11.2.22.2-2 are an indication of the level of interest in
21 development of renewable energy in the region. Some number of these applications would be
22 expected to result in actual projects. Thus, the cumulative impacts of these potential projects are
23 analyzed in general for their potential aggregate effects.

24
25 Wind testing would involve some relatively minor activities that could have some
26 environmental effects, mainly the erection of meteorological towers and monitoring of wind
27 conditions. These towers may or may not employ guy wires and may be 200 ft (60 m) high.

28
29 The likelihood of any of the regular-track application projects actually being developed is
30 uncertain, but it is generally assumed to be less than that for fast-track applications. The number
31 and type of projects listed in Table 11.2.22.2-2 are an indication of the level of interest in
32 development of renewable energy in the region. Some number of these applications would be
33 expected to result in actual projects. Thus, the cumulative impacts of these potential projects are
34 analyzed in general for their potential aggregate effects.

35
36 Wind testing would involve some relatively minor activities that could have some
37 environmental effects, mainly the erection of meteorological towers and monitoring of wind
38 conditions. These towers may or may not employ guy wires and may be 200 ft (60 m) high.

39
40
41 **Energy Transmission and Distribution Projects**

42
43 The following proposed transmission line projects, which would run through or near the
44 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, are considered reasonably foreseeable projects.

TABLE 11.2.22.2-2 Pending Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Land within 50 mi (80 km) of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ^{a,b}

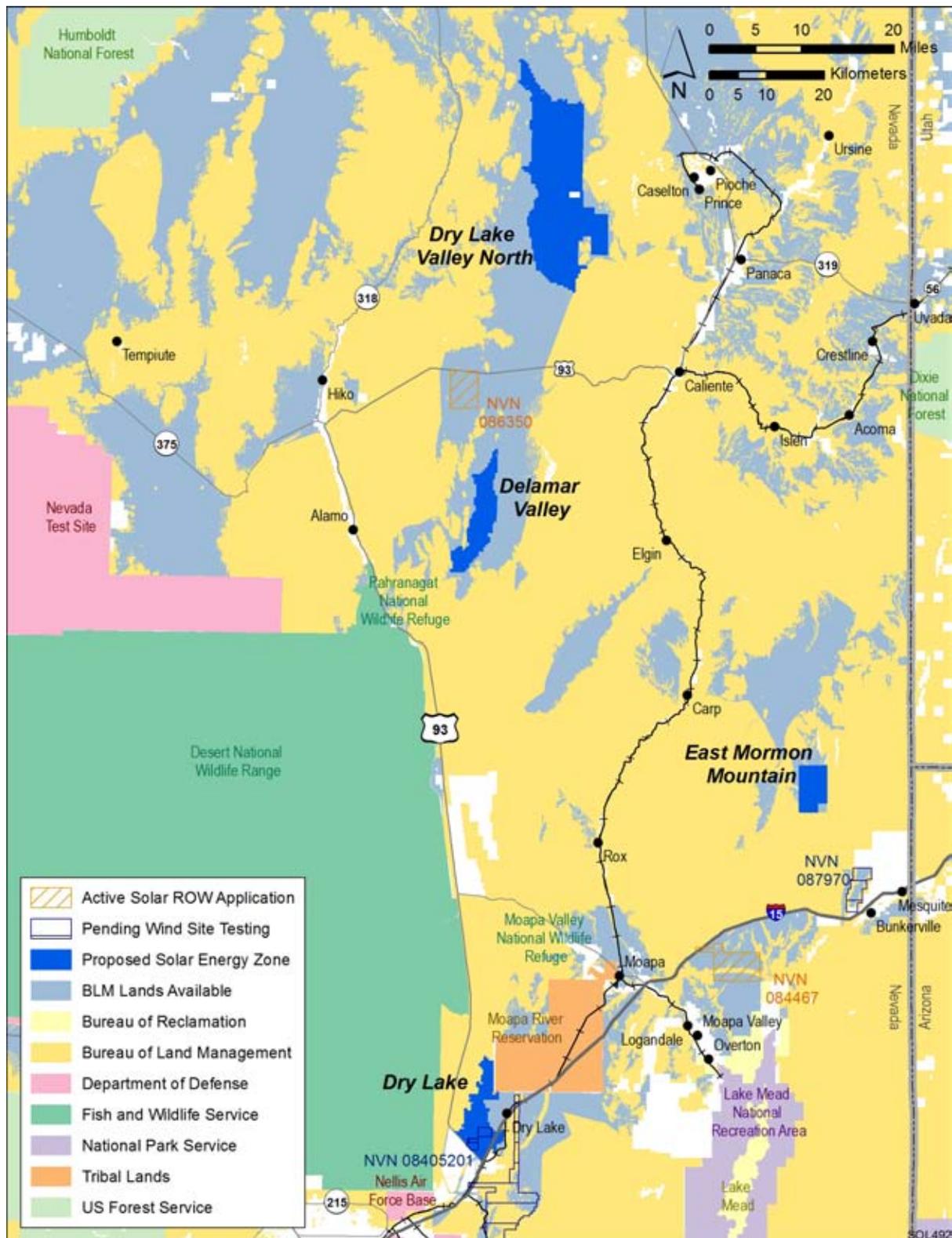
Serial Number	Applicant	Application Received	Size (acres) ^c	MW	Technology	Status	Field Office
<i>Solar Applications</i>							
NVN-84467	Pacific Solar Investments Inc	Dec. 7, 2007	11,000	1,000	CSP/Trough	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN-86350	Solar Reserve LLC	Oct. 2, 2008	7,680	180	CSP/Tower	Pending	Caliente
<i>Wind Applications</i>							
NVN-87970	Pacific Wind Development	- ^d	-	-	Wind	Pending Wind Site Testing	Las Vegas

^a Source: BLM (2009c).

^b Information for pending solar and pending wind energy projects downloaded from *GeoCommunicator* (BLM and USFS 2010b).

^c To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d A dash indicates data not available.



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.2.22.2-1 Locations of Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on Public**
 3 **Land within a 50-mi (80-km) Radius of the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ**

1 **Southwest Intertie Project (SWIP).** The SWIP is a 520-mi (830-km) long single-circuit,
2 overhead 500-kV transmission line project. The first phase, the Southern Portion, is a 264-mi
3 (422-km) long transmission line that begins at the existing Harry Allen Substation located in
4 Dry Lake, Nevada, and extends north to a proposed substation about 18 mi (29 km) northwest of
5 Ely, Nevada. The transmission line will pass through the SEZ. It will consist of self-supporting,
6 steel-lattice and steel-pole H-frame structures placed 1,200 to 1,500 ft (366 to 457 m) apart. The
7 SWIP is expected to be completed in 2010. Construction could have potential impacts to the
8 Mojave Desert Tortoise (BLM 2007a).

9
10
11 **One Nevada Transmission Line Project.** NV Energy proposes to construct and operate
12 a 236-mi (382-km) long, 500-kV transmission line with fiber optic telecommunication and
13 appurtenant facilities in White Pine, Nye, Lincoln, and Clark Counties. It will consist of self-
14 supporting, steel-lattice and steel-pole H-frame structures, placed 900 to 1,600 ft (274 to 488 m)
15 apart. The width of the right-of-way is 200 ft (61 m). The proposed action includes new
16 substations outside the ROI of the Delamar Valley SEZ. The transmission line would be within
17 the SWIP utility corridor that passes through the SEZ. Construction could have potential impacts
18 to the Mojave Desert Tortoise (BLM 2009e).

19
20
21 **Zephyr and Chinook Transmission Line Project.** TransCanada is proposing to construct
22 two 500-kV high-voltage direct current transmission lines. The Zephyr project would originate
23 in southeastern Wyoming. The Chinook project would originate in south central Montana. Both
24 would travel along the same corridor from northern Nevada, passing near or through the SEZ,
25 and terminate in the El Dorado Valley south of Las Vegas. Construction is expected to be
26 complete in 2015 or 2016 (TransCanada 2010).

27 28 29 **11.2.22.2.2 Other Actions**

30
31 Other major ongoing and foreseeable actions identified within 50 mi (80 km) of the
32 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are listed in Table 11.2.22.2-3 and described in the following
33 subsections.

34
35
36 **Arizona Nevada Tower Corporation (ANTC).** ANTC has constructed seven
37 cellular telephone signal relay towers in Lincoln County along the U.S. 93 corridor between
38 Coyote Springs Valley and the town of Pioche. Four of the seven sites are 100-ft (30.5-m)
39 square parcels. The remaining three are 50 ft × 100 ft (15.7 m × 30.5 m), 50 ft × 120 ft
40 (15.7 m × 36.6 m) and 100 ft × 200 ft (30.5 m × 61.0 m). Utility corridors were extended to
41 six of the sites to supply electricity. Solar cells are the primary source of power for the
42 Alamo Peak site, with wind generation as the backup. The towers are steel lattice, three-sided
43 and free standing, and each tower base is a 30-ft (9-m) square concrete slab. The towers at
44 Alamo Peak and Highland Peak are 125 ft (38.1 m) high, and the other five are 195 ft (59.4 m)
45 high (BLM 2007b).

TABLE 11.2.22.2-3 Other Major Actions near the Proposed Delamar Valley SEZ^a

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
Arizona Nevada Tower Corporation Communication Sites	EA issued April 2007	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, cultural resources	East, west ,and southwest of the SEZ
Patriot Communication Exercises in Lincoln County	DEA April 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, soils	North of the SEZ
Caliente Rail Realignment	FEIS June 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources	25 mi (40 km) north of the SEZ
Delamar Valley Groundwater Testing/Monitoring Wells	EA and FONSI issued Sept. 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources	Within the SEZ
Meadow Valley Gypsum Project	EA and FONSI issued 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, soils, socioeconomics	Southeast of the SEZ
Clark, Lincoln and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project	DEIS expected in March 2011	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, groundwater	Within the SEZ
Lincoln County Land Act Groundwater Development and Utility ROW	FEIS issued May 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, groundwater	Southeast of the SEZ
Coyote Springs Investment Development Project	FEIS issued Sept. 2008, ROD issued Oct. 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, socioeconomics	20-33 mi (32-53 km) south of the SEZ
Kane Springs Groundwater Development Project	FEIS issued Feb. 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, groundwater	20 mi (32 km) south of the SEZ
Alamo Industrial Park and Community Expansion	Preliminary Design Report Jan. 2000. FEIS issued Jan. 2010.	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, socioeconomics	10 mi (16 km) west of the SEZ
Meadow Valley Industrial Park	FEIS issued Jan. 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, socioeconomics	20 mi (32 km) northeast of the SEZ
NV Energy Microwave and Mobile Radio Project	Preliminary EA issued March 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources	Two of the sites 40 mi (64 km) west of SEZ, one site 50 mi (80 km) northwest of SEZ
U.S. 93 Corridor Wild Horse Gather	EA issued Dec. 28, 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	North of the SEZ
Silver King Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather	Preliminary EA issued June 10, 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	North of the SEZ
Eagle Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather	Preliminary EA issued Dec. 17, 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	Northeast of the SEZ
Ash Canyon Sagebrush Restoration and Fuels Reduction Project	Preliminary EA issued May 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	22 mi (35 km) northeast of the SEZ
Pioche/Caselton Wildland Urban Interface Project	Preliminary EA issued May 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	35 mi (57 km) northeast of the SEZ

^a Projects in later stages of agency environmental review and project development.

1
2

1 **Other Ongoing Actions**
2
3

4 ***Patriot Communications Exercise in Lincoln County.*** The U.S. Air Force at Nellis
5 Air Force Base has acquired a 15-year Communications Use Lease to support ground-based
6 radar/communications exercises at fourteen 5.7-acre (0.023-km²) sites. A maximum of five
7 exercises would be conducted annually for a period of 15 years. Three of the sites are along
8 U.S. 93 about 10 mi (16 km) north of the SEZ (BLM 2008d).
9

10 **Other Foreseeable Actions**
11
12
13

14 ***Caliente Rail Alignment.*** The DOE proposes to construct and operate a railroad for the
15 shipment of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste to the geologic repository at
16 Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The rail line would begin near Caliente, Nevada, and extend north;
17 then turn in a westerly direction, passing about 25 mi (40 km) north of the SEZ, to a location
18 near the northwest corner of the NTTR; and then continue south–southwest to Yucca Mountain.
19 The rail line would range in length from approximately 328 mi (528 km) to 336 mi (541 km),
20 depending upon the exact location of the alignment and would be restricted to DOE shipments.
21 Over a 50-year period, 9,500 casks containing spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive
22 waste, and approximately 29,000 rail cars of other materials, including construction materials,
23 would be shipped to the repository. An average of 17 one-way trains per week would travel
24 along the rail line. Construction of support facilities—interchange yard, staging yard,
25 maintenance-of-way facility, rail equipment maintenance yard, cask maintenance facility, and
26 Nevada Rail Control Center and National Transportation Operation Center—would also be
27 required. Construction would take 4 to 10 years and cost \$2.57 billion. Construction activities
28 would occur inside a 1000-ft (300-m) wide ROW for a total footprint of 40,600 acres (164 km²)
29 (DOE 2008).
30
31

32 ***Delamar Valley Groundwater Testing/Monitoring Wells.*** The Southern Nevada Water
33 Authority (SNWA) intends to construct two to four groundwater wells within two 2.5-acre
34 (0.010-km²) (a 1.0-acre [0.004-km²] long-term and a 1.5-acre [0.006-km²] short-term) locations
35 in the Delamar Valley. The dimensions for the long-term ROW would be 168 ft × 260 ft (51 m
36 × 79 m), and the dimensions for the short-term ROW would be 330 ft × 330 ft (100 m × 100 m)
37 for each site. Two 12-in. (0.30-m) and two 20-in. (0.51-m) wells would be drilled to between
38 2,200 and 2,400 ft (670 and 730 m) deep. Access to the well sites would be from both existing
39 roads and a new 809-ft (247-m) long access road. Water generated during the tests would be
40 discharged into the natural drainage network around the sites. At the completion of hydraulic
41 testing, SNWA will continue to record data to establish baseline ranges of the groundwater levels
42 in the area (BLM 2009f).
43
44

45 ***Meadow Valley Gypsum Project.*** The Meadow Valley Gypsum Project is proposing to
46 mine gypsum on 21.2 acres (0.0858 km²) of public land, about 35 mi (56 km) southeast of the

1 SEZ. A total of 46.7 acres (0.189 km²) would be disturbed during the 10-year lifetime of the
2 project. A 1.5-mi (2.5-km) access road and a 1.8-acre (0.0073-km²) railroad siding would be
3 constructed (BLM 2007c).
4
5

6 ***Clark, Lincoln and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project.*** The
7 SNWA proposes a groundwater development project that would transport approximately
8 122,755 ac-ft/yr (151 million m³/yr) of groundwater under existing water rights and applications
9 from several hydrographic basins in eastern Nevada and western Utah. The proposed facilities
10 include production wells, 306 mi (490 km) of buried water pipelines, 5 pumping stations,
11 6 regulating tanks, 3 pressure reducing stations, a buried storage reservoir, a water treatment
12 facility, and about 323 mi (517 km) of 230 kV overhead power lines, 2 primary and 5 secondary
13 substations. A portion of the project will be located in the Delamar Valley SEZ. The project
14 would develop groundwater in the following amounts in two hydraulically connected valleys that
15 would supply groundwater to the Delamar Valley SEZ: Dry Lake Valley (11,584 ac-ft/yr
16 [14.3 million m³/yr]) and Delamar Valley (2,493 ac-ft/yr [3.1 million m³/yr]). In addition, an
17 undetermined amount of water could be developed and transferred from Coyote Spring Valley,
18 which is south of the SEZ and down-gradient of the other two basins (SNWA 2010).
19
20

21 ***Lincoln County Land Act (LCLA) Groundwater Development and Utility ROW.*** This
22 project involves the construction of the infrastructure required to pump and convey groundwater
23 resources in the Clover Valley and Tule Desert hydrographic areas. The project includes 75 mi
24 (122 km) of collection and transmission pipeline, 30 wells, 5 storage tanks, water pipeline
25 booster stations, transmission lines and substations, and a natural gas pipeline. A total of
26 240 acres (0.97 km²) will be permanently disturbed, and 1,878 acres (7.6 km²) temporarily
27 disturbed. The closest approach to the SEZ is about 35 mi (58 km) east (USFWS 2009b).
28
29

30 ***Coyote Springs Investment (CSI) Development Project.*** CSI intends to develop a new
31 town in southern Lincoln County at the junction of U.S. 93 and State Route 168. The town would
32 be a master planned community on 21,454 acres (86.8 km²) and would include residential,
33 commercial and industrial land uses. Plans call for more than 111,000 residential dwelling units
34 at a density of 5 units per acre. Also included in the community would be public buildings,
35 hotels, resorts, casinos, commercial and light industrial areas, roads, bridges and a heliport.
36 Utilities and other infrastructure would be developed to serve the town, including power
37 facilities, sanitary sewer and wastewater treatment facilities, stormwater facilities, solid waste
38 disposal transfer stations, and telecommunications facilities. Water supply treatment facilities,
39 monitoring wells, production wells, storage facilities, and transmission and distribution facilities
40 would also be built. Approximately 70,000 acre ft/yr (86 million m³/yr) of water would be
41 needed for the community at full build-out, which may occur over a period of about 40 years.
42 Currently, CSI and its affiliates hold approximately 36,000 acre ft/yr (44.0 million m³/yr) in
43 certificated groundwater rights in various basins within Lincoln County. CSI currently owns the
44 21,454-acre development area and holds leases on an additional 7,548 acres (30.6 km²) of BLM
45 land in Lincoln County and 6,219 acres (25.2 km²) of BLM land in Clark County within or next
46 to the privately held land. These adjacent areas would be managed by BLM for the protection of

1 federally-listed threatened or endangered species; activities would be limited to non-motorized
2 recreation or scientific research. The north end of the development would lie about 20 mi
3 (32 km) south of the SEZ (USFWS 2008).
4
5

6 ***Kane Springs Groundwater Development Project.*** The Lincoln County Water District
7 (LCWD) proposes to construct infrastructure to pump and convey groundwater from the Kane
8 Springs Valley Hydrographic Basin to its Service Territory in the Coyote Spring Valley in
9 southern Lincoln County. Facilities would be located along or near the Kane Springs Road
10 ROW, within a 2,640-foot wide utility corridor. A production well and monitoring well were
11 constructed in 2005. Up to six additional production wells would be placed along an
12 approximately 9.4-mi (15-km) long collection pipeline. Other infrastructure would include a
13 3.8-mi (6-km) long transmission pipeline and two water storage tanks. A 3-mi (5-km) long
14 138-kV electrical transmission line, 14 mi (22 km) of lower voltage lines, and a new substation
15 would be built to supply power to the project. The Nevada State Engineer has appropriated
16 1,000 ac-ft/yr (1.2 million m³/yr) for the project, while full development would be dependent
17 upon water demand and future water rights and could draw up to 5,000 ac-ft/yr (6 million m³/yr)
18 from the Kane Springs Valley Hydrographic Basin. The project would lie about 20 mi (32 km
19 south of the SEZ (BLM 2008e).
20
21

22 ***Alamo Industrial Park and Community Expansion.*** The BLM is planning to transfer
23 4 parcels, consisting of 855 acres (3.46 km²) to Lincoln County. Parcel A, consisting of
24 approximately 217 acres (0.88 km²) is intended to be used for light industrial use. It is assumed
25 that the industrial park structures would require 117 acres (0.47 km²) with parking, roads and
26 support infrastructure on another 100 acres (0.40 km²). The remaining parcels would be used for
27 community expansion, and would be developed primarily for residential purposes. Housing units
28 limited to about 3 units per acre (0.004 km²) would be built over a 20-year period. The site,
29 about 0.1 mi (0.16 km) southeast of the Town of Alamo along U.S. 93, is about 9 mi (14 km)
30 west of the SEZ (Agra Infrastructure 2000) (BLM 2007f) (USFWS 2010d).
31
32

33 ***Meadow Valley Industrial Park.*** The BLM is planning to transfer a 103 acre (0.42 km²)
34 parcel to the City of Caliente, Nevada for the construction of the Meadow Valley Industrial Park.
35 The site is located on a previously disturbed area used for agriculture and recreation at the
36 intersection of U.S. 93 and State Route 317, about 20 mi (32 km) northeast of the SEZ.
37 Improvements to the site would include construction of a rail spur, access roads, and water and
38 sewer extensions (USFWS 2010d).
39
40

41 ***NV Energy Microwave and Mobile Radio Project.*** NV Energy is proposing to install a
42 new microwave and radio communications network at thirteen sites. Two sites are located about
43 40 mi (64 km) north of the SEZ and one is located about 10 mi (16 km) south of the SEZ. The
44 closest site is 0.6 acre (0.0024 km²) but requires disturbance of 57 acres (0.23 km²) of land for
45 access and power line ROW. Each site would include a communication shelter, two or
46 three propane tanks, and a generator. Two of the three sites closest to the SEZ would have

1 an 80-ft (25-m) self-supporting lattice tower, and the other would have a 200-ft (60-m) tower
2 (BLM 2010b).

3
4
5 ***U.S. Highway 93 Corridor Wild Horse Gather.*** The BLM Schell Field Office plans to
6 gather and remove about 50 excess wild horses residing outside the wild horse herd management
7 areas, which pose a safety hazard on U.S. 93 (BLM 2009g).

8
9
10 ***Silver King Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather.*** The BLM Schell and Caliente
11 Field Offices propose to gather and remove 445 excess wild horses from within and outside the
12 Silver King Herd Management Area (HMA). The Silver King HMA is 606,000 acres
13 (2,452 km²) in size and is located 16 mi (26 km) north of Caliente, Nevada (BLM 2010e).

14
15
16 ***Eagle Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather.*** The BLM Schell Field Office
17 proposes to gather and remove 545 excess wild horses from within and outside the Eagle HMA.
18 The Eagle HMA is 670,000 acres (2,710 km²) in size and is located 20 mi (32 km) northeast of
19 Caliente, Nevada (BLM 2009h).

20
21
22 ***Ash Canyon Sagebrush Restoration and Fuels Reduction Project.*** The BLM Caliente
23 Field Office is proposing to conduct a sagebrush improvement and fuels reduction project
24 adjacent to Ash Canyon, about 5 mi (8 km) southeast of Caliente, Nevada, and about 22 mi
25 (35 km) northeast of the SEZ. The size of the project area is 870 acres (3.5 km²). The goal is to
26 reduce pinyon and juniper in order to achieve a desired state where sagebrush is present along
27 with an understory of perennial species; to reduce risk of wild fires by reducing fuel loading; to
28 restore the historic disturbance regime; and to improve the available habitat for resident wildlife
29 (BLM 2010f).

30
31
32 ***Pioche/Caselton Wildland Urban Interface Project.*** The BLM is proposing to conduct a
33 wildland urban interface project near Pioche and Caselton, Nevada about 35 mi (57 km)
34 northeast of the SEZ. About 3,246 to 4,711 acres (13.1 to 19.1 km²) is planned for treatment.
35 The goal is to reduce the threat of wild fire to Pioche and Caselton through implementation of
36 fuel reduction treatments; to reduce the risk of large, uncontrolled wild fires by reducing fuel
37 loading; and to restore the historic disturbance regime within the project area. The treatment
38 would include reduction of canopy cover and fuel continuity of single-leaf pinyon, Utah juniper,
39 and shrub species to prevent crown fire potential (BLM 2010g).

40 41 42 **Grazing**

43
44 Grazing is a common use of lands in the vicinity of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ.
45 The management authority for grazing allotments on these lands rests with BLM's Caliente Field
46 Office. While many factors could influence the level of authorized use, including livestock

1 market conditions, natural drought cycles, increasing nonagricultural land development, and
 2 long-term climate change, it is anticipated that the current level of use will continue in the near
 3 term. A long-term reduction in federal authorized grazing use would affect the value of the
 4 private grazing lands.

5
 6
 7 **Mining**

8
 9 The only active mining in the Ely District is at Bald Mountain Mine and Mooney Basin
 10 Mine more than 100 mi (162 km) from the SEZ. The proposed Meadow Valley Gypsum Project
 11 is discussed above in this section.

12
 13
 14 **11.2.22.3 General Trends**

15
 16 General trends of population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate
 17 change for the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are presented in this section. Table 11.2.22.3-1
 18 lists the relevant impacting factors for the trends.

19
 20 **TABLE 11.2.22.3-1 General Trends Relevant to the Proposed SEZs in Nevada**

General Trend	Impacting Factors
Population growth	Urbanization Increased use of roads and traffic Land use modification Employment Education and training Increased resource use (e.g., water and energy) Tax revenue
Energy demand	Increased resource use Energy development (including alternative energy sources) Energy transmission and distribution
Water availability	Drought conditions and water loss Conservation practices Changes in water distribution
Climate change	Water cycle changes Increased wildland fires Habitat changes Changes in farming production and costs

21
 22
 23

1 **11.2.22.3.1 Population Growth**
2

3 Over the period 2000 to 2008, the population grew by 1.4% in Lincoln County, by
4 4.0% in Clark County, and by 3.4% in Iron County, Utah, the ROI for the Delamar Valley SEZ
5 (see Section 11.2.19.1.5). The population of the ROI in 2008 was 1,927,930. The growth rate
6 for the state of Nevada as a whole was 3.4% and for Utah 2.5%.
7

8
9 **11.2.22.3.2 Energy Demand**
10

11 The growth in energy demand is related to population growth through increases in
12 housing, commercial floorspace, transportation, manufacturing, and services. Given that
13 population growth is expected in seven SEZ areas in Nevada between 2006 and 2016, an
14 increase in energy demand is also expected. However, the EIA projects a decline in per-capita
15 energy use through 2030, mainly because of improvements in energy efficiency and high cost of
16 oil throughout the projection period. Primary energy consumption in the United States between
17 2007 and 2030 is expected to grow by about 0.5% each year, with the fastest growth projected
18 for the commercial sector (at 1.1% each year). Transportation, residential, and industrial energy
19 consumption are expected to grow by about 0.5, 0.4, and 0.1% each year, respectively
20 (EIA 2009).
21

22
23 **11.2.22.3.3 Water Availability**
24

25 As described in Section 11.2.9.1, the perennial yield of the Delamar Valley groundwater
26 basin is set at 2,550 ac-ft/yr (3.1 million m³/yr) representing one-half of the natural recharge
27 estimate used by the State Engineer in Ruling 5875 (NDWR 2008). Of the available
28 2,550 ac-ft/yr (3.1 million m³/yr) in water rights, 7 ac-ft/yr (8,600 m³/yr) is allocated for stock
29 water and 2,493 ac-ft/yr (3.1 million m³/yr) is allocated for municipal use (NDWR 2010a). The
30 municipal water right allocation was granted to the SNWA by the State Engineer through Ruling
31 5875, with the remaining 50 ac-ft/yr (61,700 m³/yr) of unallocated water rights in Delamar
32 Valley being set aside for future water development (NDWR 2008).
33

34 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Lincoln County
35 were 57,100 ac-ft/yr (70 million m³/yr), 11% of which came from surface waters and 89% from
36 groundwater. The largest water use category was irrigation, at 55,100 ac-ft/yr (68 million m³/yr).
37 Public supply/domestic water uses accounted for 1,300 ac-ft/yr (1.6 million m³/yr), with
38 livestock and mining water uses on the order of 230 ac-ft/yr (280,000 m³/yr) and 450 ac-ft/yr
39 (560,000 m³/yr), respectively (Kenny et al. 2009). However, within Delamar Valley there has
40 been very little groundwater development, with less than 100 ac-ft/yr (123,000 m³/yr) withdrawn
41 for stock ponds (Eakin 1963).
42
43
44

1 **11.2.22.3.4 Climate Change**
2

3 Governor Jim Gibbons’ Nevada Climate Change Advisory committee (NCCAC)
4 conducted a study of climate change and its effects on Nevada (NCCAC 2008). The report
5 summarized the present scientific understanding of climate change and its potential impacts on
6 Nevada. A report on global climate change in the United States prepared by the U.S. Global
7 Change Research Program (GCRP 2009) documents current temperature and precipitation
8 conditions and historic trends. Excerpts of the conclusions from these reports indicate:
9

- 10 • Decreased precipitation will occur, with a greater percentage of that
11 precipitation coming from rain, which will result in a greater likelihood of
12 winter and spring flooding, and decreased stream flow in the summer.
13
- 14 • The average temperature in the Southwest has already increased by about
15 1.5°F (0.8°C) compared to a 1960 to 1979 baseline, and by the end of the
16 century, the average annual temperature is projected to rise 4° to 10°F
17 (2.2° to 5.5°C).
18
- 19 • Warming climate and related reduction in spring snowpack and soil moisture
20 have increased the length of the wildfire season and intensity of forest fires.
21
- 22 • Later snow and less snow coverage in ski resort areas could force ski areas to
23 shut down before the season would otherwise end.
24
- 25 • Much of the Southwest has experienced drought conditions since 1999. This
26 represents the most severe drought in the last 110 years. Projections indicate
27 an increasing probability of drought in the region.
28
- 29 • As temperatures rise, landscape will be altered as species shift their ranges
30 northward and upward to cooler climates.
31
- 32 • Temperature increases, when combined with urban heat island effects for
33 major cities such as Las Vegas, present significant stress to health, electricity
34 and water supply.
35
- 36 • Increased minimum temperatures and warmer springs extend the range and
37 lifetime of many pests that stress trees and crops, and lead to northward
38 migration of weed species.
39

40
41 **11.2.22.4 Cumulative Impacts on Resources**
42

43 This section addresses potential cumulative impacts in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ
44 on the basis of the following assumptions: (1) because of the moderate size of the proposed SEZ
45 (10,000 to 30,000 acres [40.5 to 121 km²]), up to two projects could be constructed at a time,
46 and (2) maximum total disturbance over 20 years would be about 13,242 acres (53.6 km²)

1 (80% of the entire proposed SEZ). For purposes of analysis, it is also assumed that no more
2 than 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) would be disturbed per project annually and 250 acres (1.01 km²)
3 monthly on the basis of construction schedules planned in current applications. Since an existing
4 69-kV transmission line runs along and inside the southeastern boundary of the SEZ, no analysis
5 of impacts has been conducted for the construction of a new transmission line outside of the SEZ
6 that might be needed to connect solar facilities to the regional grid (see Section 11.2.1.2).
7 Regarding site access, the nearest major road is U.S. 93, which lies about 8 mi (13 km) to both
8 the north and west of the SEZ. It is assumed that an access road would be constructed to this road
9 to support solar development in the SEZ.

10
11 Cumulative impacts that would result from the construction, operation, and
12 decommissioning of solar energy development projects within the proposed SEZ when added
13 to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions described in the previous
14 section in each resource area are discussed below. At this stage of development, because of the
15 uncertain nature of the future projects in terms of size, number, location within the proposed
16 SEZ, and the types of technology that would be employed, the impacts are discussed
17 qualitatively or semi-quantitatively, with ranges given as appropriate. More detailed analyses
18 of cumulative impacts would be performed in the environmental reviews for the specific
19 projects in relation to all other existing and proposed projects in the geographic areas.

20 21 22 ***11.2.22.4.1 Lands and Realty*** 23

24 The area covered by the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is largely isolated and
25 undeveloped. In general, the areas surrounding the SEZ are rural in nature. Existing dirt roads
26 from separate access points on U.S. 93 provide access to the northern and southern portions of
27 the SEZ. Numerous dirt/ranch roads provide access throughout the SEZ (Section 11.2.2.1).
28

29 Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish a large
30 industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in
31 perpetuity. Access to such areas by both the general public and much wildlife would be
32 eliminated. Traditional uses of public lands would no longer be allowed. Utility-scale solar
33 energy development would be a new and discordant land use in the area.
34

35 As shown in Table 11.2.22.2-2 and Figure 11.2.22.2-1, there are two pending solar
36 development applications and one pending wind site testing application within a 50-mi (80-km)
37 radius of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. There are currently no solar applications within
38 the SEZ. One solar application lies about 5 mi (8 km) northwest of the SEZ and the other lies
39 about 50 mi (80 km) to the southeast, as does the lone wind application. In addition, the
40 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is about 20 mi (32 km) to the north, but contains no
41 solar applications. The small number of applications indicates only modest interest in renewable
42 energy development within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ, while no foreseeable renewable
43 energy projects have been identified.
44

45 Several foreseeable projects of other types are of note within this distance, however,
46 including proposed groundwater development and associated utility projects and proposed

1 transmission line projects that would lie on or near the SEZ, and a planned community
2 development on 43,000 acres (174 km²) that would lie about 20 mi (32 km) south of the SEZ.
3 Proposed projects are described in Section 11.2.22.2.2.
4

5 The development of utility-scale solar projects in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ in
6 combination with other ongoing, foreseeable and potential actions within the geographic extent
7 of effects, nominally 50 mi (80 km), could have cumulative effects on land use in the vicinity
8 of the proposed SEZ. While ongoing and foreseeable actions on or near the SEZ would
9 permanently disturb relatively small amounts of land and the planned community development
10 lies at a distance that would add little to impacts from the SEZ, identified actions could result in
11 small cumulative impacts on land use through impacts on, for example, groundwater and visual
12 resources, especially if the SEZ is fully developed with solar projects.
13
14

15 ***11.2.22.4.2 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics***

16
17 There are 15 specially designated areas within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Delamar
18 Valley SEZ in Nevada (Section 11.2.3.1). The potential exists for cumulative visual impacts on
19 these areas from the construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the SEZ and the
20 construction of transmission lines outside the SEZ. The exact nature of cumulative visual
21 impacts on the users of these areas would depend on the specific solar technologies employed in
22 the SEZ and the locations selected within the SEZ for solar facilities and outside the SEZ for
23 transmission lines. Currently proposed solar and wind projects lie far enough away from the SEZ
24 that sensitive areas would not likely be cumulatively affected by energy facilities within the
25 geographic extent of effects. However, SEZ facilities and associated roads and transmission lines
26 would add to the visual clutter of the area, including that from several proposed transmission
27 lines and a proposed water pipeline project.
28
29

30 ***11.2.22.4.3 Rangeland Resources***

31
32 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ contains portions of two perennial grazing allotments
33 (Section 11.2.4.1.1). If utility-scale solar facilities are constructed on the SEZ, those areas
34 occupied by the solar projects would be excluded from grazing. The effects of other renewable
35 energy projects within the geographic extent of effects, including pending solar and wind
36 applications within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ that are ultimately developed, would not likely
37 result in cumulative impacts on grazing due to the small number and distance of the proposed
38 facilities from Delamar Valley. However, a number of groundwater development projects in the
39 Delamar Valley basin and connected basins, described in Section 11.2.22.2.2, along with
40 groundwater use by solar facilities in the SEZ, could result in a cumulative effect on the
41 availability of groundwater for grazing. Other foreseeable projects that might affect these
42 allotments, mainly proposed transmission lines and a water pipeline, would have minimal long-
43 term effects on grazing.
44

45 A number of BLM HMAs and HAs occur within the 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region for the
46 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ (Section 11.2.4.2.1), including one within the 5-mi (8-km) area of

1 indirect effects. While such areas near the proposed SEZ contain wild horses, potential indirect
2 impacts from development within the SEZ would be mitigated. Since foreseeable projects within
3 this distance would have minimal effects on wild horses and burros, cumulative impacts are
4 unlikely to occur.

7 ***11.2.22.4.4 Recreation***

8
9 Limited outdoor recreation (e.g., backcountry driving, OHV use, and some camping and
10 hunting) occurs on or in the immediate vicinity of the SEZ. While there are no current solar
11 applications within the proposed SEZ, construction of utility-scale solar projects on the SEZ
12 would preclude recreational use of the affected lands for the duration of the projects. Road
13 closures and access restrictions within the proposed SEZ would affect OHV use in particular.
14 Foreseeable and potential actions, primarily transmission lines and a water pipeline, would also
15 affect areas of low recreational use and would have minimal effects on current recreational
16 activities. Thus, cumulative impacts on recreation within the geographic extent of effects are
17 not expected.

18 19 20 ***11.2.22.4.5 Military and Civilian Aviation***

21
22 The southwest portion of the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is crossed by one MTR with
23 a 100-ft (30-m) AGL operating limit, while the area is completely included within the NTTR.
24 The military has expressed serious concern over possible solar energy facilities within the SEZ.
25 Nellis Air Force Base has indicated that any facilities higher than 100 ft (30 m) may be
26 incompatible with low-level aircraft use of the MTR, and the NTTR has indicated that structures
27 higher than 50 ft (15 m) AGL may present unacceptable electromagnetic compatibility concerns
28 for its test mission (Section 11.2.6.2). Potential solar facilities, proposed communication towers,
29 and proposed new transmission lines outside the SEZ could present additional concerns for
30 military aviation, depending on the eventual location of such facilities with respect to training
31 routes, and thus, could result in cumulative impacts on military aviation. The closest civilian
32 airports located in Alamo, Nevada, and Lincoln County, Nevada, 13 mi (21 km) northwest and
33 32 mi (51 km) northeast, respectively, are unlikely to be affected by facilities in the SEZ.

34 35 36 ***11.2.22.4.6 Soil Resources***

37
38 Ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling) during the
39 construction phase of a solar project, including the construction of any associated transmission
40 line connections and new roads, would contribute to soil loss due to wind erosion. Road use
41 during construction, operations, and decommissioning of the solar facilities would further
42 contribute to soil loss. Programmatic design features would be employed to minimize erosion
43 and loss. Residual soil losses with mitigations in place would be in addition to losses from
44 construction of other potential renewable energy facilities, proposed transmission lines, proposed
45 water lines, and recreational uses. Overall, the cumulative impacts on soil resources would be
46 small, however, because of the small number of currently foreseeable projects within the

1 geographic extent of effects. The small number of pending solar and wind applications in this
2 area suggests that future impacts from renewable energy projects would increase minimally over
3 that from any development in the SEZ.
4

5 Landscaping of solar energy facility areas in the SEZ could alter drainage patterns and
6 lead to increased siltation of surface water streambeds, in addition to that from other foreseeable
7 projects and other activities (e.g., OHV use, outside the SEZ). However, with the expected
8 programmatic design features in place, cumulative impacts would be small.
9

10 **11.2.22.4.7 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)**

11 As discussed in Section 11.2.8, there are currently no active oil and gas leases within the
12 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, while there are no mining claims or proposals for geothermal
13 energy development pending. Because of the generally low level of mineral production in the
14 proposed SEZ and surrounding area and the expected low impact on mineral accessibility of
15 other foreseeable actions within the geographic extent of effects, no cumulative impacts on
16 mineral resources are expected.
17
18
19
20

21 **11.2.22.4.8 Water Resources**

22 Section 11.2.9.2 describes the water requirements for various technologies if they were to
23 be employed on the proposed SEZ to develop utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount of
24 water needed during the peak construction year for all evaluated solar technologies would be
25 1,964 to 2,814 ac-ft (2.4 million to 3.5 million m³). During operations, with full development of
26 the SEZ over 80% of its available land area, the amount of water needed for all evaluated solar
27 technologies would range from 76 to 39,762 ac-ft/yr (94,000 to 49 million m³). The amount of
28 water needed during decommissioning would be similar to or less than the amount used during
29 construction. As discussed in Section 11.2.22.2.3, water withdrawals in 2005 from surface waters
30 and groundwater in Lincoln County were 57,100 ac-ft/yr (70 million m³/yr), of which 11% came
31 from surface waters and 89% came from groundwater. The largest water use category was
32 irrigation, at 55,100 ac-ft/yr (68 million m³/yr). Therefore, cumulatively the additional water
33 resources needed for solar facilities in the SEZ during operations would constitute from a
34 relatively small (0.1%) to a very large (70%) increment (the ratio of the annual operations water
35 requirement to the annual amount withdrawn in Lincoln County), depending on the solar
36 technology used (PV technology at the low end and the wet-cooled parabolic trough technology
37 at the high end). However, as discussed in Section 11.2.9.1.3, very little water is currently
38 withdrawn from the Delamar Valley basin, roughly 100 ac-ft/yr. The annual yield of the basin is
39 determined to be 2,550 ac-ft/yr (3.1 million m³/yr), all but 50 ac-ft/yr (61,700 m³/yr) of which is
40 currently allocated,, with the vast majority allocated to the SNWA for municipal use. Thus, solar
41 facilities on the SEZ would have the capacity to far exceed the available groundwater in the
42 basin and even within in Lincoln County using wet cooling, while full development with dry-
43 cooled solar trough technologies could exceed estimated basin yields (Section 11.2.9.2.2).
44
45

1 While solar development of the proposed SEZ with water-intensive technologies would
2 likely be infeasible due to impacts on groundwater supplies and restrictions on water rights,
3 excessive groundwater withdrawals could disrupt the existing groundwater flow pattern to the
4 Pahranaagat Valley and Coyote Springs Valley basins, which could adversely affect groundwater
5 flow in the White River Groundwater Flow System, as well as the springs and wetlands within
6 the Pahranaagat NWR that support critical wildlife habitat (Section 11.2.9.2.4). Thus, a significant
7 increase in withdrawals from development within the proposed SEZ could result in a major
8 impact on groundwater and supported habitats in the Delamar Valley, while further cumulative
9 impacts could occur when combined with other future uses in the region and from potential solar
10 facilities in both the proposed Delamar Valley and in the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ,
11 located 20 mi (32 km) to the north. Other foreseeable, actions with groundwater demands within
12 in the central portion of the White River groundwater flow system are described in
13 Section 11.2.22.2.2 and include: (1) the proposed Coyote Springs Investment Development
14 Project, a planned community located about 20 to 33 mi (32 to 53 km) south of the SEZ, which,
15 at full build-out in approximately 40 years, would require an estimated 70,000 ac-ft/yr
16 (86 million m³/yr) of water, mainly from groundwater; (2) the Kane Springs Groundwater
17 Development project, which could eventually draw 5,000 ac-ft/yr (6 million m³/yr); (3) the
18 Clark, Lincoln and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project, which could
19 withdraw 14,000 ac-ft/yr (17.3 million m³/yr) from the Dry Lake and Delamar Valley
20 groundwater basins, and (4) the dry-cooled BrightSource Energy Solar Project, which would be
21 located within the Coyote Springs Development Project and which currently has unknown
22 groundwater needs.

23
24 Small quantities of sanitary wastewater would be generated during the construction and
25 operation of the potential utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount generated from solar
26 facilities would be in the range of 19 to 148 ac-ft (23 to 183 thousand m³) during the peak
27 construction year and would range from less than 2 up to 37 ac-ft/yr (up to 46,000 m³/yr) during
28 operations. Because of the small quantity, the sanitary wastewater generated by the solar energy
29 facilities would not be expected to put undue strain on available sanitary wastewater treatment
30 facilities in the general area of the SEZ. For technologies that rely on conventional wet-cooling
31 systems, there would also be from 418 to 752 ac-ft/yr (0.52 to 0.93 million m³) of blowdown
32 water from cooling towers. Blowdown water would need to be either treated on-site or sent to an
33 off-site facility. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure that treatment ponds
34 are effectively lined in order to prevent any groundwater contamination. Thus, blowdown water
35 would not contribute to cumulative effects on treatment systems or on groundwater.

36 37 38 **11.2.22.4.9 Vegetation** 39

40 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located within the Tonopah Basin ecoregion, which
41 primarily supports a sparse shadscale communities. The SEZ is located in a transition zone
42 between the Great Basin and Mojave deserts, with Mojave desert-scrub communities and
43 endemic species in the SEZ and adjacent areas. If utility-scale solar energy projects were to
44 be constructed within the SEZ, all vegetation within the footprints of the facilities would likely
45 be removed during land-clearing and land-grading operations. Full development of the SEZ
46 over 80% of its area would result in moderate to large impacts on certain cover types

1 (Section 11.2.10.2.1). Wetlands associated with the Delamar Lake playa could be affected by
2 project development, while intermittently flooded areas downgradient from solar projects or
3 access roads could be affected by ground-disturbing activities. Alteration of surface drainage
4 patterns or hydrology could adversely affect downstream dry wash communities. Wetland and
5 riparian habitats outside of the SEZ that are supported by groundwater discharge, including the
6 Pahranaagat NWR, could be affected by hydrologic changes resulting from project activities. The
7 fugitive dust generated during the construction of the solar facilities could increase the dust
8 loading in habitats outside a solar project area, in combination with that from other construction,
9 agriculture, recreation, and transportation. The cumulative dust loading could result in reduced
10 productivity or changes in plant community composition. Similarly, surface runoff from project
11 areas after heavy rains could increase sedimentation and siltation in areas downstream.
12 Programmatic design features would be used to reduce the impacts from solar energy projects
13 and thus reduce the overall cumulative impacts on plant communities and habitats. While most
14 of the cover types within the SEZ are relatively common in the greater SEZ region, several cover
15 types are relatively uncommon, representing 1% or less of the land area within the region. Thus,
16 other ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions would have a cumulative effect on them.
17 Such effects could be moderate with full build-out of the SEZ, but would likely fall to small for
18 foreseeable development due to the abundance of the primary species and the relatively small
19 number of foreseeable actions within the geographic extent of effects. However, the proposed
20 Coyote Springs Investment Development project, a proposed community development
21 covering 43,000 acres (174 km²) and located about 20 mi (32 km) south of the proposed SEZ
22 (Section 11.2.22.2.2), could contribute to cumulative effects on some rare cover types if they are
23 present in the development area. Nearer the SEZ, cumulative effects on wetland species could
24 occur from water use, drainage modifications, and stream sedimentation from development in the
25 region. The magnitude of such effects is difficult to predict at the current time.

26 27 28 **11.2.22.4.10 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota** 29

30 Wildlife species that could potentially be affected by the development of utility-scale
31 solar energy facilities in the proposed SEZ include amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals.
32 The construction of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ and any associated transmission
33 lines and roads in or near the SEZ would have an impact on wildlife through habitat disturbance
34 (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration), wildlife disturbance, and wildlife injury or
35 mortality. In general, impacted species with broad distributions and a variety of habitats would
36 be less affected than species with a narrowly defined habitat within a restricted area. The use of
37 programmatic design features would reduce the severity of impacts on wildlife. These design
38 features would include pre-disturbance biological surveys to identify key habitat areas used by
39 wildlife, followed by avoidance or minimization of disturbance to those habitats.

40
41 As noted in Section 11.2.22.2, other ongoing, reasonably foreseeable and potential future
42 actions within 50 mi (80 km), of the proposed SEZ include a groundwater transfer project, two
43 pending solar applications, and one pending wind application (Figure 11.2.22.2-1). While
44 impacts from full build-out over 80% of the proposed SEZ would result in small to moderate
45 impacts on some amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species (Section 11.2.11), impacts from
46 foreseeable development within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects would be small.

1 Many of the wildlife species present within the proposed SEZ that could be affected by other
2 actions have extensive available habitat within the region, while no foreseeable solar or wind
3 projects have been firmly identified within the geographic extent of effects. The pending solar
4 and wind applications in the region could contribute to small cumulative effects, however, as
5 would the foreseeable groundwater transfer and transmission line projects. In addition, the
6 proposed Coyote Springs Investment Development project located about 20 mi (32 km) south of
7 the proposed SEZ could contribute to cumulative effects on some species due to its large size.
8

9 There are no surface waterbodies or perennial streams within the proposed Delamar
10 Valley SEZ or within the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect effects, while washes are typically dry and
11 flow only after precipitation, and Delamar Lake and associated wetlands rarely contain water.
12 Thus, no standing aquatic communities are likely to be present in the proposed SEZ. However,
13 aquatic communities do exist within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects, including
14 Ash Spring and the Pahrnagat NWR, which contain stream and wetland habitat critical for
15 aquatic biota, including several protected endemic fish species (Section 11.2.11.2). However,
16 potential contributions to cumulative impacts on aquatic biota and habitats resulting from
17 groundwater drawdown or soil transport to surface streams from solar facilities within the SEZ
18 and within the geographic extent of effects are difficult to quantify, but are expected to be low.
19 There is little foreseeable development within the geographic extent of effects that would affect
20 the same aquatic habitats potentially affected by the proposed SEZ, while available groundwater
21 is already fully appropriated. The magnitude of any cumulative impacts on aquatic species that
22 might occur will depend on the extent of eventual solar and other development in the region and
23 on cooling technologies employed by solar facilities.
24
25

26 ***11.2.22.4.11 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, 27 and Rare Species)*** 28

29 On the basis of recorded occurrences or suitable habitat, as many as 49 special status
30 species could occur within the Delamar Valley SEZ or could be affected by groundwater use
31 there. Of these species only the desert tortoise is known to occur within the affected area of the
32 SEZ. The nearest recorded occurrences of desert tortoise are 5 mi (8 km) west of the SEZ, while
33 designated critical habitat occurs approximately 9 mi (14 km) south of the SEZ. In addition,
34 there are 16 groundwater-dependent species or species with habitats that may be affected in the
35 White River Valley regional groundwater system from withdrawals in the Delamar Valley.
36 Numerous additional species that occur on or in the vicinity of the SEZ are listed as threatened
37 or endangered by the state of Nevada or Utah or listed as a sensitive species by the BLM
38 (Section 11.2.12.1). Design Features to be used to reduce or eliminate the potential for effects on
39 these species from the construction and operation of utility-scale solar energy facilities in the
40 SEZs and related projects (e.g., access roads and transmission line connections) outside the SEZ
41 include avoidance of habitat and minimization of erosion, sedimentation, and dust deposition.
42 Ongoing effects on special status species include those from roads, transmission lines, and
43 recreational activities in the area. However, the amount of foreseeable development within the
44 geographic extent of effects is low, including mainly one potential solar and one potential wind
45 project, a groundwater transfer pipeline, and several transmission line projects. Cumulative
46 impacts on protected species, including the desert tortoise, are possible but are expected to be

1 relatively low. Actual impacts would depend on the number, location, and cooling technologies
2 of projects that are actually built. Projects would employ mitigation measures to limit effects.
3
4

5 ***11.2.22.4.12 Air Quality and Climate*** 6

7 While solar energy generates minimal emissions compared with fossil fuels, the site
8 preparation and construction activities associated with solar energy facilities would be
9 responsible for some amount of air pollutants. Most of the emissions would be particulate matter
10 (fugitive dust) and emissions from vehicles and construction equipment. When these emissions
11 are combined with those from other nearby projects outside the proposed SEZ or when they are
12 added to natural dust generation from winds and windstorms, the air quality in the general
13 vicinity of the projects could be temporarily degraded. For example, the maximum 24-hour
14 PM₁₀ concentration at or near the SEZ boundaries could at times exceed the applicable standard
15 of 150 µg/m³. The dust generation from the construction activities can be controlled by
16 implementing aggressive dust control measures, such as increased watering frequency or road
17 paving or treatment.
18

19 Because the area proposed for the SEZ is rural and undeveloped land, there are no
20 significant industrial sources of air emissions in the area. The only type of air pollutant of
21 concern is dust generated by winds. Because the number of other foreseeable and potential
22 actions that could produce fugitive dust emissions is small, while such projects are unlikely to
23 overlap in both time and affected area, cumulative air quality effects due to dust emissions
24 during any overlapping construction periods would be small.
25

26 Over the long term and across the region, the development of solar energy may have
27 beneficial cumulative impacts on the air quality and atmospheric values by offsetting the need
28 for energy production that results in higher levels of emissions, such as coal, oil, and natural gas.
29 As discussed in Section 11.2.13.2.2, air emissions from operating solar energy facilities are
30 relatively minor, while the displacement of criteria air pollutants, VOCs, TAPs, and GHG
31 emissions currently produced from fossil fuels could be significant. For example, if the Delamar
32 Valley SEZ were fully developed (80% of its acreage) with solar facilities, the quantity of
33 pollutants avoided could be as large as 12% of all emissions from the current electric power
34 systems in Nevada.
35
36

37 ***11.2.22.4.13 Visual Resources*** 38

39 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located in the central portion of the broad and flat
40 Delamar Valley. The valley is bounded by mountain ranges to the east, southeast and west, with
41 open views to the north. (Section 11.2.14.1). The area is sparsely inhabited, remote, and rural in
42 character.
43

44 The VRI values for the SEZ and immediate surroundings are VRI Class IV, indicating
45 low relative visual values. Currently, there is a low level of cultural disturbance, including from

1 unpaved roads, transmission lines, fences, and corrals. Delamar Lake is used for various
2 recreational uses, including OHV driving and racing. Grazing occurs outside of the dry lake bed.

3
4 Construction of utility-scale solar facilities on the SEZ and associated transmission lines
5 outside the SEZ would significantly alter the natural scenic quality of the area. Because of the
6 large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat, open nature of the
7 proposed SEZ, some lands outside the SEZ would also be subjected to visual impacts related to
8 the construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities. Potential
9 impacts would include night sky pollution, including increased skyglow, light spillage, and glare.
10 Other potential solar and wind projects and related roads and transmission lines outside the
11 proposed SEZ would cumulatively affect the visual resources in the area.

12
13 Visual impacts resulting from solar energy development within the SEZ would be in
14 addition to impacts caused by other potential projects in the area. There is currently only one
15 solar facility ROW application nearby, about 5 mi (8 km) northwest of the SEZ, and one other
16 solar and one wind site testing application, each about 50 mi (80 km) southeast of the SEZ on
17 public lands (Figure 11.2.22.2-1). In addition, several new transmission projects and a
18 groundwater transfer pipeline project represent foreseeable development that would pass through
19 or near the proposed SEZ as discussed in Section 11.2.22.2. While the contribution to cumulative
20 impacts in the area of these potential projects would depend on the location of facilities that are
21 actually built, it may be concluded that the general visual character of the landscape within this
22 distance could be altered from what is currently rural desert by the presence of solar facilities,
23 transmission lines, and other new infrastructure. Because of the topography of the region, such
24 developments, located in basin flats, would be visible at great distances from surrounding
25 mountains, which include sensitive viewsheds. Given the small number of current proposals, it is
26 unlikely that two or more facilities would be viewable from a single location. However, facilities
27 would be located near major roads and thus would be viewable by motorists, who would also be
28 viewing transmission lines, towns, and other infrastructure, as well as the road system itself.

29
30 As facilities are added, several projects might become visible from one location, or in
31 succession, as viewers move through the landscape, as by driving on local roads. In general,
32 the new projects would not be expected to be consistent in terms of their appearance
33 and, depending on the number and type of facilities, the resulting visual disharmony could
34 exceed the visual absorption capability of the landscape and add significantly to the cumulative
35 visual impact. Considering the above in light of the fact that only potential solar and wind
36 projects have been identified, small cumulative visual impacts could occur within the geographic
37 extent of effects from future solar, wind, and other existing and future developments.

38 39 40 ***11.2.22.4.14 Acoustic Environment***

41
42 The areas around the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ are relatively quiet. The existing
43 noise sources around the SEZ include road traffic, aircraft flyover, and cattle grazing. Other
44 noise sources are associated with current land use around the SEZ, including outdoor recreation
45 and OHV use. The construction of solar energy facilities could increase the noise levels
46 periodically for up to 3 years per facility, but there would be little or no noise during operation of

1 solar facilities, except from solar dish engine facilities and from parabolic trough or power tower
2 facilities using TES, which could also minimally affect nearby residences due to considerable
3 separation distances.
4

5 Other ongoing and reasonably foreseeable and potential future activities in the general
6 vicinity of the SEZs are described in Section 11.2.22.2. Because proposed projects and nearest
7 residents are relatively far from the SEZ with respect to noise impacts and the area is sparsely
8 populated, cumulative noise effects during the construction or operation of solar facilities are
9 unlikely.
10

11 ***11.2.22.4.15 Paleontological Resources***

12
13
14 The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ has low potential for the occurrence of significant
15 fossil material in 73% of its area, mainly alluvial deposits, and unknown potential in about
16 27% of its area, mainly playa deposits (Section 11.2.16.1). While impacts on significant
17 paleontological resources are unlikely to occur in most of the SEZ, the specific sites selected for
18 future projects would be investigated to determine whether a paleontological survey is needed.
19 Any paleontological resources encountered would be mitigated to the extent possible. No
20 significant cumulative impacts on paleontological resources are expected.
21

22 ***11.2.22.4.16 Cultural Resources***

23
24
25 The Delamar Valley is rich in cultural history, and the area covered by the proposed
26 Delamar Valley SEZ has the potential to contain significant cultural resources. At least 9 surveys
27 have been conducted within the boundaries of the SEZ, and 17 additional surveys have been
28 conducted within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ, resulting in the recording of 8 sites within SEZ and
29 at least 47 sites located within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ (Section 11.2.17.1). Areas with potential
30 for significant sites within the proposed SEZ include areas around the dry lake, at the south end
31 of the SEZ, as well as in alluvial fans located on the outer portions of the SEZ and within a 5-mi
32 (8-km) radius. It is possible that the development of utility-scale solar energy projects in the
33 SEZ, when added to other potential projects likely to occur in the area, could contribute
34 cumulatively to cultural resource impacts occurring in the region. However, the amount of
35 potential and foreseeable development is low, including one potential solar project, a proposed
36 groundwater transfer pipeline, and several proposed transmission line projects within the 25-mi
37 (40-km) geographic extent of effects (Section 11.2.22.2). While any future solar projects would
38 disturb large areas, the specific sites selected for future projects would be surveyed; historic
39 properties encountered would be avoided or mitigated to the extent possible. Through ongoing
40 consultation with the Nevada SHPO and appropriate Native American governments, it is likely
41 that most adverse effects on significant resources in the region could be mitigated to some
42 degree. It is unlikely that any sites recorded in the SEZ would be of such individual significance
43 that, if properly mitigated, development would cumulatively cause an irretrievable loss of
44 information about a significant resource type, but this would depend on the results of the future
45 surveys and evaluations. An increase in vandalism on cultural sites could result from additional
46 development in the area, however, particularly if there are multiple solar projects on the SEZ.

1 **11.2.22.4.17 Native American Concerns**
2

3 Major Native American concerns in arid portions of the Great Basin include water,
4 culturally important plant and animal resources, and culturally important landscapes. The
5 development of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the SEZ in combination with the
6 foreseeable development in the surrounding area could cumulatively contribute to effects on
7 these resources. Development of the SEZ would result in the removal of plant species from the
8 footprint of the facility during construction. This would include some plants of cultural
9 importance. However, the primary species that would be affected are abundant in the region, thus
10 the cumulative effect would likely be small. Likewise, habitat for important species, such as the
11 black-tailed jackrabbit, would be reduced; however, extensive habitat is available in the area,
12 reducing the cumulative effect. The cultural importance of the mountains surrounding the SEZ is
13 as yet undetermined. If culturally important, the view from these features can be an important
14 part of their cultural integrity. The degree of impact on these resources of development at
15 specific locations must be determined in consultation with the Native American Tribes whose
16 traditional use area includes the proposed SEZ. In general, Tribes prefer that development occur
17 on previously disturbed land and this SEZ is largely undeveloped.
18

19 Government-to-government consultation is under way with federally recognized Native
20 American Tribes with possible traditional ties to the Delamar Valley area. All federally
21 recognized Tribes with Southern Paiute or Western Shoshone roots have been contacted and
22 provided an opportunity to comment or consult regarding this PEIS. To date, no specific
23 concerns have been raised to the BLM regarding the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. However,
24 the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah has asked to be kept informed of PEIS developments. When
25 commenting on past projects in the Delamar Valley, the Southern Paiute have expressed concern
26 over adverse effects of energy projects on a wide range of resources (Section 11.2.18.2).
27 Continued discussion with the area Tribes through government-to-government consultation is
28 necessary to determine the extent to which cumulative effects of solar energy development in the
29 Delamar Valley can be addressed.
30

31
32 **11.2.22.4.18 Socioeconomics**
33

34 Solar energy development projects in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ could
35 cumulatively contribute to socioeconomic effects in the immediate vicinity of the SEZs and in
36 the surrounding multicounty ROI. The effects could be positive (e.g., creation of jobs and
37 generation of extra income, increased revenues to local governmental organizations through
38 additional taxes paid by the developers and workers) or negative (e.g., added strain on social
39 institutions such as schools, police protection, and health-care facilities). Impacts from solar
40 development would be most intense during facility construction, but of greatest duration
41 during operations. Construction would temporarily increase the number of workers in the area
42 needing housing and services in combination with temporary workers involved in other new
43 projects in the area, including other renewable energy development. The number of workers
44 involved in the construction of solar projects in the peak construction year (including
45 the transmission lines) could range from about 260 to 3,500 depending on the technology being
46 employed, with solar PV facilities at the low end and solar trough facilities at the high end. The

1 total number of jobs created in the area could range from approximately 460 (solar PV) to as
2 high as 6,000 (solar trough). Cumulative socioeconomic effects in the ROI from construction of
3 solar facilities would occur to the extent that multiple construction projects of any type were
4 ongoing at the same time. It is a reasonable expectation that this condition would occur within a
5 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ occasionally over the 20-year or more solar development
6 period.
7

8 Annual impacts during the operation of solar facilities would be less, but of 20- to
9 30-year duration, and could combine with those from other new projects in the area, including
10 the proposed groundwater transfer pipeline, and several proposed transmission line projects. The
11 number of workers needed at the solar facilities would be in the range of 30 to 600 with
12 approximately 40 to 900 total jobs created in the region, assuming full build-out of the SEZ
13 (Section 11.2.19.2.2). Population increases would contribute to general upward trends in the
14 region in recent years. The socioeconomic impacts overall would be positive, through the
15 creation of additional jobs and income. The negative impacts, including some short-term
16 disruption of rural community quality of life, would not likely be considered large enough to
17 require specific mitigation measures.
18

19 20 ***11.2.22.4.19 Environmental Justice*** 21

22 Any impacts from solar development could have cumulative impacts on minority and
23 low-income populations within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ in combination with other
24 development in the area. Such impacts could be both positive, such as from increased economic
25 activity, and negative, such as from visual impacts, noise, and exposure to fugitive dust. Actual
26 impacts would depend on where low-income populations are located relative to solar and other
27 proposed facilities and on the geographic range of effects. Overall, effects from facilities within
28 the SEZ are expected to be small, while other foreseeable and potential actions would not likely
29 combine with effects from the SEZ on minority and low-income populations. If needed,
30 mitigation measures can be employed to reduce the impacts on these populations in the vicinity
31 of the SEZ. Thus, it is not expected that the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ would contribute to
32 cumulative impacts on minority and low-income populations.
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34 35 ***11.2.22.4.20 Transportation*** 36

37 U.S. 93 lies about 8 mi (13 km) to the west and a equal distance to the north of the
38 proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. The closest commercial airport is Lincoln County Airport at
39 Panaca, about 35 mi (56 km) to the northeast of the SEZ. The Union Pacific railroad serves the
40 region. During construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities, there could be up to
41 1,000 workers commuting to the construction site at the SEZ, which could increase the AADT
42 on these roads by 2,000 vehicle trips for each facility under construction. With as many as two
43 facilities assumed under construction at the same time, traffic on U.S. 93 could experience
44 slowdowns in the area of the SEZ (Section 11.2.21.2). This increase in highway traffic from
45 construction workers could likewise have moderate cumulative impacts in combination with
46 existing traffic levels and increases from additional future projects in the area, including from

1 construction in the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ located 20 mi (32 km) to the north,
2 should construction schedules overlap. Local road improvements may be necessary on portions
3 of U.S. 93 near the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ. Any impacts during construction activities
4 would be temporary. The impacts can also be mitigated to some degree by staggered work
5 schedules and ride-sharing programs. Traffic increases during operation would be relatively
6 small because of the low number of workers needed to operate the solar facilities and would have
7 little contribution to cumulative impacts.
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11.2.23 References

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1 **11.3 DRY LAKE**

2
3
4 **11.3.1 Background and Summary of Impacts**

5
6
7 **11.3.1.1 General Information**

8
9 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located in Clark County in southern Nevada
10 (Figure 11.3.1.1-1). The SEZ has a total area of 15,649 acres (63 km²). In 2008, the county
11 population was 1,879,093. The towns of Moapa Town and Overton are as close as 18 mi (29 km)
12 northeast and 23 mi (37 km) east of the SEZ, respectively. The Nellis Air Force Base is located
13 approximately 13 mi (21 km) southwest of the SEZ.

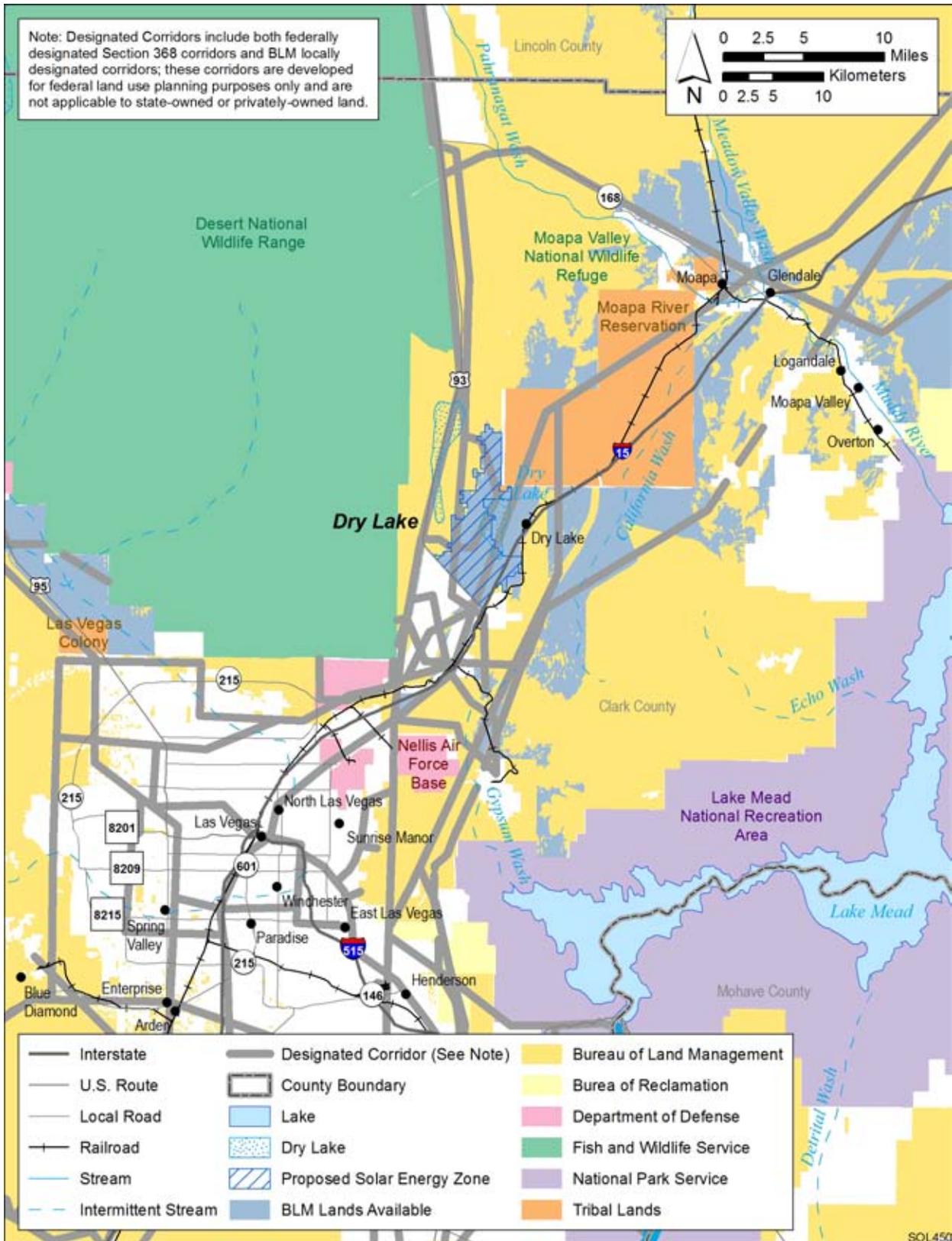
14
15 The nearest major roads accessing the proposed Dry Lake SEZ are I-15, which passes
16 through the southeastern portion of the SEZ, and U.S. 93, which runs from northwest to
17 southeast along part of the southwest border of the SEZ. The UP Railroad runs north to south
18 along a portion of the eastern SEZ boundary, with the nearest stop in Las Vegas. The nearest
19 public airport is the North Las Vegas Airport, a regional airport about 21 mi (34 km) to the
20 southwest of the SEZ that does not have scheduled commercial passenger service. McCarran
21 International Airport is farther south, in Las Vegas, and is served by all major U.S. airlines.

22
23 Three designated transmission corridors that are heavily developed with numerous
24 natural gas, petroleum product, and electric transmission lines (including a 500-kV transmission
25 line) pass through the proposed SEZ. It is assumed that the existing 500-kV transmission line, or
26 any of the other existing transmission lines, could potentially provide access from the SEZ to the
27 transmission grid (see Section 11.3.1.2).

28
29 There are four foreseeable and 16 pending solar development applications and one
30 foreseeable and nine pending wind site testing applications within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the
31 proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Five of the 16 pending solar applications are either within or adjacent
32 to the SEZ, as is one of the wind site testing applications. These applications are discussed in
33 Section 11.3.22.2.1.

34
35 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is in an undeveloped rural area. The SEZ is located in
36 Dry Lake Valley and is bounded on the west by the Arrow Canyon Range and on the southeast
37 by the Dry Lake Range. Land within the SEZ is undeveloped scrubland, characteristic of a
38 semiarid basin.

39
40 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ and other relevant information are shown in
41 Figure 11.3.1.1-1. The criteria used to identify the SEZ as an appropriate location for solar
42 energy development included proximity to existing transmission lines or designated corridors,
43 proximity to existing roads, a slope of generally less than 2%, and an area of more than
44 2,500 acres (10 km²). In addition, the area was identified as being relatively free of other types
45 of conflicts, such as USFWS-designated critical habitat for threatened and endangered species,
46 ACECs, SRMAs, and NLCS lands (see Section 2.2.2.2 for the complete list of exclusions).



1

2 **FIGURE 11.3.1.1-1 Proposed Dry Lake SEZ**

1 Although these classes of restricted lands were excluded from the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, other
2 restrictions might be appropriate. The analyses in the following sections evaluate the affected
3 environment and potential impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy development in the
4 proposed SEZ for important environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic resources.
5

6 As initially announced in the *Federal Register* on June 30, 2009, the proposed Dry Lake
7 SEZ encompassed 16,516 acres (67 km²). Subsequent to the study area scoping period, the
8 boundaries of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ were altered somewhat to facilitate the BLM's
9 administration of the SEZ area. Borders with irregularly shaped boundaries were adjusted to
10 match the section boundaries of the Public Lands Survey System (PLSS) (BLM and
11 USFS 2010c). The revised SEZ is approximately 867 acres (3.5 km²) smaller than the original
12 SEZ area as published in June 2009.
13
14

15 **11.3.1.2 Development Assumptions for the Impact Analysis**

16
17 Maximum solar development of the Dry Lake SEZ is assumed to be 80% of the SEZ
18 area over a period of 20 years; a maximum of 12,519 acres (51 km²). These values are shown
19 in Table 11.3.1.2-1, along with other development assumptions. Full development of the Dry
20 Lake SEZ would allow development of facilities with an estimated total of 1,391 MW of
21 electrical power capacity if power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies were used, assuming
22 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required, and an estimated 2,504 MW of power if solar
23 trough technologies were used, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.
24

25 Availability of transmission from SEZs to load centers will be an important consideration
26 for future development in SEZs. Several existing transmission lines, including a 500-kV line, run
27 through the SEZ. It is possible that an existing line could be used to provide access from the SEZ
28 to the transmission grid, but a 500-kV capacity line would be inadequate for 1,391 to 2,504 MW
29 of new capacity (note: a 500-kV line can accommodate approximately the load of one 700-MW
30 facility). At full build-out capacity, new transmission and/or upgrades of existing transmission
31 lines may be required to bring electricity from the proposed Dry Lake SEZ to load centers;
32 however, at this time the location and size of such new transmission facilities are unknown.
33 Generic impacts of transmission and associated infrastructure construction and of line upgrades
34 for various resources are discussed in Chapter 5. Project-specific analyses would need to identify
35 the specific impacts of new transmission construction and line upgrades for any projects
36 proposed within the SEZ.
37

38 For the purposes of analysis in the PEIS, it was assumed that the existing 500-kV
39 transmission line which runs through the proposed SEZ could provide initial access to the
40 transmission grid, and thus, no additional acreage for transmission line access was assessed.
41 Access to the existing transmission line was assumed, without additional information on whether
42 this line would be available for connection of future solar facilities. If a connecting transmission
43 line were constructed in the future to connect facilities within the SEZ to a different off-site grid
44 location from the one assumed here, site developers would need to determine the impacts from
45 construction and operation of that line. In addition, developers would need to determine the
46 impacts of line upgrades if they were needed.

TABLE 11.3.1.2-1 Proposed Dry Lake SEZ—Assumed Development Acreages, Solar MW Output, Access Roads, and Transmission Line ROWs

Total Acreage and Assumed Developed Acreage (80% of Total)	Assumed Maximum SEZ Output for Various Solar Technologies	Distance to Nearest State, U.S., or Interstate Highway	Distance and Capacity of Nearest Existing Transmission Line	Assumed Area of Transmission Line and Road ROWs	Distance to Nearest Designated Corridor ^d
15,649 acres and 12,519 acres ^a	1,391 MW ^b and 2,504 MW ^c	I-15 0 mi ^d	0 mi and 500 kV	0 acres and 0 acres	0 mi

^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^b Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies, assuming 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required.

^c Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using solar trough technologies, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.

^d BLM-designated corridors are developed for federal land use planning purposes only and are not applicable to state-owned or privately owned land.

Existing road access to the proposed Dry Lake SEZ should be adequate to support construction and operation of solar facilities, because a portion of I-15 runs through the SEZ and because U.S. 93 is adjacent to the SEZ. Thus, no additional road construction outside of the SEZ was assumed to be required to support solar development.

11.3.1.3 Summary of Major Impacts and SEZ-Specific Design Features

In this section, the impacts and SEZ-specific design features assessed in Sections 11.3.2 through 11.3.21 for the proposed Dry Lake SEZ are summarized in tabular form. Table 11.3.1.3-1 is a comprehensive list of impacts discussed in these sections; the reader may reference the applicable sections for detailed support of the impact assessment. Section 11.3.22 discusses potential cumulative impacts from solar energy development in the proposed SEZ.

Only those design features specific to the proposed Dry Lake SEZ are included in Sections 11.3.2 through 11.3.21 and in the summary table. The detailed programmatic design features for each resource area to be required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program are presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would also be required for development in this and other SEZs.

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 Summary of Impacts of Solar Energy Development within the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ and SEZ-Specific Design Features^a

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Lands and Realty	Full development of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ could disturb up to 12,519 acres (51 km ²). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish a large industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity.	None.
	The three designated transmission corridors located within the SEZ could limit future solar development within the corridor. Alternatively, solar development could also constrain future development within these corridors.	None.
	Solar development could sever existing roads that cross the SEZ, making it difficult to access public lands within the SEZ that are not developed or those that are outside of the SEZ.	None.
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Wilderness characteristics in up to 3% of the Arrow Canyon and 13% of the Muddy Mountains WAs could be adversely affected.	Design features for visual resources should be applied to minimize adverse visual impacts.
Rangeland Resources: Livestock Grazing	The grazing allotments within the SEZ have been closed, therefore there are no impacts to grazing.	None.
Rangeland Resources: Wild Horses and Burros	None.	None.
Recreation	Recreational use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ that would be developed for solar energy production.	None.

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Recreation (<i>Cont.</i>)	Because the SEZ sits astride numerous roads and trails, construction of solar energy facilities could sever access to undeveloped public lands.	None.
Military and Civilian Aviation	Nellis Air Force Base has expressed concern for solar energy facilities that might affect approach and departure from runways on the base. The military is also concerned with the potential impact on the test and training mission at the NTTR.	None.
Geologic Setting and Soil Resources	Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase. Impacts would include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind, soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. These impacts may be impacting factors for other resources (e.g., air quality, water quality, and vegetation).	None.
Minerals (fluids, solids, and geothermal resources)	None.	None.
Water Resources	<p>Ground-disturbance activities (affecting 38% of the total area in the peak construction year) could affect surface water quality due to surface runoff, sediment erosion, and contaminant spills.</p> <p>Construction activities may require up to 3,480 ac-ft (4.3 million m³) of water during the peak construction year.</p> <p>Construction activities would generate as high as 148 ac-ft (180,000 m³) of sanitary wastewater.</p>	<p>Wet-cooling and dry-cooling options would not be feasible unless further hydrologic study of the basin reveals that more water is available; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures.</p> <p>Land-disturbance activities should avoid impacts to the extent possible in the vicinity of the ephemeral washes and the dry lake present on the site.</p>

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Water Resources (Cont.)	<p>Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would use the following amounts of water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For parabolic trough facilities (2,504-MW capacity), 1,788 to 3,791 ac-ft/yr (2.2 million to 4.7 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; 12,554 to 37,593 ac-ft/yr (15 million to 46 million m³/yr) for wet-cooled systems. • For power tower facilities (1,391-MW capacity), 989 to 2,102 ac-ft/yr (1.2 million to 2.6 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; 6,971 to 20,881 ac-ft/yr (8.6 million to 26 million m³/yr) for wet-cooled systems. • For dish engine facilities (1,391-MW capacity), 711 ac-ft/yr (880,000 m³/yr). • For PV facilities (1,391-MW capacity), 71 ac-ft/yr (86,000 m³/yr). • Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would generate up to 35 ac-ft/yr (43,000 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater and up to 711 ac-ft/yr (877,000 m³/yr) of blowdown water. 	<p>Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid areas identified as being within a 100-year floodplain, which totals 1,569 acres [6.3 km²] of the proposed SEZ.</p> <p>Groundwater rights must be obtained from the NDWR.</p> <p>Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.</p> <p>Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in accordance with state standards.</p> <p>Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water quality standards in accordance with the <i>Nevada Administrative Code</i> (445A.453-445A.455).</p>
Vegetation ^b	<p>Up to 80% (12,519 acres [50.7 km²]) of the SEZ would be cleared of vegetation; re-establishment of shrub communities in temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult because of the arid conditions and might require extended periods of time.</p> <p>Noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in widespread habitat degradation.</p>	<p>An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan, addressing habitat restoration, should be approved and implemented to increase the potential for successful restoration of desert scrub and other affected habitats, and to minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species such as salt cedar or</p>

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation ^b (Cont.)	<p>The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition.</p> <p>Vegetation communities associated with Dry Lake playa habitats or other intermittently flooded areas within or downgradient from solar projects could be affected by ground-disturbing activities.</p> <p>The use of groundwater within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ for technologies with high water requirements, such as wet-cooling systems, could disrupt the groundwater flow pattern and adversely affect mesquite communities on or near the SEZ or springs in the vicinity of the SEZ.</p>	<p>Mediterranean grass. Invasive species control should focus on biological and mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use of herbicides.</p> <p>All dry wash, dry wash woodland, chenopod scrub, and playa communities within the SEZ should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated. Any yucca, cacti, or succulent plant species that cannot be avoided should be salvaged. A buffer area should be maintained around dry wash, dry wash woodland, playa, and wetland habitats to reduce the potential for impacts.</p> <p>Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on dry wash, dry wash woodland, wetland, and playa habitats, including downstream occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be determined through agency consultation.</p> <p>Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect impacts on groundwater-dependent communities, such as mesquite communities. Potential impacts on springs should be determined through hydrological studies.</p>
Wildlife: Amphibians and Reptiles ^b	<p>Direct impacts on representative amphibian and reptile species from SEZ development would be small (i.e., loss of $\leq 1\%$ of potentially suitable habitats). With implementation of proposed design features, indirect impacts would be expected to be negligible.</p>	<p>Dry Lake and wash habitats should be avoided.</p>

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Wildlife: Birds ^b	<p>Direct impacts on all representative bird species from SEZ development would be small (i.e., loss of $\leq 1\%$ of potentially suitable habitats).</p> <p>Other impacts on birds could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., buildings and fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with implementation of design features.</p>	<p>The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds will be followed.</p> <p>Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.</p> <p>Dry lake and wash habitats should be avoided.</p>
Wildlife: Mammals ^b	<p>Direct impacts on all representative mammal species would be small (i.e., loss of $\leq 1\%$ of potentially suitable habitats). In addition to habitat loss, other direct impacts on mammals could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., fences). Indirect impacts on mammals could result from surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental spills, collection, and harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with the implementation of design features.</p>	<p>The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free movement of mammals, particularly big game species.</p> <p>Dry Lake and wash habitats should be avoided.</p>
Wildlife: Aquatic Biota ^b	<p>The dry lake and the washes and wetlands present in the SEZ are typically dry and are not connected to any permanent surface water features; therefore, impacts on aquatic habitat and communities are not likely. California Wash and Gypsum Wash are intermittent streams in the area of indirect effects that flow into perennial surface waters. Thus fugitive dust entering these streams could potentially affect aquatic habitat and biota.</p>	<p>Appropriate engineering controls should be implemented to minimize the amount of runoff and fugitive dust that reaches California Wash and Gypsum Wash.</p>

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
<p>Wildlife: Aquatic Biota^b (Cont.)</p>	<p>Groundwater withdrawals for solar energy needs could affect surface water levels, habitat conditions, and aquatic biota in the Colorado River and the springs located in the vicinity of the SEZ. Contaminants are not likely to affect aquatic habitat and biota given the relatively large distance and lack of hydrologic connection of the SEZ to any perennial surface water.</p>	<p>Minimize or eliminate the impact of groundwater withdrawals on streams near the SEZ such as the Muddy River, and springs such as those along the north shore of Lake Meade and within Desert NWR and Moapa NWR</p>
<p>Special Status Species^b</p>	<p>Potentially suitable habitat for 62 special status species occurs in the affected area of the Dry Lake SEZ. For all of these special status species, less than 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region occurs in the area of direct effects.</p> <p>There are 13 groundwater dependent species that occur outside of the areas of direct and indirect effects. Potential impacts on these species could range from small to large depending on the solar energy technology deployed, the scale of development within the SEZ, and the cumulative rate of groundwater withdrawals.</p>	<p>Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the area of direct effects to determine the presence and abundance of special status species. Disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing impacts to occupied habitats is not possible for some species, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effect; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy for special status species that used one or more of these options to offset the impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the appropriate federal and state agencies.</p> <p>Consultation with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted to address the potential for impacts on the following four species currently listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA: Moapa dace, Pahrump poolfish, desert tortoise, and southwestern willow flycatcher. Consultation would identify an appropriate survey protocol, avoidance and minimization measures, and, if appropriate,</p>

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Special Status Species ^b (Cont.)		<p>reasonable and prudent alternatives, reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions for incidental take statements.</p> <p>Coordination with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted to address the potential for impacts on the following seven species under review for listing under the ESA that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ: Las Vegas buckwheat, grated tryonia, Moapa pebblesnail, Moapa Valley pebblesnail, Moapa Warm Spring riffle beetle, Moapa speckled dace, and Moapa White River springfish. Coordination would identify an appropriate survey protocol, and mitigation requirements, which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or compensation.</p> <p>Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash, playa, and desert pavement habitats on the SEZ could reduce or eliminate impacts on 14 special status species.</p> <p>Avoidance or minimization of groundwater withdrawals to serve solar energy development on the SEZ could reduce or eliminate impacts on 13 special status species. In particular, impacts on aquatic and riparian habitat in the Corn Creek Spring, Moapa Warm Springs and Muddy River should be avoided.</p>

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Special Status Species ^b (Cont.)		Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the affected area should be avoided or minimized. This can be accomplished by identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.
Air Quality and Climate	<p><i>Construction:</i> Temporary exceedances of AAQS for 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ and 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentration levels at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding areas during the construction of solar facilities. These concentrations would decrease quickly with distance. Modeling indicates that emissions from construction activities are anticipated to be somewhat higher than Class I PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearest federal Class I area (Grand Canyon NP, Arizona). In addition, construction emissions from the engine exhaust of heavy equipment and vehicles could affect AQRVs (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at nearby federal Class I areas.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> Positive impact due to avoided emissions of air pollutants from combustion-related power generation: 6.4 to 12% of total emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ from electric power systems in the state of Nevada avoided (up to 6,189 tons/yr SO₂, 5,308 tons/yr NO_x, 0.035 ton/yr Hg, and 3,407,000 tons/yr CO₂).</p>	None.
Visual Resources	The SEZ is in an area of low scenic quality, and major cultural disturbances are already present in SEZ and surrounding areas. Residents, workers, and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) as they travel area roads.	None.

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Visual Resources (Cont.)	<p>Large visual impacts on the SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed due to major modification of the character of the existing landscape.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 2.3 mi (3.7 km) from Desert National Wildlife Range. Because of the close proximity of the NWR to the SEZ, and the elevated viewpoints in the NWR, strong visual contrasts could be observed by NWR visitors.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 2.4 mi (3.9 km) from a high-potential segment of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. Because of the close proximity of the NHT to the SEZ, and the elevated viewpoints in the WA, strong visual contrasts could be observed by NHT users.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 2.5 mi (4.0 km) from Arrow Canyon WA. Because of the close proximity of the WA to the SEZ, and the elevated viewpoints in the WA, strong visual contrasts could be observed by WA visitors.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 6.6 mi (10.6 km) from Muddy Mountains WA. Because of the elevated viewpoints in the WA, moderate visual contrasts could be observed by WA visitors.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 4.5 mi (7.2 km) from Muddy Mountains SRMA. Because of the elevated viewpoints in the SRMA, moderate visual contrasts could be observed by SRMA visitors.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 4.3 mi (6.9 km) from Nellis Dunes SRMA. Because of the elevated viewpoints in the SRMA, moderate visual contrasts could be observed by SRMA visitors.</p>	

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Visual Resources (Cont.)	<p>Almost 38 mi (61.2 km) of I-15 are within the Dry Lake SEZ viewshed, and almost 4 mi (6.4 km) of I-15 pass along and through the SEZ's southeasternmost portion. Because of the close proximity of the I-15 to the SEZ, strong visual contrasts could be observed by travelers on I-15.</p> <p>Almost 13 mi (21 km) of U.S. 93 are within the SEZ viewshed, and about 4.5 mi (7.2 km) of U.S. 93 pass along the SEZ's southwestern boundary. Because of the close proximity of the U.S. 93 to the SEZ, strong visual contrasts could be observed by travelers on U.S. 93.</p>	
Acoustic Environment	<p><i>Construction:</i> For construction of a solar facility located near the southern SEZ boundary, estimated noise levels at the nearest residences located about 12 mi (19 km) from the SEZ boundary would be about 14 dBA, which is well below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. In addition, an estimated 40 dBA L_{dn} at these residences (i.e., no contribution from construction activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> For operation of a parabolic trough or power tower facility located near the southern SEZ boundary, the predicted noise level would be about 20 dBA at the nearest residences, which is well below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. If the operation were limited to daytime, 12 hours only, a noise level of about 40 dBA L_{dn} (i.e., no contribution from facility operation) would be estimated for the nearest residences, which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. However, in the case of 6-hour TES, the estimated noise level at the nearest residences would be 30 dBA, which is equivalent to the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. The day-night average noise level is estimated to be about 41 dBA L_{dn}, which is still well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p>	None.

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Acoustic Environment (Cont.)	If 80% of the SEZ were developed with dish engine facilities, the estimated noise level at the nearest residences would be about 32 dBA, which is below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. On the basis of 12-hour daytime operation, the estimated 40 dBA L _{dn} at these residences (i.e., no contributions from dish engines) would be well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L _{dn} for residential areas.	
Paleontological Resources	Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely to occur in 90% of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of the SEZ is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted. The potential for impacts on significant paleontological resources in the remaining 10% of the SEZ is unknown. A paleontological survey will likely be needed.	The need for and the nature of any SEZ-specific design features would depend on the results of future paleontological investigations.
Cultural Resources	<p>Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed Dry Lake SEZ; however, further investigation is needed. Consistent with findings at other SEZs, dune areas continue to have potential to contain significant sites within the valley floors suitable for solar development. A cultural resource survey of the entire area of potential effects, including consultation with affected Native American Tribes, would need to be conducted first to identify archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and traditional cultural properties, and then an evaluation would follow to determine whether any are eligible for listing in the NRHP as historic properties.</p> <p>Direct impacts are possible to the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road site within the SEZ, which is listed in the NRHP as a district. Visual impacts are also possible to a high-potential segment of the congressionally designated Old Spanish National Historic Trail located near the SEZ to the east.</p>	<p>Coordination with the Trail Administration for the Old Spanish Trail and Old Spanish Trail Association is recommended for identifying potential mitigation strategies for avoiding or minimizing potential impacts on the congressionally designated Old Spanish National Historic Trail, and also to any remnants of the NRHP-listed site associated with the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road that may be located within the SEZ. Avoidance of the Old Spanish Trail NRHP-listed site within the southeastern portion of the proposed SEZ is recommended.</p> <p>Other SEZ-specific design features would be determined through consultation with the Nevada SHPO and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations.</p>

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Native American Concerns	<p>The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is directly adjacent to Moapa Valley, a traditional center of Southern Paiute culture. It is likely that plant and animal species of cultural importance to the Southern Paiute are present within the proposed SEZ. With 80% of the SEZ developed, it is likely that important traditional plants and animal habitat will be destroyed. The cultural importance of this loss must be determined through consultation with the Tribes. The culturally important Salt Song Trail approaches or passes through the SEZ and could experience visual and noise impacts by the development of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed SEZ.</p>	<p>The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features would be determined during government-to-government consultation with the affected Tribes.</p>
Socioeconomics	<p><i>Construction:</i> A total of 441 to 5,842 jobs would be added; ROI income would increase by \$27.3 million to \$361.5 million.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> A total of 36 to 822 annual jobs would be added; ROI income would increase by \$1.3 million to \$31.1 million.</p>	None.
Environmental Justice	<p>There are both minority and low income populations, as defined by CEQ guidelines, within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ. Therefore, any adverse impacts of solar projects, although likely to be small, could disproportionately affect both minority and low-income populations.</p>	None.

TABLE 11.3.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Transportation	The primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be from commuting worker traffic. I-15 provides a regional traffic corridor that would experience small impacts for single projects that may have up to 1,000 workers each day, with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum), or possibly 4,000 vehicle trips per day if two larger projects were to be developed at the same time. Such an increase would range from 10 to 20% of the current traffic volume. If all project traffic were routed through U.S. 93, the traffic levels would represent a 100 to 200% increase of the traffic level experienced on U.S. 93 north of its junction with I-15.	

Abbreviations: AAQS = ambient air quality standards; AQRV = air quality–related value; BLM = Bureau of Land Management; BMP = best management practice; CEQ = Council on Environmental Quality; CO₂ = carbon dioxide; dBA = A-weighted decibel; DoD = U.S. Department of Defense; EPA = U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; ESA = Endangered Species Act; Hg = mercury; L_{dn} = day-night average sound level; MTR = military training route; NDOW = Nevada Department of Wildlife; NDWR = Nevada Division of Water Resources; NNHP = Nevada Natural Heritage Program; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; NP = National Park; NRHP = *National Register of Historic Places*; NTTR = Nevada Test and Training Range; PEIS = programmatic environmental impact statement; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 µm or less; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 µm or less; PSD = prevention of significant deterioration; PV = photovoltaic; ROI = region of influence; ROW = right-of-way; SEZ = solar energy zone; SHPO = State Historic Preservation Office; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; SRMA = Special Recreation Management Area; TES = thermal energy storage; USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- ^a The detailed programmatic design features for each resource area to be required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program are presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would be required for development in the proposed Dry Lake SEZ.
- ^b The scientific names of all plants, wildlife, aquatic biota, and special status species are provided in Sections 11.3.10 through 11.3.12.

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1 **11.3.2 Lands and Realty**

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4 **11.3.2.1 Affected Environment**

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6 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is a moderately sized and well-blocked area of BLM-
7 administered land. The character of much the land in the SEZ, especially the southern portion, is
8 highly developed with many types of energy, water, and transportation infrastructure facilities
9 present. Three designated transmission corridors pass through the area, including a 368 corridor
10 (of the Energy Policy Act of 2005), that contain numerous electric transmission lines, natural gas
11 and refined petroleum product lines, and water lines (see Figure 11.3.1.1-1). A new power
12 generating station is being constructed within the area of the SEZ, and two existing natural gas
13 power plants are located just southwest of the SEZ on private land. A minerals processing plant
14 is located in the southeastern corner of the area.

15
16 The area is bordered on the southwest by U.S. 93, and I-15 passes through the
17 southeastern portion of the SEZ. A railroad closely follows the southeastern border of the SEZ,
18 and there is an undeveloped railroad ROW located in the portion of the SEZ east of I-15. With
19 the exception of the 368 corridor, the area in the northern portion of the SEZ is relatively
20 undeveloped. Several informal dirt roads provide access into the area, in addition to roads that
21 provide access to along the various transmission lines.

22
23 As of February 2010, there were five ROW applications for solar energy facilities either
24 within or adjacent to the SEZ.

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27 **11.3.2.2 Impacts**

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29
30 ***11.3.2.2.1 Construction and Operations***

31
32 Full development of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ could disturb up to 12,519 acres
33 (51 km²) (Table 11.3.1.2-1). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production
34 would establish a large industrial area that would exclude other potential uses of the land,
35 perhaps in perpetuity. Numerous energy-related activities occur within the SEZ; solar energy
36 development, however, with its high density of visible facilities, would become a dominating
37 visual presence in the area.

38
39 Existing ROW authorizations on the SEZ would not be affected by solar energy
40 development since they are prior rights. Should the proposed SEZ be identified as an SEZ in the
41 ROD for this PEIS, the BLM would still have discretion to authorize additional ROWs in the
42 area until solar energy development was authorized, and then future ROWs would be subject to
43 the rights granted for solar energy development.

44
45 The existing electrical transmission and pipelines in the three designated transmission
46 corridors, and the existing pipeline pumping, mineral processing, and power plant construction

1 sites, occupy a large area within the SEZ that would not be available for solar energy
2 development. The railroad ROW may also not be available. To avoid technical or operational
3 interference between transmission and pipeline facilities and solar energy facilities, solar
4 facilities cannot be constructed under transmission lines or over pipelines. A consideration that
5 could affect future solar development is the need for future corridor capacity within the three
6 designated corridors. As presently proposed, capacity for future electrical transmission lines or
7 pipelines would be restricted by solar energy development. This is an administrative conflict that
8 can be addressed by the BLM through its planning process, but there would be implications
9 either for the amount of potential solar energy development that could be accommodated within
10 the SEZ, or the amount of additional corridor capacity available for future development.
11

12 Existing dirt roads located in the SEZ would be closed wherever solar development
13 facilities are developed, and access to public lands not developed for solar energy could be
14 affected. This could adversely affect public land users wishing to access any areas isolated by
15 solar development unless provision of alternate access is retained or provided.
16
17

18 ***11.3.2.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***

19

20 An existing 500-kV transmission line runs through the SEZ; this line might be available
21 to transport the power produced in this SEZ. Establishing a connection to the existing line would
22 not involve the construction of a new transmission line outside of the SEZ. If a connecting
23 transmission line were constructed in a different location outside of the SEZ in the future, site
24 developers would need to determine the impacts from construction and operation of that line. In
25 addition, developers would need to determine the impacts of line upgrades if they were needed.
26

27 Road access to the SEZ is readily available from U.S. 93 and I-15, so it is anticipated
28 there would be no additional land disturbance outside the SEZ associated with road construction
29 to provide access to the SEZ.
30

31 Roads and power lines would be constructed within the SEZ as part of the development
32 of solar energy facilities.
33
34

35 **11.3.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

36

37 There are no SEZ specific design features proposed to protect lands and realty resources.
38 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as
39 required under BLM's Solar Energy Program would provide some mitigation for some identified
40 impacts. The exceptions may be the development of the SEZ would establish a large industrial
41 area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity.
42
43

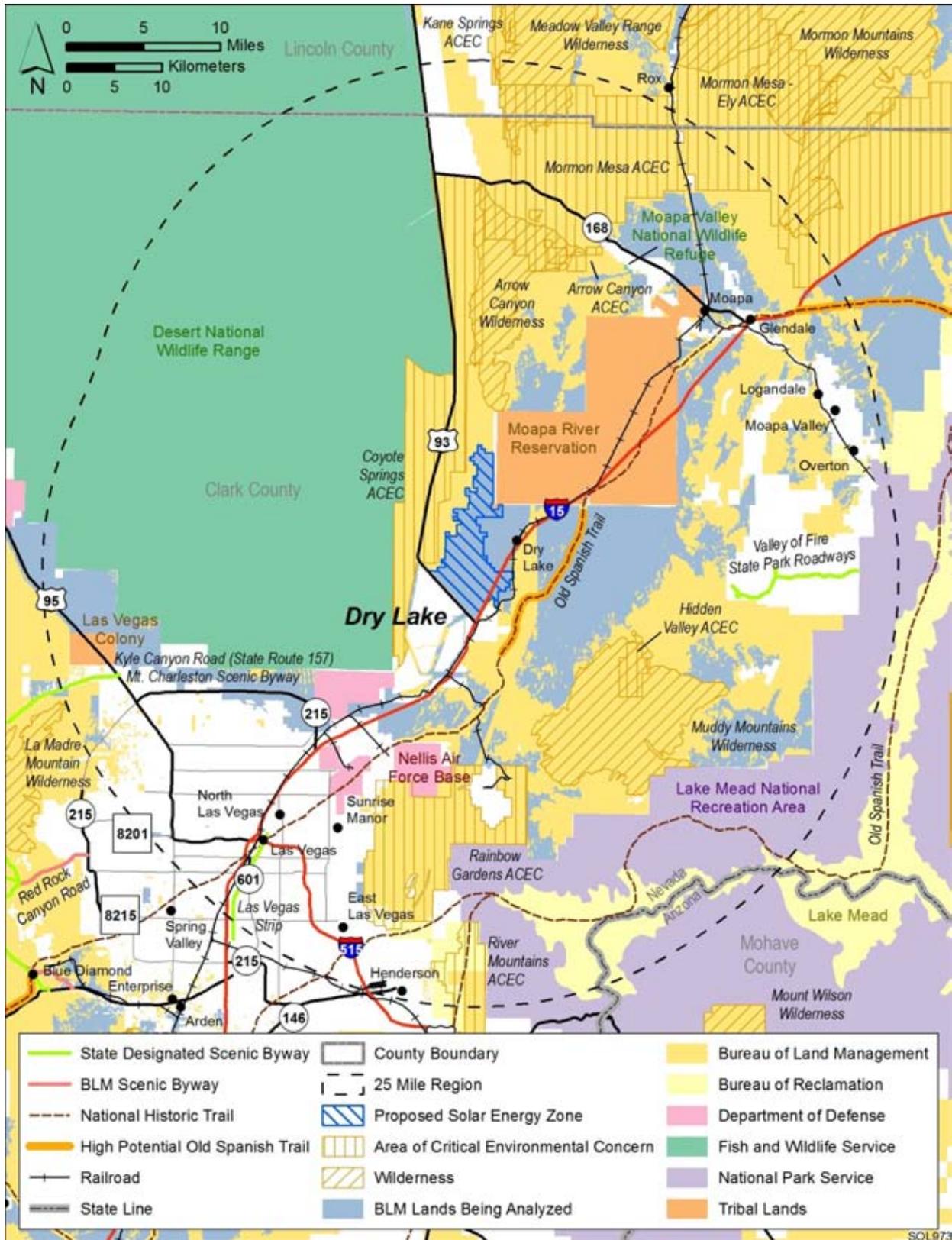
1 **11.3.3 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**
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3

4 **11.3.3.1 Affected Environment**
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6 There are 9 specially designated areas within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Dry Lake
7 SEZ that potentially could be affected by solar energy development within the SEZ, principally
8 from impacts on scenic, recreation, and/or wilderness resources. It is not anticipated that any of
9 these areas would experience increased visitation impacts associated with SEZ development.
10 The Meadow Valley Range and Mormon Mountains WAs and the Lake Mead NRA are not
11 considered further because of the small amount of acreage with visibility of the SEZ, the long
12 distance from the SEZ, and the percentage of the total acreage of the areas with visibility of the
13 SEZ is less than 1%. The ACECs included in the list below have scenic values as one of the
14 components supporting the designation. The Hidden Valley, Coyote Springs, Arrow Canyon,
15 Mormon Mesa, and Kane Springs ACECs that are within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ are not being
16 analyzed because they were designated to protect either critical desert tortoise habitat, or
17 paleontological, cultural, or geologic resources that would not be affected by solar development
18 within the SEZ. The specially designated areas that could be affected from solar development
19 within the SEZ include the following (see Figure 11.3.3.1-1):
20

- 21 • Wilderness Areas
 - 22 – Arrow Canyon
 - 23 – Muddy Mountains
- 24
- 25 • Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
 - 26 – Rainbow Gardens
 - 27 – River Mountains
- 28
- 29 • National Wildlife Refuges
 - 30 – Desert National Wildlife Range
 - 31 – Moapa Valley
- 32
- 33 • National Trail
 - 34 – Old Spanish Trail
- 35
- 36 • Scenic Byway
 - 37 – Bitter Springs Backcountry Byway
- 38
- 39 • State Park
 - 40 – Valley of Fire
- 41

42 No lands within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ and outside of designated wilderness areas
43 have been identified by the BLM to be managed to protect wilderness characteristics.
44
45



1
2 **FIGURE 11.3.3.1-1 Specially Designated Areas in the Vicinity of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ**

1 **11.3.3.2 Impacts**

2
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4 **11.3.3.2.1 Construction and Operations**

5
6 The primary potential impact on the remaining specially designated areas near the SEZ
7 would be from visual impacts of solar energy development that could affect scenic, recreational,
8 or wilderness characteristics of the areas. The visual impact on specially designated areas is
9 difficult to determine and would vary by solar technology employed, the specific area being
10 affected, and the perception of individuals viewing the development. Development of the SEZ,
11 especially full development, would be a factor in the viewshed from portions of these specially
12 designated areas, as summarized in Table 11.3.3.2-1. The data provided in the table assume the
13 use of 198-m (650-ft) power tower solar energy technology, which because of the potential
14 height of these facilities, could be visible from the largest amount of land of the technologies
15 being considered in the PEIS. Viewshed analysis for this SEZ has shown that the visual impacts
16 of shorter solar energy facilities would be slightly less than for power tower technology that is
17 used for the analysis (see Section 11.3.14 for more detail on all viewshed analysis discussed in
18 this section). Assessment of the visual impact of solar energy projects must be conducted on a
19 site-specific and technology-specific basis to accurately identify impacts.

20
21 In general, the closer a viewer is to solar development, the greater the impact on an
22 individual’s perception. From a visual analysis perspective, the most sensitive viewing distances
23 generally are from 0 to 5 mi (0 to 8 km). The viewing height above a solar energy development
24 area, the size of the solar development area, and the purpose for which a person is visiting an
25 area are also important. Individuals seeking a wilderness or scenic experience within these areas
26 could be expected to be more adversely affected than those simply traveling along a highway
27 with another destination in mind. In the case of the Dry Lake SEZ, the low-lying location of the
28 SEZ in relation to some of the surrounding specially designated areas, especially the Muddy
29 Mountains and Arrow Canyon WAs, would highlight the industrial-like development in the SEZ.

30
31 The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could potentially cause large though
32 temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities. The visual contrast levels
33 projected for sensitive visual resource areas that were used to assess potential impacts on
34 specially designated areas do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these
35 effects would be incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be
36 conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects.

37
38
39 **Wilderness Areas**

40
41
42 **Arrow Canyon.** The southernmost portion of the Arrow Canyon WA is less than 2.5 mi
43 (4 km) north of the northernmost portion of the SEZ. About 1,500 acres (6.1 km²), or about 5%,
44 of the WA within about 9 mi (14 km) are within the SEZ viewshed. Mountains of the Arrow
45 Canyon Range just south of the WA screen views of the SEZ from all but the highest elevations
46 of the southern peaks in the WA. From a few of these peaks, nearly open views of the SEZ exist,

TABLE 11.3.3.2-1 Potentially Affected Specially Designated Areas within a 25-mi (40-km) Viewshed of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ, Assuming Power Tower Solar Technology and a Target Height of 650 ft (198.1 ha)

Feature Type	Feature Name (Total Acreage/Linear Distance) ^a	Feature Area or Highway Length		
		Visible within 5 mi	Visible within	
			5 mi and 15 mi	15 mi and 25 mi
WAs	Arrow Canyon (27,521 acres)	764 acres (2.8%) ^b	1,485 acres (5.4%)	1,485 acres (5.4%)
	Muddy Mountains (44,522 acres)	0 acres	5,764 acres (13%)	5,764 acres (13%)
ACECs	Rainbow Gardens (38,777 acres)	0 acres	680 acres (1.8%)	844 acres (2.2%)
	River Mountains (10,950 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	1,962 acres (18%)
Wildlife Refuges	Desert (1,626,903 acres)	12,098 acres (0.7%)	45,730 acres (2.8%)	51,276 acres (3.2%)
	Moapa Valley (117 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres
National Trail	Old Spanish Trail (high-potential segment)	11 mi	0 mi	1 mi
Scenic Highway	Bitter Springs (28 mi)	0 mi	9.5 mi	0 mi
State Park	Valley of Fire (36,000 acres)	0 acres	727 acres (2%)	0 acres

^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047; to convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

^b Percentage of total feature acreage or road length viewable.

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looking down the narrow north–south axis of the SEZ; from those viewpoints, solar facilities would cause moderate to strong contrast levels with the surrounding terrain. It is anticipated that in the portions of the WA with views of the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ, wilderness characteristics would likely be adversely affected. These effects would be restricted to less than 3% of the WA. It is possible that areas visible out to 9 mi (14 km) could be adversely affected, but because of the visual orientation along the narrow axis of the SEZ, it is not clear this would be the case.

1 **Muddy Mountains.** The Muddy Mountains WA is located about 7 mi (11 km) southeast
2 of the SEZ at the point of closest approach. Within the WA, solar facilities within the SEZ could
3 be visible from an area of about 5,800 acres (23.5 km²) scattered throughout the peaks of much
4 of the western half of the WA out to a distance of about 12 mi (19 km) from the SEZ. The Dry
5 Valley Range provides at least partial screening of the SEZ for views within the WA. However,
6 for some of the higher peaks closer to the SEZ, a substantial portion of the SEZ would be in view
7 over the mountains of the Dry Lake Range, and for some viewpoints within the WA, the SEZ
8 would stretch across most of the horizontal field of view, and strong visual contrast would be
9 expected as a result. Because of the anticipated strong contrast and a clear view into the largest
10 portion of the SEZ, it is anticipated that wilderness characteristics in the portions of the WA
11 closest to the SEZ would be adversely affected. The presence of existing development within the
12 SEZ, especially the new power plant under construction, and the presence of the freeway and
13 existing power line development within the SEZ that are visible from the WA may moderate the
14 impact of solar development.

15
16
17 **Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**
18
19

20 **Rainbow Gardens.** The Rainbow Gardens ACEC, which was designated to protect
21 geological, scientific, cultural, sensitive plants, and scenic resources is located 9 mi (24.5 km)
22 south of the SEZ. Within the ACEC, solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible from about
23 2.2% of the area, and this visibility is scattered through several areas of the northwestern
24 portion of the area, generally at the summits and on north-facing slopes of Sunrise and
25 Frenchman Mountains, and neighboring peaks and ridges. From these high-elevation viewpoints,
26 views of the SEZ are over the tops of mountains in the Dry Lake Range and hills more directly
27 south of the SEZ. Although the viewpoints are 1,000 to 2,000 ft (305 to 610 m) above the
28 elevation of the SEZ, the vertical angle of view is low, and the SEZ is partially screened by
29 intervening topography. In addition, the views are along the SEZs' relatively narrow north-south
30 axis, so that the SEZ occupies only a small portion of the horizontal field of view; consequently,
31 only weak visual contrast is expected from solar facilities within the SEZ. On the basis of this
32 assessment, it is anticipated that there would be no effect on this ACEC from solar construction
33 within the SEZ.

34
35
36 **River Mountains.** The River Mountains ACEC is located about 20 mi (32 km) south of
37 the SEZ. The ACEC was designated to protect the scenic viewshed for Henderson and Boulder
38 City located south of the ACEC and to protect bighorn sheep habitat. From within the ACEC,
39 solar facilities within the SEZ could be distantly visible from an area of about 2,000 acres
40 (8.1 km²) scattered among the peaks and ridge tops within the area. Because of the long distance
41 to the SEZ and screening of much of the SEZ by intervening topography, minimal levels of
42 visual contrast would be expected for viewpoints in the ACEC, and it is anticipated that there
43 would be no effect within the ACEC from construction within the SEZ; the reasons for which
44 the area was designated would also not be affected.

1 **Wildlife Refuges**
2
3

4 ***Desert Wildlife Refuge.*** The refuge was established to protect and perpetuate the desert
5 bighorn sheep and its habitat. The refuge contains habitat for many species, and there also are
6 many recreational opportunities available. The refuge is located a little more than 2 mi (3 km)
7 west of the SEZ at the point of closest approach, beyond the Arrow Canyon Range, and extends
8 beyond the 25-mi (40-km) viewshed of the SEZ. Within the refuge, areas with visibility of solar
9 facilities within the SEZ would include the eastern slopes of mountains and ridges of the
10 Las Vegas Range on the east side of the refuge, primarily within 10 mi (16 km) of the SEZ,
11 but extending in a few areas to beyond 20 mi (32 km) into the refuge. Public access to the
12 refuge is restricted to the eastern third of the area, and strong visual contrast would be expected
13 for some viewpoints that look into the SEZ. Lower elevation viewpoints would be more subject
14 to screening by the mountains of the Arrow Canyon Range, and lower contrast levels would
15 therefore be expected. While the major purpose of the refuge would not be disrupted by the
16 presence of solar facilities in the SEZ, it is possible that some of the areas closest to the SEZ
17 could become less attractive to recreational visitors who currently access these areas. It is not
18 anticipated that this would result in a significant impact on recreational use of the refuge nor
19 would there be any effect on the major purpose of the refuge.
20

21
22 ***Moapa Valley.*** This is a very small refuge that was established for the protection of the
23 Moapa dace, a small endangered fish. The refuge is located about 15 mi (24 km) northeast of the
24 SEZ. The principle concern for the refuge is the maintenance of adequate water flows to sustain
25 the dace and to protect its habitat. Groundwater withdrawals within the SEZ to support solar
26 operations could create concern over the long-term impacts on maintenance of the refuge. Water
27 withdrawals in the basin are currently controlled and monitored by the Nevada State Engineer.
28 See Section 11.3.12 for more detailed information on ecological issues associated with the
29 maintenance of adequate groundwater flows within the region surrounding the SEZ. The
30 implementation of design features and complete avoidance or limitations of groundwater
31 withdrawals from the regional groundwater system would reduce impacts on the Moapa dace
32 and other special status species residing in thermal springs of the Moapa Valley.
33

34
35 **National Trail**
36
37

38 ***Old Spanish National Historic Trail.*** About 30 mi (48 km) of the Old Spanish National
39 Historic Trail are within the SEZ viewshed to the east and northeast of the SEZ. Much of this
40 segment of the trail has been identified as having high potential for future management for
41 protection and interpretation of the trail. For all but 5 mi (8 km), visibility of solar facilities
42 within the SEZ would be limited to the upper portions of power towers, and expected visual
43 contrast levels in these portions of the trail would likely be minimal or very weak. The SEZ
44 would be visible from the trail in a number of places, but the segment with full visibility of solar
45 facilities within the SEZ is a 5-mi (8 km) stretch roughly paralleling the SEZ's eastern boundary,
46 and 3 to 5 mi (5 to 8 km) east of the SEZ. For much of this segment, views of the SEZ would be

1 partially screened by the Dry Lake Range, but some portions of the SEZ would be visible
2 through gaps in the range and beyond the northern end of the range. Visual contrast levels are
3 expected to be minimal to weak, but a site-specific analysis would be required prior to any solar
4 project construction. Potential impacts on the historical setting of the trail and future
5 management of the trail are unknown at this time.
6
7

8 **Scenic Byway**

9

10
11 ***Bitter Springs Backcountry Byway.*** This BLM 28-mi (45-km) designated byway is
12 located about 7 mi (11 km) east from the nearest boundary of the SEZ. About 9.5 mi (15.3 km)
13 of the byway is within the viewshed of the SEZ before it enters the Muddy Mountains. Views of
14 solar development within the SEZ from the byway would be generally very low angle. No
15 impact on the use of the byway from construction of solar facilities within the SEZ is anticipated.
16
17

18 **Nevada State Park**

19
20

21 ***Valley of Fire.*** This is Nevada's oldest and largest state park and it includes about
22 36,000 acres (146 km²). The western boundary of the park is about 14 mi (23 km) from the SEZ.
23 Visual analysis indicates that the southwestern corner of the state park could have some limited
24 visibility of taller solar power towers constructed in the SEZ on about 727 acres (3 km²), or
25 2% of the park. Overall contrast levels associated with solar facilities would be low, and it is not
26 anticipated that there would be an adverse impact on the use of the park.
27
28

29 ***11.3.3.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***

30

31 Because of the availability of an existing transmission line and road access to the SEZ,
32 no additional construction of transmission or road facilities was assessed. Should additional
33 transmission lines be required outside of the SEZ, there may be additional impacts to specially
34 designated areas. See Section 11.3.1.2 for the development assumptions underlying this analysis.
35
36

37 **11.3.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

38

39 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
40 as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program would provide some mitigation for some
41 identified impacts. The exceptions may be the adverse impacts on wilderness characteristics in
42 up to 3% of the Arrow Canyon and 13% of the Muddy Mountains WAs that would not be
43 completely mitigated.
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A proposed design feature specific to the Dry Lake SEZ is as follows:

- Design features for visual resources as described in Section 11.3.14 should be applied to minimize adverse visual impacts.

1 **11.3.4 Rangeland Resources**
2

3 Rangeland resources managed by the BLM on BLM-administered lands include livestock
4 grazing and habitat for wild horses and burros. These resources and possible impacts on them
5 from solar development within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ are discussed in Sections 11.3.4.1
6 and 11.3.4.2.
7

8
9 **11.3.4.1 Livestock and Grazing**
10

11
12 ***11.3.4.1.1 Affected Environment***
13

14 Three grazing allotments overlapped the proposed SEZ, but they were closed to grazing
15 in the 1998 ROD for the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan (BLM 1998).
16

17
18 ***11.3.4.1.2 Impacts***
19

20 Because the Dry Lake SEZ does not contain any active grazing allotments, solar energy
21 development within the SEZ would have no impact on livestock and grazing.
22

23
24 ***11.3.4.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***
25

26 No SEZ-specific design features would be necessary to protect or minimize impacts on
27 livestock and grazing.
28

29
30 **11.3.4.2 Wild Horses and Burros**
31

32
33 ***11.3.4.2.1 Affected Environment***
34

35 Section 4.4.2 discusses wild horses (*Equus caballus*) and burros (*E. asinus*) that occur
36 within the six-state study area. Nearly 100 wild horse and burro herd management areas (HMAs)
37 occur within Nevada (BLM 2009f). Five HMAs in Nevada are located wholly or partially within
38 the 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region for the proposed Dry Lake SEZ; while one HMA in Arizona also
39 occurs partially within the SEZ region (BLM 2010a) (Figure 11.3.4.2-1). None of the HMAs
40 occur within the SEZ or within the area of indirect effects. The Muddy Mountains HMA is the
41 closest HMA. It occurs about 8 mi (13 km) east of the Dry Lake SEZ (Figure 11.3.4.2-1).
42

43 In addition to the HMAs managed by the BLM, the USFS has wild horse and burro
44 territories in Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah and is the lead management
45 agency that administers 37 of the territories (Giffen 2009; USFS 2007). The closest territory to
46 the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is the Spring Mountain Territory, located within a portion of the



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FIGURE 11.3.4.2-1 Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas and Territories within the Analysis Area for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (Sources: BLM 2009f; USFS 2007)

1 Toiyabe National Forest. The closest portion of this territory is located about 33 mi (53 km) west
2 of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ (Figure 11.3.4.2-1).

3
4
5 ***11.3.4.2.2 Impacts***
6

7 Because the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is about 8 mi (13 km) or more from any wild horse
8 and burro HMA managed by the BLM and more than about 33 mi (53 km) from any wild horse
9 and burro territory administered by the USFS, solar energy development within the SEZ would
10 not directly or indirectly affect wild horses and burros that are managed by these agencies.
11

12
13 ***11.3.4.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***
14

15 No SEZ-specific design features for solar development within the proposed Dry Lake
16 SEZ would be necessary to protect or minimize impacts on wild horses and burros.
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1 **11.3.5 Recreation**

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4 **11.3.5.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The site of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is an easily accessible area, close to Las Vegas,
7 that is flat with numerous roads and trails that provide access into the area. Although there are no
8 recreation data available, the area appears to offer limited opportunities for recreation, although
9 backcountry driving, OHV use of the roads and trails, and recreational shooting are evident in
10 the area. The area may also support some limited camping and hunting opportunities. OHV use
11 in the SEZ and surrounding area has been designated as “Limited to existing roads, trails, and
12 dry washes” (BLM 2010b).

13
14
15 **11.3.5.2 Impacts**

16
17
18 **Construction and Operations**

19
20 Recreational use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ developed for solar
21 energy production, and existing recreational users would be displaced. Although there are no
22 recreational use figures for the area, the area is not a major recreation destination, and it is not
23 anticipated that the loss of recreational opportunities would be significant. The area contains
24 numerous roads and trails that access areas in and around the SEZ, and the potential exists for
25 many of these roads and trails to be closed. This could adversely affect access to undeveloped
26 areas within the SEZ and areas outside the SEZ. Whether recreational visitors would continue
27 to use any remaining undeveloped portions of the SEZ, or how the use of areas surrounding the
28 SEZ would change, is unknown.

29
30 Because of the presence of solar development within the SEZ, it is possible that some of
31 the specially designated areas closest to the SEZ could become less attractive to recreational
32 visitors who currently access these areas. It is not anticipated that this would result in a
33 significant impact on recreational use.

34
35 Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes
36 designated open and available for public use. If open OHV routes within the SEZ were identified
37 during project-specific analyses, they would be re-designated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for
38 more details on how routes coinciding with proposed solar facilities would be treated).

39
40
41 **Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**

42
43 Because of the availability of an existing transmission line and road access to the SEZ,
44 no additional construction of transmission or road facilities was assessed. Should additional
45 transmission lines be required outside of the SEZ, there may be additional impacts to specially
46 designated areas. See Section 11.3.1.2 for the development assumptions underlying this analysis.

1 **11.3.5.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 No SEZ specific design features to protect recreation resources would be required.
4 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as
5 required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program would provide adequate mitigation for some
6 identified impacts. The exceptions may be that recreational use of the area developed for solar
7 energy production would be lost and would not be mitigated.
8
9
10

1 **11.3.6 Military and Civilian Aviation**

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3
4 **11.3.6.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is not located under any military airspace, nor is it identified
7 as a DoD Consultation Area in BLM land records. It is located about 13.5 mi (22 km) northeast
8 of Nellis Air Force Base, which is one of the largest fighter bases in the world. While not located
9 under designated military airspace, the area is close to airspace that is used for military aircraft
10 approaches and departures from Nellis.

11
12 The nearest public airport is the North Las Vegas Airport, a regional airport about a
13 21-mi (34-km) drive to the southwest of the SEZ. The airport does not have scheduled
14 commercial passenger service but caters to smaller private and business aircraft (Clark County
15 Department of Aviation 2010a). Farther to the south in Las Vegas, McCarran International
16 Airport is served by all major U.S. airlines and is the major airport in the area.

17
18
19 **11.3.6.2 Impacts**

20
21 The Command at Nellis Air Force Base has commented that approaches/departures from
22 runways at Nellis may be affected by solar towers or other tall structures that could be located in
23 the SEZ. In addition, because of the nature of testing at the NTTR located to the west and north
24 of the SEZ, the military has indicated that solar technologies requiring structures higher than
25 50 ft (15 m) AGL may present unacceptable electromagnetic compatibility concerns for its test
26 mission. The NTTR has commented that a pristine testing environment is required for the unique
27 national security missions conducted on the NTTR.

28
29 The North Las Vegas and McCarran International airports are located far enough away
30 from the facility that there would be no effect on their operations.

31
32
33 **11.3.6.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

34
35 No SEZ specific design features are required to protect either military airspace or civilian
36 aviation operations. The programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
37 would require early coordination with the DoD to identify and mitigate, if possible, potential
38 impacts on the use of MTRs.

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1 **11.3.7 Geologic Setting and Soil Resources**

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4 **11.3.7.1 Affected Environment**

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7 **11.3.7.1.1 Geologic Setting**

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10 **Regional Setting**

11
12 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located in Dry Lake Valley, a northeast-trending closed
13 basin within the Basin and Range physiographic province in southern Nevada. The valley is
14 bounded on the west by the Arrow Canyon Range and on the southeast by the Dry Lake Range
15 (Figure 11.3.7.1-1). Dry Lake Valley is one of many structural basins (grabens) typical of the
16 Basin and Range province.

17
18 Exposed sediments in Dry Lake Valley consist mainly of modern alluvial and eolian
19 deposits (Qa) (Figure 11.3.7.1-2). Playa lake sediments at Dry Lake (Qp) occur in the valley's
20 center. The surrounding mountains are composed predominantly of Paleozoic carbonates
21 (limestone and dolomite) and Tertiary volcanoclastic sedimentary rocks. The oldest rocks in the
22 region are the Late Proterozoic to Cambrian metamorphic rocks (CZq) exposed along ridges
23 within the Las Vegas Range to the west (Longwell et al. 1965).

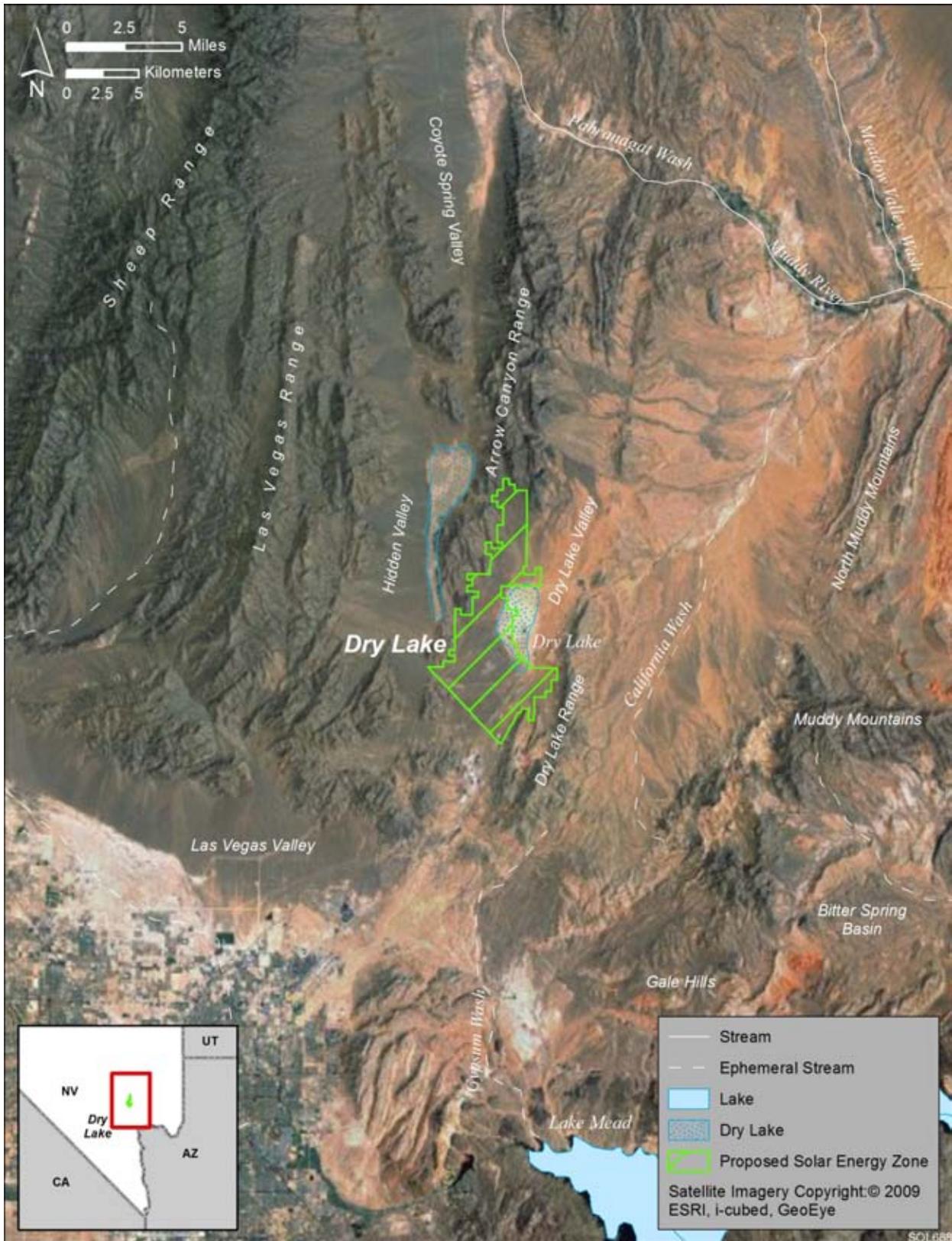
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25
26 **Topography**

27
28 Dry Lake Valley is an elongated basin covering an area of about 102,400 ac (414 km²).
29 Elevations along the valley axis range from about 2,200 ft (670 m) at its northern end and along
30 the range fronts to about 1,970 ft (600 m) at its southern end near Dry Lake. Alluvial fan deposits
31 occur along the valley margins and coalesce toward the valley center. The valley is drained by
32 several unnamed ephemeral streams that terminate at the Alkali Flat and Dry Lake, a playa in the
33 southern part of the valley.

34
35 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located in the southern part of Dry Lake Valley, between
36 the Arrow Canyon Range to the west and the Dry Lake Range to the east (Figure 11.3.7.1-1).
37 The terrain of the proposed SEZ site is relatively flat. Elevations range from about 2,556 ft
38 (779 m) along the northwest-facing boundary to 1,985 ft (600 m) along the western edge of
39 Dry Lake near the center of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.7.1-3).

40
41
42 **Geologic Hazards**

43
44 The types of geologic hazards that could potentially affect solar project sites and their
45 mitigation are discussed in Sections 5.7.3 and 5.7.4. The following sections provide a
46 preliminary assessment of these hazards at the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Solar project developers



1

2 **FIGURE 11.3.7.1-1 Physiographic Features of the Dry Lake Valley Region**

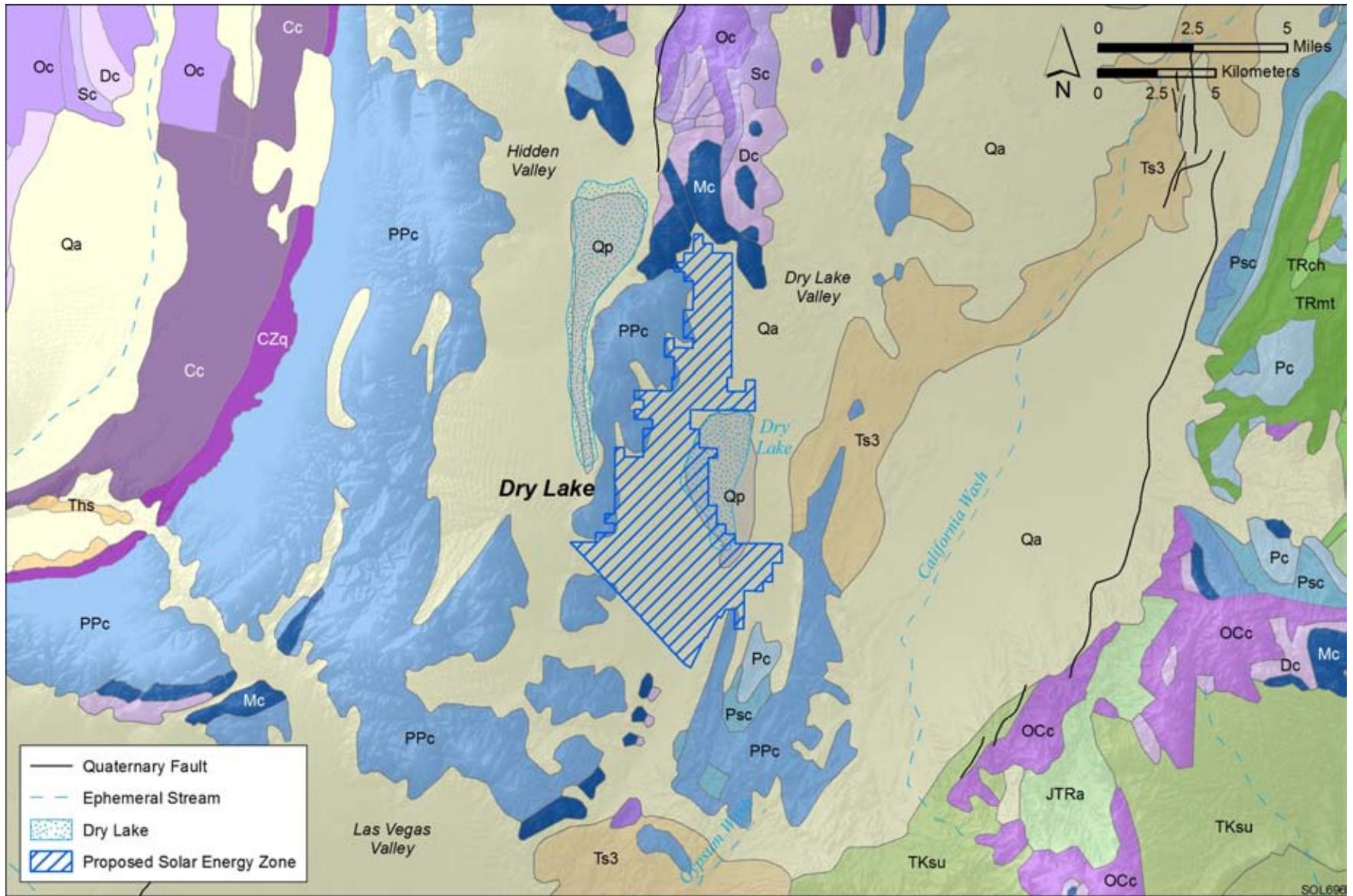


FIGURE 11.3.7.1-2 Geologic Map of the Dry Lake Valley Region (Sources: Ludington et al. 2007; Stewart and Carlson 1978)

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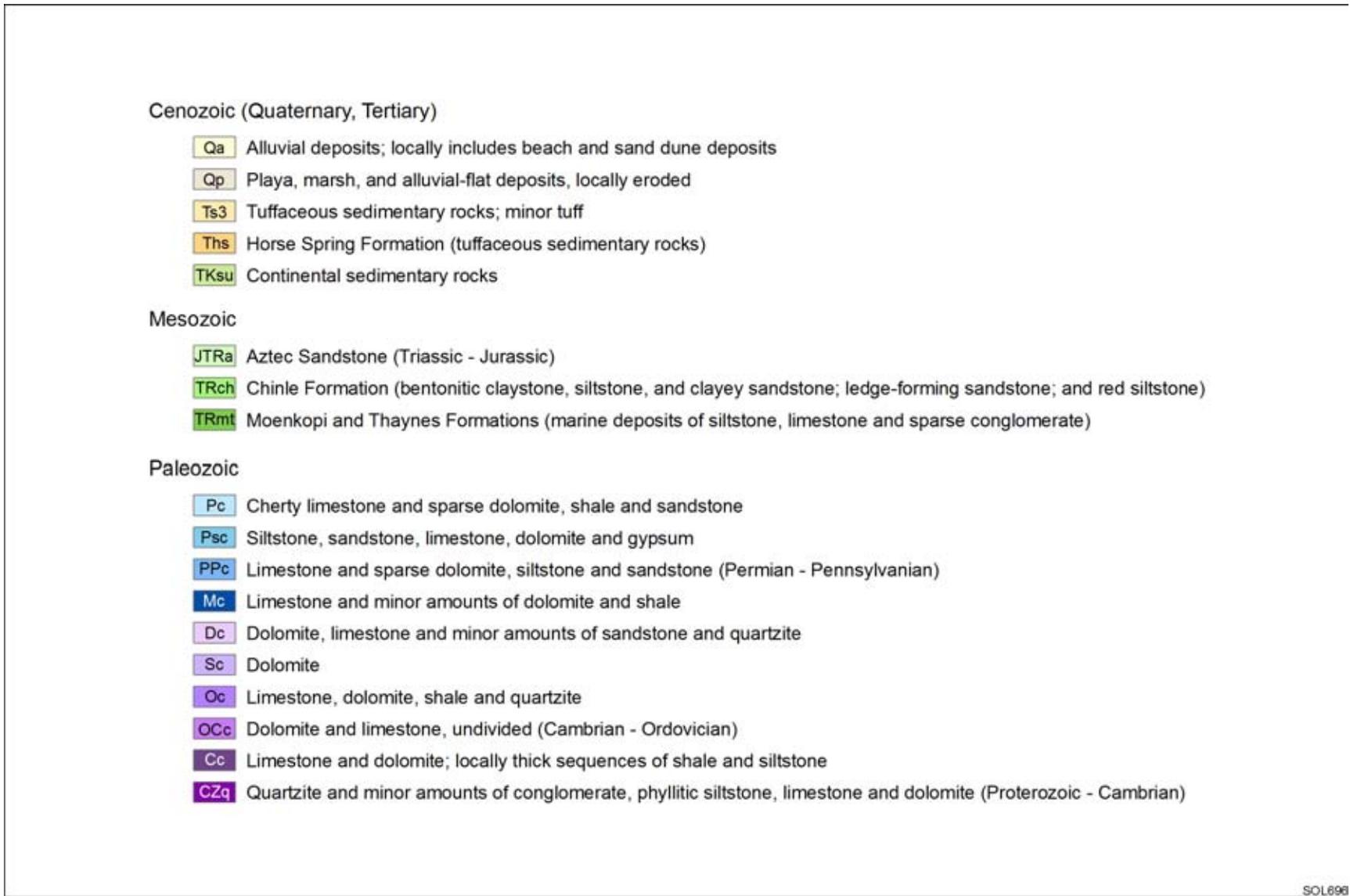
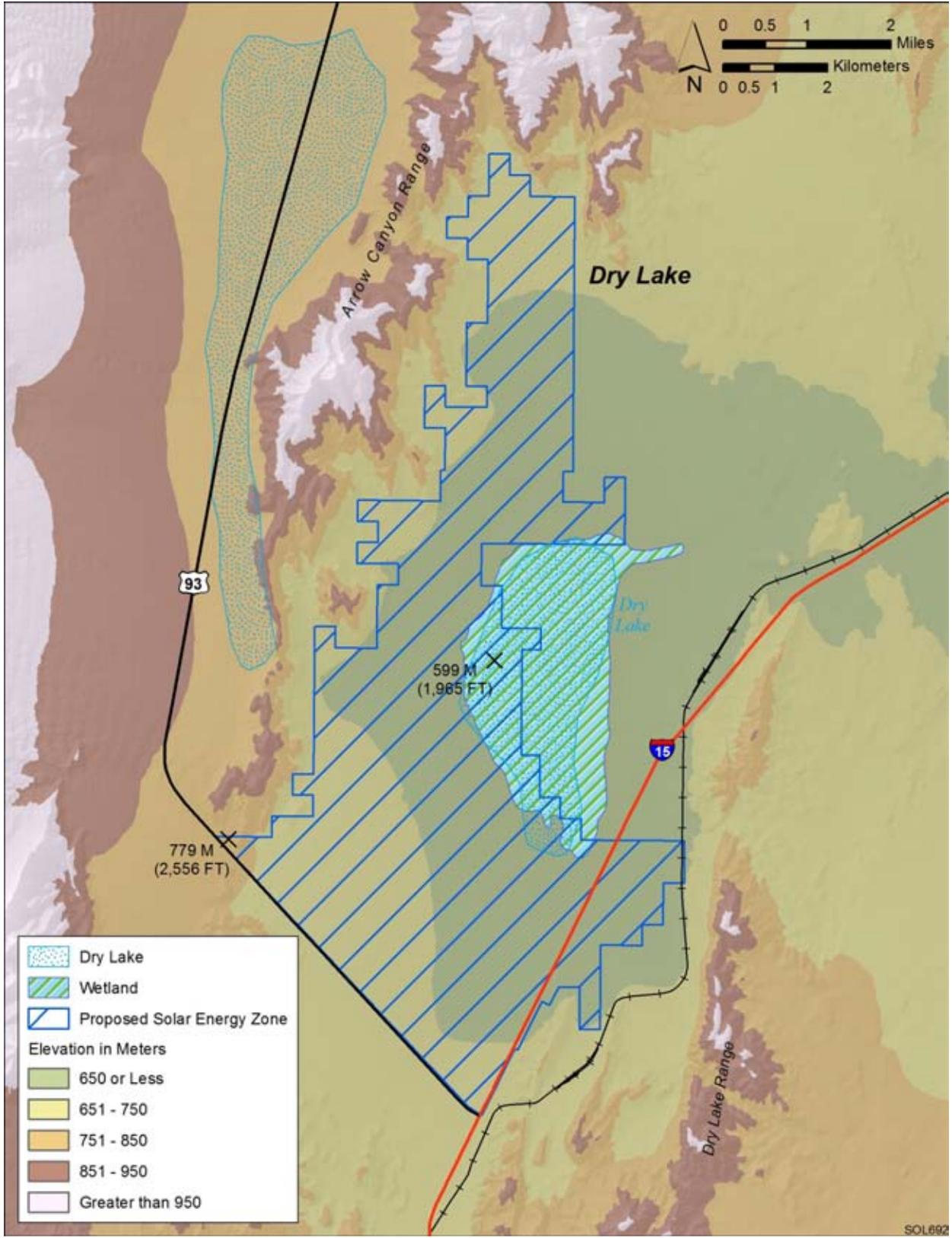


FIGURE 11.3.7.1-2 (Cont.)



1

2 **FIGURE 11.3.7.1-3 General Terrain of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ**

1 may need to conduct a geotechnical investigation to identify and assess geologic hazards locally
2 to better identify facility design criteria and site-specific design features to minimize their risk.
3
4

5 **Seismicity.** Clark County is south of the Southern Nevada Seismic Belt (also called the
6 Pahranaagat Shear Zone), a south-southwest trending zone of seismic activity characterized
7 mainly by background earthquakes (i.e., earthquakes not associated with surface expression)
8 (DePolo and DePolo 1999). Although the region is seismically active, no Quaternary faults occur
9 within or immediately adjacent to the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. The nearest Quaternary fault is
10 the Arrow Canyon Range fault, a north-striking fault along the western edge of the Arrow
11 Canyon Range a few miles north of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.7.1-4).
12

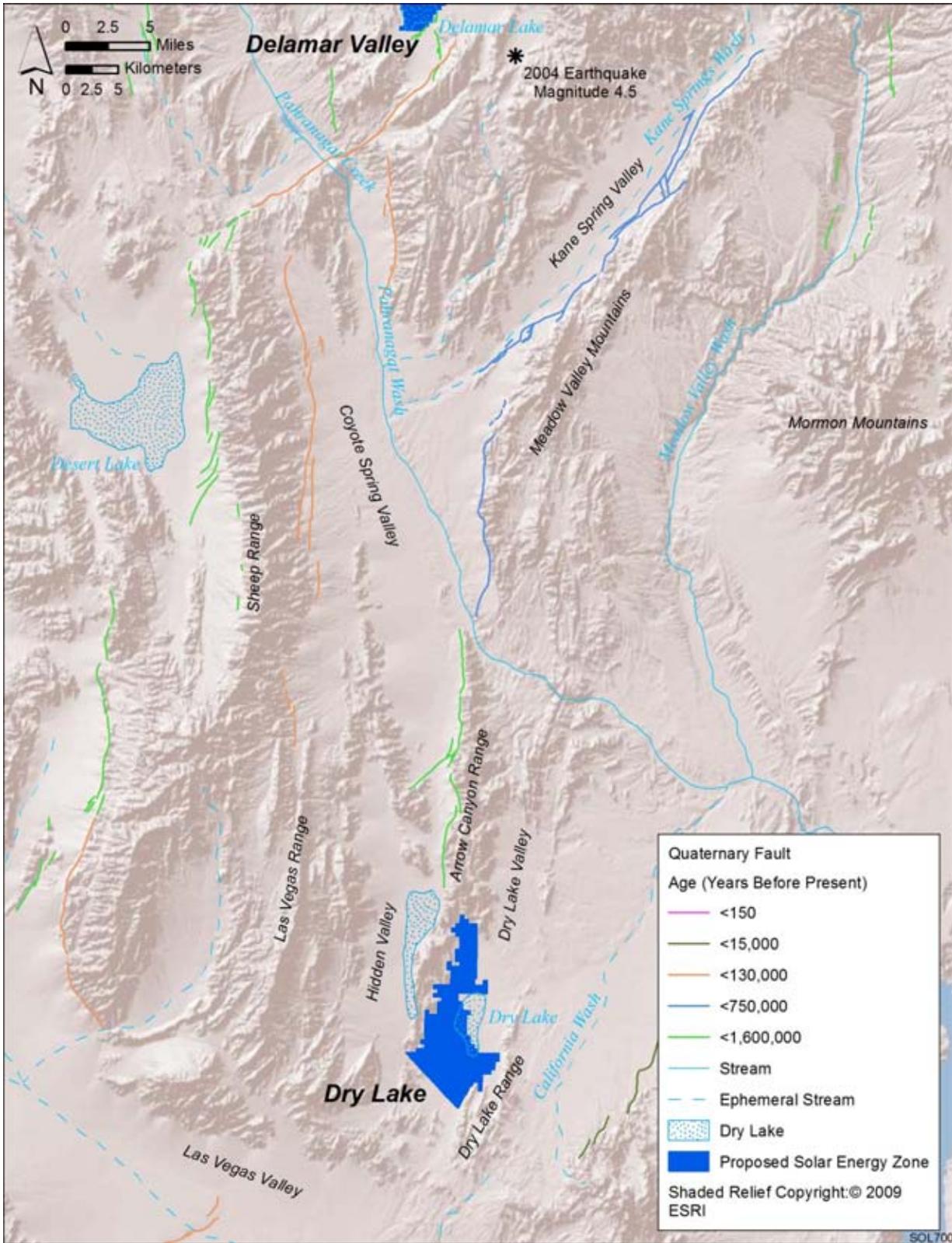
13 The Arrow Canyon Range fault is a major basin and range normal fault that forms an
14 abrupt boundary between the down-dropped block (Hidden Valley) to the west and the east-
15 tilting block of the Arrow Canyon Range to the east. Its trace is well defined, and fault-line
16 scarps have been mapped at the 1:100,000 scale. The northern part of the fault cuts older
17 alluvium of middle to early Pleistocene age and is covered by alluvial fan deposits of middle
18 to late Pleistocene age, placing the age of most recent movement at less than 1.6 million years.
19 Slip rates along the fault are estimated to be less than 0.2 mm/yr (Anderson 1998).
20

21 From June 1, 2000, to May 31, 2010, 51 earthquakes were recorded within a 61-mi
22 (100-km) radius from the proposed Dry Lake SEZ (USGS 2010a). The largest earthquake during
23 that period occurred on May 16, 2004. It was located about 50 mi (80 km) north of the SEZ in
24 the Gregerson Basin (near the Delamar Mountains) and registered a Richter magnitude¹ (ML)
25 of 4.5 (Figure 11.3.7.1-4). During this period, 24 (47%) of the recorded earthquakes within a
26 61-mi (100-km) radius of the SEZ had magnitudes greater than 3.0; none were greater than 4.5
27 (USGS 2010a).
28
29

30 **Liquefaction.** The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is within an area where the peak horizontal
31 acceleration with a 10% probability of exceedance in 50 years is between 0.09 and 0.10 g.
32 Shaking associated with this level of acceleration is generally perceived as moderate to strong;
33 however, the potential damage to structures is very light to light (USGS 2008). Given the very
34 low intensity of ground shaking estimated for the area and the low incidence of historical
35 seismicity in the region, the potential for liquefaction in sediments within and around the SEZ is
36 also likely to be low.
37
38

39 **Volcanic Hazards.** Dry Lake Valley is located about 60 mi (100 km) southeast of the
40 southwestern Nevada volcanic field, which consists of volcanic rocks (tuffs and lavas) of the
41 Timber Mountain-Oasis Valley caldera complex and Silent Canyon and Black Mountain calderas

¹ Richter scale magnitude (ML) was the original magnitude defined by Richter and Gutenberg for local earthquakes in 1935. It was based on the maximum amplitude recorded on a Wood-Anderson torsion seismograph but is currently calculated for earthquakes with magnitudes ranging from 2 to 6, using modern instruments with adjustments (USGS 2010b).



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.3.7.1-4 Quaternary Faults in the Dry Lake Valley Region (USGS and NBMG 2010;**
 3 **USGS 2010a)**

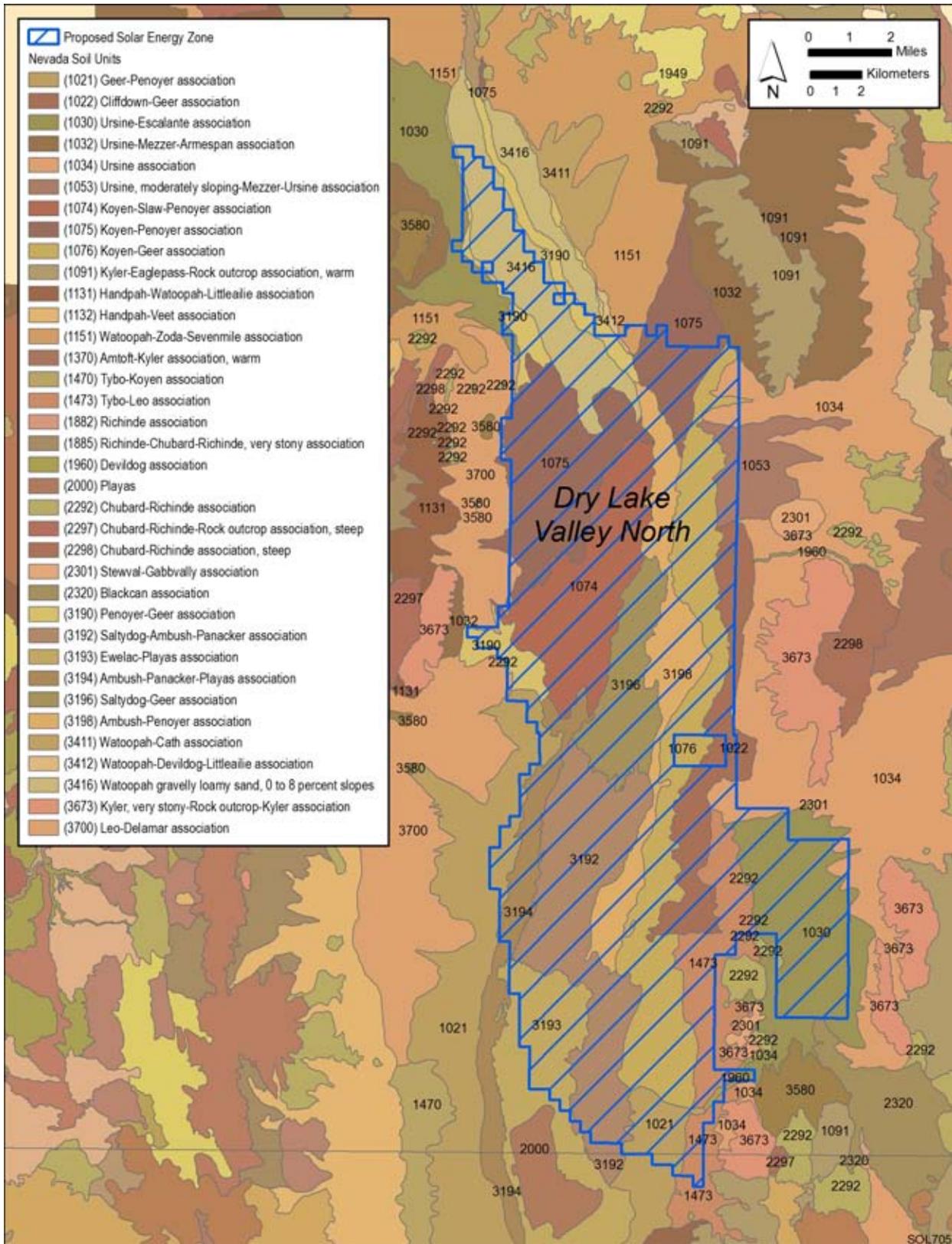
1 (Figure 11.3.7.1-4). The area has been studied extensively because of its proximity to the NTS
2 and Yucca Mountain repository. Two types of fields are present in the region: (1) large-volume,
3 long-lived fields with a range of basalt types associated with more silicic volcanic rocks
4 produced by melting of the lower crust, and (2) small-volume fields formed by scattered basaltic
5 scoria cones during brief cycles of activity, called rift basalts because of their association with
6 extensional structural features. The basalts of the region typically belong to the second group;
7 examples include the basalts of Silent Canyon and Sleeping Butte (Byers et al. 1989;
8 Crowe et al. 1983).

9
10 The oldest basalts in the region were erupted during the waning stages of silicic
11 volcanism in the southern Great Basin in the Late Miocene and are associated with silicic
12 volcanic centers like Dome Mountain (the first group). Rates of basaltic volcanic activity in
13 the region have been relatively constant but generally low. Basaltic eruptions occurred from
14 1.7 million to 700,000 years ago, creating the cinder cones within Crater Flat (Stuckless and
15 O’Leary 2007). The most recent episode of basaltic eruptions occurred at the Lathrop Wells
16 Cone complex about 80,000 years ago, a few miles east of the proposed Amargosa SEZ
17 (Stuckless and O’Leary 2007). There has been no silicic volcanism in the region in the past
18 5 million years. Current silicic volcanic activity occurs entirely along the margins of the Great
19 Basin (Crowe et al. 1983).

20
21 Crowe et al. (1983) determined that the annual probability of a volcanic event for the
22 region is very low (3.3×10^{-10} to 4.7×10^{-8}), similar to the probability of 1.7×10^{-8} calculated
23 for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository (Cline et al. 2005). The volcanic risk in the region is
24 associated only with basaltic eruptions; the risk of more explosive silicic volcanism is negligible.
25 Perry (2002) cites new hypotheses and geologic data that point to a possible increase in the
26 recurrence rate (and thus the probability of disruption) of volcanism in the region. These include
27 hypotheses of anomalously high strain rate episodes in the region and the presence of a regional
28 mantle hot spot; and new aeromagnetic data that suggest as many as twelve previously
29 unrecognized volcanoes may be buried in the alluvial-filled basins in the region.

30
31
32 ***Slope Stability and Land Subsidence.*** The incidence of rock falls and slope failures can
33 be moderate to high along mountain fronts. Such events can present a hazard to facilities on the
34 relatively flat terrain of valley floors, such as Dry Lake Valley, if they are located at the base of
35 steep slopes. The risk of rock falls and slope failures decreases toward the flat valley center.

36
37 No land subsidence monitoring has taken place in Dry Lake Valley to date; however,
38 earth fissures have been documented in the Las Vegas Valley around Las Vegas, about 17 mi
39 (27 km) southwest of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. The fissures are likely the result of land
40 subsidence caused by compaction of unconsolidated alluvial sediments due to groundwater
41 withdrawal. Spatial distribution of fissures in the valley suggests that fissures are preferentially
42 located near and along Quaternary faults, with 80% of fissures within 1,150 ft (350 m) of a
43 known fault. The maximum subsidence measured for the period between 1963 and 1987 was
44 about 5 ft (1.5 m). Since then, subsidence rates have declined by as much as 50 to 80%. The
45 reduction in subsidence rates has been attributed to the effects of the artificial recharge program



1

2 **FIGURE 11.3.7.1-5 Soil Map for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (NRCS 2008)**

1 (using water from Lake Mead) started in the 1990s, which has generally increased water levels in
2 the region (Bell et al. 2002; Burbey 2002; Galloway et al. 1999).

3
4
5 **Other Hazards.** Other potential hazards at the proposed Dry Lake SEZ include those
6 associated with soil compaction (restricted infiltration and increased runoff), expanding clay
7 soils (destabilization of structures), and hydro-compactable or collapsible soil (settlement).
8 Disturbance of soil crusts and desert pavement on soil surfaces may increase the likelihood
9 of soil erosion by wind.

10
11 Alluvial fan surfaces, such as those found in Dry Lake Valley, can be the sites of
12 damaging high-velocity flash floods and debris flows during periods of intense and prolonged
13 rainfall. The nature of the flooding and sedimentation processes (e.g., stream flow versus debris
14 flow fans) will depend on the specific morphology of the fan (NRC 1996). Section 11.3.9.1.1
15 provides further discussion of flood risks within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ.

16 17 18 **11.3.7.1.2 Soil Resources**

19
20 Soils within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ are predominantly very gravelly and stony
21 loams of the Colorock-Tonopah and Bard-Tonopah associations, which together make up about
22 68% of the soil coverage at the site (Figure 11.3.7.1-5). Soil map units within the proposed Dry
23 Lake SEZ are described in Table 11.3.7.1-1. These gently to moderately sloping soils are derived
24 alluvium from sedimentary rocks (mainly carbonates); some soils (particularly those of the
25 Colorock series) have well developed pavements. They are characterized as deep and well to
26 excessively drained. Most of the soils on the site have a high surface runoff potential and
27 moderate permeability. The water erosion potential is low for all soils at the site except those
28 within the playa (covering about 1% of the site). The susceptibility to wind erosion is moderate
29 for most soils, with as much as 86 tons (78 metric tons) of soil eroded by wind per acre each year
30 (NRCS 2010). Biological soil crusts and desert pavement have not been documented in the SEZ,
31 but may be present.

32
33 None of the soils within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is rated as hydric.² Except for the
34 Ireteba loam, which covers about 851 acres (3.4 km²) and has a frequent flooding rating (with a
35 50% chance in any year), flooding is rare for soils at the site but possible under unusual weather
36 conditions (with a 1 to 5% chance in any year). None of the soils is classified as prime or unique
37 farmland (NRCS 2010).

38 39 40 **11.3.7.2 Impacts**

41
42 Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities
43 (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase of a solar
44 project. These include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind,

² A hydric soil is a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding (NRCS 2010).

TABLE 11.3.7.1-1 Summary of Soil Map Units within the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area, in Acres ^c (percent of SEZ)
469360	Colorock-Tonopah association, moderately sloping (2 to 8% slopes)	Low (0.24)	Moderate (WEG 6) ^d	Consists of about 55% Colorock very gravelly clay loam and 40% Tonopah gravelly sandy loam. Nearly level to gently sloping soils on fan remnants. Parent material is calcareous alluvium derived from sedimentary rock. Deep and well to excessively drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and moderate permeability. Available water capacity is low. Moderate rutting hazard. Colorock soils have well developed pavements. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	8,777 (56)
469349	Bard-Tonopah association, gently sloping	Low (0.28)	Moderate (WEG 5)	Consists of about 60% Bard gravelly fine sandy loam and 30% Tonopah gravelly sandy loam. Gently sloping soils on fan remnants. Parent material is alluvium derived from limestone and dolomite. Shallow and deep, well to excessively drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and moderate permeability. Available water capacity is very low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	1,814 (12)
469355	Bard very stony loam (2 to 4% slopes)	Low (0.28)	Moderate (WEG 5)	Nearly level to gently sloping soils on fan remnants. Parent material consists of alluvium derived from limestone and dolomite. Moderately deep and well drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and high permeability. Available water capacity is very low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	1,546 (10)
469353	Bard gravelly fine sandy loam (2 to 8% slopes)	Low (0.20)	Moderate (WEG 4)	Nearly level to gently sloping soils on fan remnants. Parent material consists of alluvium derived from limestone and dolomite. Moderately deep and well drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and high permeability. Available water capacity is very low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	1,189 (8)

TABLE 11.3.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area, in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
369381	Ireteba loam, overflow	Low (0.28)	Moderate (WEG 4)	Nearly level soils formed on floodplains. Parent material consists of alluvium derived from mixed sources. Moderately deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate permeability. Low resistance to compaction. Available water capacity is high. Severe rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	851 (5)
369380	Ireteba loam	Low (0.28)	Moderate (WEG 4)	Nearly level soils on fan remnants. Parent material consists of alluvium from mixed sources. Moderately deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate permeability. Available water capacity is high. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	516 (3)
369379	Grapevine loam	Moderate (0.43)	Moderate (WEG 4)	Level to nearly level soils on fan piedmonts and alluvial flats. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate permeability. Parent material consists of mixed alluvium with some gypsum. Available water capacity is moderate. Used mainly as wildlife habitat and rangeland; unsuitable for cultivation.	415 (1)
369399	Rock land-St. Thomas association, very steep	Not rated	Not rated	Consists of about 60% rockland and 30% St. Thomas. Steeply sloping soils on mountain slopes. Parent material is colluvium derived from limestone and dolomite over residuum weathered from limestone and dolomite. Shrink-swell potential is low. Available water capacity is very low. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	226 (1)
369395	Playas	Moderate (0.37)	Moderate (WEG 4)	Moderately to strongly saline, very poorly drained silty clay loam (0 to 6 in. ^e) to silty clay (6 to 60 in.) formed on playas. Used mainly for wildlife habitat, watershed, and recreational and esthetic purposes.	195 (1)

TABLE 11.3.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area, in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
369354	Bard very gravelly fine sandy loam (2 to 15% slopes)	Low (0.10)	Moderate (WEG 6)	Moderately sloping soils formed on fan remnants. Parent material consists of alluvium derived from limestone and dolomite. Shallow to moderately deep and well drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and high permeability. Available water capacity is very low. Slight rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	116 (<1)

^a Water erosion potential rates based on soil erosion factor K, which indicates the susceptibility of soil to sheet and rill erosion by water. Values range from 0.02 to 0.69 and are provided in parentheses under the general rating; a higher value indicates a higher susceptibility to erosion. Estimates based on the percentage of silt, sand, and organic matter and on soil structure and saturated hydraulic conductivity.

^b Wind erosion potential here is based on the wind erodibility group (WEG) designation: groups 1 and 2, high; groups 3 through 6, moderate; and groups 7 and 8 low (see footnote d for further explanation).

^c To convert from acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d WEG = wind erodibility group. WEGs are based on soil texture, content of organic matter, effervescence of carbonates, content of rock fragments, and mineralogy, and also take into account soil moisture, surface cover, soil surface roughness, wind velocity and direction, and the length of unsheltered distance (USDA 2004). Groups range in value from 1 (most susceptible to wind erosion) to 8 (least susceptible to wind erosion). The NRCS provides a wind erodibility index, expressed as an erosion rate in tons per acre per year, for each of the wind erodibility groups: WEG 4, 86 tons (78 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year; WEG 5, 56 tons (51 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year; and WEG 6, 48 tons (44 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year.

^e To convert from in. to cm, multiply by 2.54.

Source: NRCS (2010).

1 soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. Such impacts are
2 common to all utility-scale solar energy developments in varying degrees and are described in
3 more detail for the four phases of development in Section 5.7.1.
4

5 Because impacts on soil resources result from ground-disturbing activities in the project
6 area, soil impacts would be roughly proportional to the size of a given solar facility, with larger
7 areas of disturbed soil having a greater potential for impacts than smaller areas (Section 5.7.2).
8 The magnitude of impacts would also depend on the types of components built for a given
9 facility since some components would involve greater disturbance and would take place over a
10 longer timeframe.
11

12 **11.3.7.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

13
14
15 No SEZ-specific design features were identified for soil resources at the proposed Dry
16 Lake SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
17 Section A.2.2., as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would reduce the potential for
18 soil impacts during all project phases.
19
20

1 **11.3.8 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)**
2
3

4 **11.3.8.1 Affected Environment**
5

6 As of September 17, 2010, there were a number of active mining claims, both lode and
7 placer located, in Sections 13 and 14, Township 18S, Range 63E, in the very southern tip of the
8 proposed Dry Lake SEZ (BLM and USFS 2010a). There also is a mineral processing plant
9 located in Section 13. The public land within the SEZ was closed to additional locatable mineral
10 entry in June 2009, pending the outcome of this solar energy PEIS. There are no active oil and
11 gas leases in the area, but all but a small portion of the area has been leased in the past (BLM and
12 USFS 2010b). The area remains open for discretionary mineral leasing for oil and gas and other
13 leasable minerals, and for disposal of salable minerals. There is no active or historical
14 geothermal leasing or development in or near the SEZ (BLM and USFS 2010b).
15

16
17 **11.3.8.2 Impacts**
18

19 The existing mining claims in the southern portion of the SEZ represent prior existing
20 rights and would likely make development of the encumbered parcels within the two sections
21 unlikely. In addition, this same area already has numerous existing ROWs present, so it is not
22 likely to be utilized for solar development.
23

24 If the area were identified as a solar energy zone, it would continue to be closed to all
25 incompatible forms of mineral development. For the purpose of this analysis, it is assumed
26 that future development of oil and gas resources would continue to be possible, since such
27 development could occur with directional drilling from outside the SEZ. Since the remainder of
28 the SEZ does not contain existing mining claims, it is also assumed that there would be no future
29 loss of locatable mineral production. The production of common minerals, such as sand and
30 gravel and mineral materials used for road construction or other purposes, might take place in
31 areas not directly developed for solar energy production.
32

33 Since the SEZ has no history of leasing or development of geothermal resources, it is not
34 anticipated that solar development would adversely affect development of geothermal resources.
35

36
37 **11.3.8.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
38

39 No SEZ-specific design features are required to protect mineral resources. Implementing
40 the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under
41 BLM's Solar Energy Program would provide adequate protection mineral resources.
42
43
44

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1 **11.3.9 Water Resources**

2
3
4 **11.3.9.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located within the Lower Colorado-Lake Mead subbasin
7 of the Lower Colorado River Basin hydrologic region (USGS 2010c) and the Basin and Range
8 physiographic province, which is characterized by intermittent mountain ranges and desert
9 valleys (Planert and Williams 1995). The proposed SEZ has surface elevations ranging between
10 1,970 and 2,560 ft (600 and 780 m). The Dry Lake SEZ is located within Garnet Valley
11 Hydrographic Area (also referred to as Dry Lake Valley), a closed basin that is internally drained
12 and underlain by alluvial deposits that fill the valley (Figure 11.3.9.1-1). The climate of Garnet
13 Valley is arid; average annual precipitation is about 5 in. (13 cm) in the basin (WRCC 2010a).
14 Evaporation rates are estimated to be 99 in. (251 cm) in the basin (Cowherd et al. 1988;
15 WRCC 2010b).
16
17

18 **11.3.9.1.1 Surface Waters (Including Drainages, Floodplains, and Wetlands)**

19
20 The Dry Lake SEZ is located within the Garnet Valley Hydrographic Area, a closed basin
21 that has an area of approximately 99,800 acres (404 km²) and is not hydraulically connected to
22 the Colorado River Basin (NDWR 1972). Surface water features within the proposed Dry Lake
23 SEZ include three unnamed washes that lead to the remnants of a Pleistocene era dry lake
24 (Figure 11.3.9.1-1) (NDWR 1972). Annual runoff from the mountains within the Garnet Valley
25 is estimated to be 300 ac-ft/yr (370,000 m³/yr) (Rush 1968). The basin is closed, so any water
26 that runs off the mountains of the Garnet Valley Basin evaporates or infiltrates into the ground.
27 The area of the dry lake is approximately 2,700 acres (11 km²). To the east, in the adjacent
28 California Wash Basin, the California Wash drains east to Muddy River, a tributary to the
29 Colorado River.
30

31 Flood hazards within the SEZ include areas within the 100-year floodplain (Zone A)
32 and areas outside the 500-year floodplain (Zone X) (FEMA 2009). Areas of the SEZ within the
33 100-year floodplain total 1,569 acres (6.3 km²) and include the Pleistocene era dry lake and
34 two washes that extend southwest from the dry lake. Flooding in parts of these areas occurs with
35 an annual probability greater than or equal to 1%. In these areas, intermittent flooding may occur
36 with temporary ponding and erosion. The rest of the proposed SEZ is estimated to be outside the
37 500-year floodplain, and has an annual probability of flooding of less than 0.2%.
38

39 A 3,310-acre (13-km²) wetland area has been identified by the NWI in the vicinity of
40 the dry lake, and approximately 1,022 acres (4.1 km²) of the SEZ are part of the wetland area
41 (USFWS 2009a). Further information regarding the wetlands near the SEZ is described in
42 Section 11.3.10.1.
43
44

45 **11.3.9.1.2 Groundwater**

46
47 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located within the Garnet Valley groundwater basin
48 (NDWR 2010a). The basin-fill aquifer in Garnet Valley consists of unconfined Quaternary-age

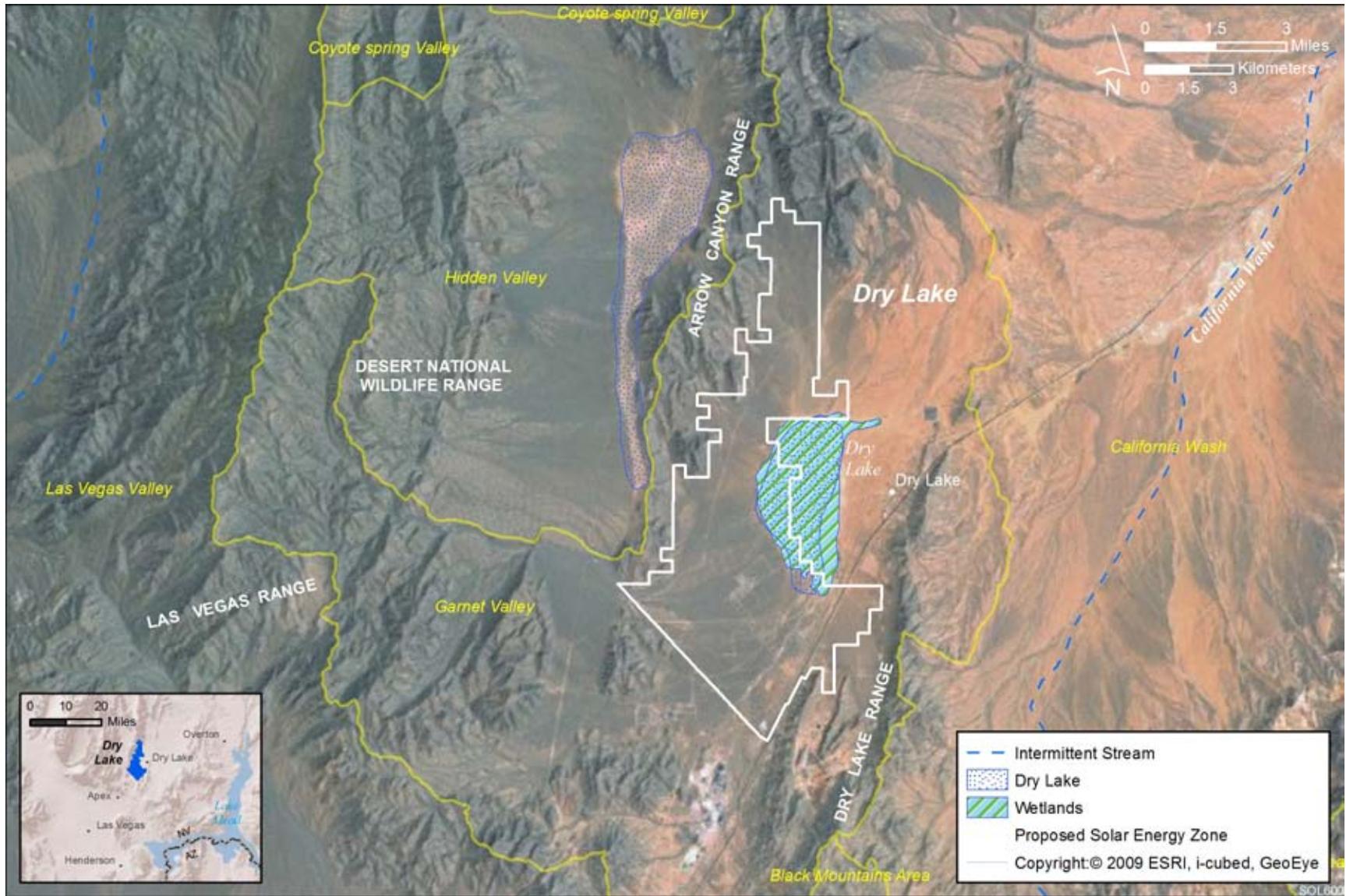


FIGURE 11.3.9.1-1 Surface Water Features near the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

1 alluvium and lacustrine deposits of moderately well-sorted sand, silt, and clay. The younger
2 alluvium is underlain by the Muddy Creek Formation consisting of gypsum and Pleistocene-age
3 poorly sorted, semi-consolidated alluvium (Rush 1968). Alluvium thickness has been found to be
4 between 900 and 1,500 ft (274 and 457 m) in the center of the basin, but likely averages around
5 600 ft (183 m) (Rush 1968). Thickness of suitable aquifer basin-fill materials was found to be
6 between 50 and 200 ft (15 and 61 m) in the basin (Rush 1968). Transmissivity values have not
7 been reported for the alluvium in the basin, but are estimated to be low, in general, with areas of
8 coarser and more well-sorted materials being more conductive (Rush 1968).

9
10 Paleozoic carbonate rocks underlie the alluvium in the Garnet Valley basin and are
11 present in the mountain ranges on the basin margins (Rush 1968; Burbey 1997). The Paleozoic
12 carbonate rocks that underlay Garnet Valley basin are thought to be a part of the White River
13 Groundwater Flow System, a regional-scale carbonate-rock aquifer that flows generally toward
14 the south and terminates at Muddy River Springs and the Virgin River. The White River
15 Groundwater Flow System is a part of a large carbonate-rock province that occurs within
16 approximately one-third of Nevada, a large portion of Utah, and parts of Arizona and California
17 (Harrill and Prudic 1998). Connectivity of the carbonate-rock aquifer system in Nevada is
18 difficult to assess, due to the complex geologic history of compression and extensional forces
19 that the rocks were subjected to long after they were deposited (Burbey 1997). Garnet Valley and
20 the Hidden Valley basin to the north are studied together because of their similar properties and
21 connectivity. Approximately 17,000 ft (5,200 m) of carbonate rocks were measured during
22 exploratory drilling of the Arrow Canyon mountain range, which is thought to be one of the
23 thickest sequences of carbonate rocks in southern Nevada (Burbey 1997). Connectivity of the
24 carbonate rock systems in the Garnet Valley (and the adjacent Hidden Valley) basin with the rest
25 of White River Groundwater Flow System is unclear. Fault systems to the east and west may
26 impede groundwater flow between Garnet Valley and Las Vegas Valley to the west and
27 California Wash basin to the east. However, the Garnet Valley/Hidden Valley groundwater
28 system is thought to be connected to the Coyote Spring Valley basin to the north, as the isotopic
29 characteristics of the water in Garnet Valley are similar to those of the White River Groundwater
30 Flow System (Burbey 1997).

31
32 Groundwater discharge through evapotranspiration was estimated to be nonexistent in the
33 Garnet Valley aquifer system (DeMeo et al. 2008). Groundwater recharge from precipitation on
34 the valley floor and the surrounding mountains was estimated to be 400 ac-ft/yr (490,000 m³/yr)
35 (Rush 1968). Groundwater inflows from neighboring basins were estimated at 400 ac-ft/yr
36 (490,000 m³/yr) from the Hidden Valley groundwater basin, adjacent to the north/west
37 (Rush 1968). Groundwater is estimated to discharge from the basin to the west into the
38 California Wash groundwater basin at a rate of 800 ac-ft/yr (990,000 m³/yr) (Rush 1968).
39 Estimates of interbasin flows were estimated based on the amount of recharge received in the
40 upstream basin, Hidden Valley, and in Garnet Valley to formulate the numbers presented in the
41 report by Rush (1968).

42
43 Groundwater flows through the basin from the west to the east, through fractured
44 carbonate rocks; however, the groundwater gradient is very flat (Rush 1968; Burbey 1997).
45 Groundwater elevations were approximately 1,810 to 1,815 ft (552 to 553 m) in the year
46 2000, and were recorded at between 230 and 760 ft (70 and 230 m) below ground surface

1 (USGS 2010d). Water depths in some areas of the basin declined approximately 20 ft (6 m)
2 between the 1950s and 1980s.

3
4 Groundwater quality in the Garnet Valley basin has been measured (one sample in each
5 of four wells) and reported to the NWIS database (USGS 2010d). Concentrations of total
6 dissolved solids (TDS) have been measured at between 950 and 1,010 mg/L, which is above
7 the secondary MCL of 500 mg/L recommended by the EPA (2009d). Sulfate concentrations
8 have been measured at between 330 to 370 mg/L, which is higher than secondary MCL. Iron,
9 fluoride, and manganese concentrations also exceeded secondary MCLs in one well. The only
10 well sampled for Radon-222 had a concentration of 530 pCi/L, which exceeds the primary MCL
11 for alpha-emitting radioactive constituents of 15 pCi/L.

12 13 14 ***11.3.9.1.3 Water Use and Water Rights Management***

15
16 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Clark County were
17 680,000 ac-ft/yr (839 million m³/yr), of which 83% came from surface waters and 17% came
18 from groundwater. The largest water use category was public supply, at 526,000 ac-ft/yr
19 (649 million m³/yr). Thermoelectric water use accounted for 28,000 ac-ft/yr (34 million m³/yr),
20 with irrigation water use on the order of 17,000 ac-ft/yr (21 million m³/yr) (Kenny et al. 2009).
21 Municipal water use for the Las Vegas Valley Water District is listed as the primary water use
22 (64%); other uses include industrial (20%), mining and milling (8%), quasi-municipal (5%),
23 domestic (1%), and commercial (<1%) (NDWR 2010a; SNWA 2009).

24
25 All waters in Nevada are the property of the public in the State of Nevada and subject
26 to the laws described in Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapters 532 through 538 (available at
27 <http://leg.state.nv.us/nrs>). The NDWR, led by the State Engineer, is the agency responsible for
28 managing both surface water and groundwater resources, which includes overseeing water right
29 applications, appropriations, and interbasin transfers (NDWR 2010c). The two principle ideas
30 behind water rights in Nevada are the prior appropriations doctrine and the concept of beneficial
31 use. A water right establishes an appropriation amount and date such that more senior water
32 rights have priority over newer water rights. In addition, water rights are treated as both real and
33 personal property, such that water rights can be transferred without affecting the land ownership
34 (NDWR 2010c). Water rights applications (new or transfer of existing) are approved if the water
35 is available to be appropriated, if existing water rights will not be affected, and if the proposed
36 use is not deemed to be harmful to the public interest. If these conditions are satisfied according
37 to the State Engineer, proof of beneficial use of the approved water must be provided within a
38 certain time period, and following that a certificate of appropriation is issued (BLM 2001).

39
40 The NDWR has the authority to designate preferred uses of groundwater in a basin,
41 overriding the prior appropriation doctrine (BLM 2001). The NDWR generally does not grant
42 water rights in a basin that is over-appropriated. However, in basins that may have alternative
43 sources of water, groundwater rights can be temporarily granted in excess of the estimated
44 recharge of the basin. For example, basins that may have access to Colorado River water in the
45 future may be temporarily granted use of groundwater. Those permits may then be revoked at

1 a later date when water becomes available from the Colorado River (BLM 2001). Interbasin
2 transfers of water are possible within Nevada and are regulated by the NDWR (NDWR 2010c).

3
4 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located in the Garnett Valley groundwater basin
5 (NDWR 2010a). The NDWR estimates the perennial yield for each groundwater basin as the
6 amount of water that can be economically withdrawn for an indefinite period without depleting
7 the source (NDWR 1999). The perennial yield for Garnett Valley was estimated to be
8 400 ac-ft/yr (490,000 m³/yr) according to the study by Rush (1968) (NDWR 2010a). The
9 Garnett Valley groundwater basin is over-appropriated with up to approximately 3,400 ac-ft/yr
10 (4.2 million m³/yr) committed for beneficial uses in Garnet Valley. However, groundwater
11 withdrawals ranged from 797 to 1,558 ac-ft/yr (980,000 to 1.9 million m³/yr) between 2001 and
12 2009, primarily for mining and industrial uses (NDWR 2010a,b). The Southern Nevada Water
13 Authority (SNWA 2009) stated that the Las Vegas Valley Water District has leased the majority
14 of their 2,200 ac-ft/yr (2.7 million m³/yr) of groundwater rights in Garnet Valley to dry-cooled
15 power plants in the area.

16
17 In 1990, Garnet Valley was designated as a groundwater basin by the State Engineer,
18 and the preferred uses of groundwater were specified to exclude irrigation and to include the
19 following uses: municipal, quasi-municipal, industrial, commercial, mining, stockwater, and
20 wildlife purposes (NDWR 1990). In 2002, the State Engineer issued Order 1169 stating that
21 new applications for water in the carbonate-rock aquifer systems within Garnet Valley would
22 be suspended to allow further study of the system (NDWR 2002). An additional 44,500 ac-ft/yr
23 (55 million m³/yr) of water rights have been applied for within the basin and are under
24 consideration by the NDWR (NDWR 2010b). These water rights applications are currently
25 being held in abeyance per NDWR Order 1169 (NDWR 2002).

26 27 28 **11.3.9.2 Impacts**

29
30 Potential impacts on water resources related to utility-scale solar energy development
31 include direct and indirect impacts on surface waters and groundwater. Direct impacts occur at
32 the place of origin and at the time of the proposed activity, while indirect impacts occur away
33 from the place of origin or later in time. Impacts on water resources considered in this analysis
34 are the result of land disturbance activities (construction, final developed site plan, and off-site
35 activities such as road and transmission line construction) and water use requirements for solar
36 energy technologies that take place during the four project phases: site characterization,
37 construction, operations, and decommissioning/reclamation. Both land disturbance and
38 consumptive water use activities can affect groundwater and surface water flows, cause
39 drawdown of groundwater surface elevations, modify natural drainage pathways, obstruct natural
40 recharge zones, and alter surface water–wetland–groundwater connectivity. Water quality can
41 also be degraded through the generation of wastewater, chemical spills, increased erosion and
42 sedimentation, and increased salinity (e.g., by the excessive withdrawal from aquifers).

1 ***11.3.9.2.1 Land Disturbance Impacts on Water Resources***
2

3 Impacts related to land disturbance activities are common to all utility-scale solar
4 energy developments, which are described in more detail for the four phases of development in
5 Section 5.9.1; these impacts will be minimized through the implementation of programmatic
6 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Land disturbance activities should be
7 avoided to the extent possible in the vicinity of the dry lake, 100-year flood plain, and ephemeral
8 wash areas within the SEZ. The area of the 100-year floodplain totals 1,569 acres (6.3 km²) of
9 the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Alterations to these systems could enhance erosion processes,
10 disrupt groundwater recharge, and negatively affect plant and animal habitats associated with the
11 ephemeral channels and the dry lake.
12

13
14 ***11.3.9.2.2 Water Use Requirements for Solar Energy Technologies***
15

16
17 **Analysis Assumptions**
18

19 A detailed description of the water use assumptions for the four utility-scale solar energy
20 technologies (parabolic trough, power tower, dish engine, and PV systems) is presented in
21 Appendix M. Assumptions regarding water use calculations specific to the proposed Dry Lake
22 SEZ include the following:
23

- 24 • On the basis of a total area of 15,649 acres (63 km²), it is assumed that two
25 solar projects would be constructed during the peak construction year;
26
- 27 • Water needed for making concrete would come from an off-site source;
28
- 29 • The maximum land disturbance for an individual solar facility during the peak
30 construction year is 3,000 acres (12 km²);
31
- 32 • Assumptions on individual facility size and land requirements (Appendix M),
33 along with the assumed number of projects and maximum allowable land
34 disturbance, result in the potential to disturb up to 38% of the SEZ total area
35 during the peak construction year; and
36
- 37 • Water use requirements for hybrid cooling systems are assumed to be on the
38 same order of magnitude as those using dry cooling (see Section 5.9.2.1).
39

40
41 **Site Characterization**
42

43 During site characterization, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust and
44 for providing the workforce potable water supply. Impacts on water resources during this phase
45 of development are expected to be negligible, since activities would be limited in area, extent,
46 and duration; water needs could be met by trucking water in from an off-site source.
47

1 **Construction**

2
3 During construction, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust and for
4 providing the workforce potable water supply. Because there are no significant surface water
5 bodies on the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, the water requirements for construction activities could
6 be met by either trucking water to the sites or by using on-site groundwater resources.
7

8 Water requirements for dust suppression and potable water supply during construction
9 are shown in Table 11.3.9.2-1 and could be as high as 3,480 ac-ft (4.3 million m³) in the peak
10 construction year. The assumptions underlying these estimates for each solar energy technology
11 are described in Appendix M. Groundwater wells would have to yield up to an estimated
12 2,160 gpm (8,200 L/min) to meet the estimated construction water requirements. These yields
13 are on the order of a large-scale municipal or agricultural well, so multiple wells may be needed
14 in order to obtain the water requirements (Harter 2003). In addition, up to 148 ac-ft (180,000 m³)
15 of sanitary wastewater generated on-site would need to be either treated on-site or sent to an off-
16 site facility. The availability of groundwater, groundwater rights, and the impacts of groundwater
17 withdrawal would need to be assessed during the site characterization phase of a solar
18 development project. Obtaining water from an offsite source could be necessary for solar
19 development projects.
20

21 Groundwater quality in the vicinity of the SEZ is known to have elevated concentrations
22 of TDS and other constituents. If groundwater were to be used for potable supply during
23 construction, it would need to be tested to verify the quality would comply with drinking water
24 standards.
25
26

**TABLE 11.3.9.2-1 Estimated Water Requirements during the Peak Construction Year
for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ**

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Water use requirements ^a				
Fugitive dust control (ac-ft) ^{b,c}	2,260	3,390	3,390	3,390
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft)	148	90	37	19
Total water use requirements (ac-ft)	2,408	3,480	3,428	3,409
Wastewater generated				
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft)	148	90	37	19

^a Assumptions of water use for fugitive dust control, potable supply for workforce, and wastewater generation are presented in Table M.9-1 (Appendix M).

^b Fugitive dust control estimation assumes a local pan evaporation rate of 99 in./yr (251 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010a).

^c To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

27
28

1 **Operations**

2

3 During operations, water would be required for mirror/panel washing, the workforce

4 potable water supply, and cooling (parabolic trough and power tower only) (Table 11.3.9.2-2).

5 Water needs for cooling are a function of the type of cooling used (dry, hybrid, wet). Further

6 refinements to water requirements for cooling would result from the percentage of time the

7 option was employed (30 to 60% range assumed) and the power of the system. The differences

8 between the water requirements reported in Table 11.3.9.2-2 for the parabolic trough and power

9 tower technologies are attributable to the assumptions of acreage per megawatt. As a result, the

10 water usage for the more energy-dense parabolic trough technology is estimated to be almost

11 twice as large as that for the power tower technology.

12

13

TABLE 11.3.9.2-2 Estimated Water Requirements during Operations at the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Full build-out capacity (MW) ^{a,b}	2,504	1,391	1,391	1,391
Water use requirements				
Mirror/panel washing (ac-ft/yr) ^{c,d}	1,252	696	697	70
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft/yr)	35	16	16	1.6
Dry cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	501–2,504	278–1,391	NA ^f	NA
Wet cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	11,267–36,306	6,260–20,170	NA	NA
Total water use requirements				
Non-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	NA	NA	711	71
Dry-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	1,788–3,791	989–2,102	NA	NA
Wet-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	12,554–37,593	6,971–20,881	NA	NA
Wastewater generated				
Blowdown (ac-ft/yr) ^g	711	395	NA	NA
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft/yr)	35	16	16	1.6

^a Land area for parabolic trough was estimated at 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW); land area for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies was estimated at 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW).

^b Water needs are linearly related to power. Water usage for any other size project can be estimated by using multipliers provided in Table M.9-2 (Appendix M).

^c Value assumes a usage rate of 0.5 ac-ft/yr/MW for mirror washing for parabolic trough, power tower, and dish engine technologies and a rate of 0.05 ac-ft/yr/MW for panel washing for PV systems.

^d To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

^e Dry-cooling value assumes 0.2 to 1.0 ac-ft/yr per MW and wet-cooling value assumes 4.5 to 14.5 ac-ft/yr per MW (range in these values represents 30 and 60% operating times) (DOE 2009).

^f NA = not applicable.

^g Value scaled from 250-MW Beacon Solar project with an annual discharge of 44 gpm (167 L/min) (AECOM 2009). Blowdown estimates are relevant to wet cooling only.

1 At full build-out capacity, water needs for mirror/panel washing are estimated to range
2 from 70 to 1,252 ac-ft/yr (86,000 to 1.5 million m³/yr) and the workforce potable water supply
3 from 1.6 to 35 ac-ft/yr (2,000 to 43,000 m³/yr). The maximum total water usage during normal
4 operation at full build-out capacity would be greatest for those technologies using the wet-
5 cooling option and is estimated to be as high as 37,593 ac-ft/yr (46 million m³/yr). Water usage
6 for dry-cooling systems would be as high as 3,791 ac-ft/yr (4.7 million m³/yr), approximately
7 a factor of 10 times less than the wet-cooling option. Non-cooled technologies, dish engine
8 and PV systems, require substantially less water at full build-out capacity, up to 711 ac-ft/yr
9 (880,000 m³/yr) for dish engine systems and 71 ac-ft/yr (86,000 m³/yr) for PV systems
10 (Table 11.3.9.2-2). Operations would produce up to 35 ac-ft/yr (43,000 m³/yr) of sanitary
11 wastewater; in addition, for wet-cooled technologies, 395 to 711 ac-ft/yr (490,000 to
12 880,000 m³/yr) of cooling system blowdown water would need to be treated either on- or
13 off-site. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure that treatment ponds
14 were effectively lined in order to prevent any groundwater contamination.
15

16 Groundwater is the primary water resource available for solar energy development at the
17 proposed Dry Lake SEZ. However, obtaining water from an off-site source could be necessary
18 for solar development projects. At the level of full build-out, parabolic trough technologies that
19 use wet cooling would use 32 to 94 times the amount of water of the estimated perennial yield of
20 the Garnett Valley groundwater basin. Water use for technologies that use dry cooling would
21 also exceed the perennial yield of the basin. If groundwater withdrawals exceeded the sustainable
22 yield of the basin, then groundwater levels would decline in the basin, potentially leading to
23 permanent loss of groundwater storage, land surface subsidence, and reduced inflows to the
24 California Wash basin, which is within the Colorado River Basin watershed. Groundwater level
25 declines could also affect flow in the White River Groundwater Flow System and impact
26 groundwater discharge to the Muddy River Springs or the Virgin River. Groundwater may be
27 available within the carbonate aquifer, but further study is needed to determine the connectivity
28 of the system within Nevada and the potential impacts from large-scale groundwater
29 withdrawals. Further, both new and current applications for groundwater rights are being held in
30 abeyance per NDWR Order 1169. Also, 44,500 ac-ft/yr (55 million m³/yr) of water rights that
31 have been applied for within the basin and would be considered by the NDWR first before any
32 applications for new water rights or transfer of existing water rights would be considered. Based
33 on the information presented here, wet cooling and dry cooling for the full build-out scenario is
34 not deemed feasible for the Dry Lake SEZ. To the extent possible, solar development projects
35 should implement water conservation practices to limit water needs.
36

37 Groundwater quality in the vicinity of the SEZ is known to have elevated concentrations
38 of TDS and other constituents. If groundwater were to be used for potable supply during
39 construction, it would need to be tested to verify the quality would comply with drinking water
40 standards.
41

42 **Decommissioning/Reclamation**

44 During decommissioning/reclamation, all surface structures associated with the solar
45 project would be dismantled, and the site reclaimed to its pre-construction state. Activities and
46

1 water needs during this phase would be similar to those during the construction phase (dust
2 suppression and potable supply for workers) and may also include water to establish vegetation
3 in some areas. However, the total volume of water needed is expected to be less. Because
4 quantities of water needed during the decommissioning/reclamation phase would be less than
5 those for construction, impacts on surface and groundwater resources also would be less.
6
7

8 ***11.3.9.2.3 Off-Site Impacts: Roads and Transmission Lines***

9

10 Impacts associated with the construction of roads and transmission lines primarily deal
11 with water use demands for construction, water quality concerns relating to potential chemical
12 spills, and land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology. The extent of the impacts on
13 water resources would be proportional to the amount and location of land disturbance needed
14 to connect the proposed SEZ to major roads and existing transmission lines. The proposed
15 Dry Lake SEZ is located adjacent to existing roads and transmission lines as described in
16 Section 11.3.1.2, so it is assumed that impacts would be negligible.
17
18

19 ***11.3.9.2.4 Summary of Impacts on Water Resources***

20

21 The impacts on water resources associated with developing solar energy at the proposed
22 Dry Lake SEZ are associated with land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology, water
23 quality concerns, and water use requirements for the various solar energy technologies. Land
24 disturbance activities can cause localized erosion and sedimentation issues, as well as altering
25 groundwater recharge and discharge processes. Land disturbance activities should be avoided
26 to the extent possible in the vicinity of the dry lake, 100-year flood plain, and ephemeral wash
27 areas within the SEZ. Alterations to these systems could enhance erosion processes, disrupt
28 groundwater recharge, and negatively affect plant and animal habitats associated with the
29 ephemeral channels and the dry lake.
30

31 Impacts relating to water use requirements vary depending on the type of solar
32 technology built and, for technologies using cooling systems, the type of cooling (wet, dry, or
33 hybrid) used. Groundwater is the primary water resource available to solar energy facilities in
34 the proposed Dry Lake SEZ; however, aquifer characteristics and the basin's sustainable yield
35 are not fully quantified. The estimates of groundwater recharge, discharge, underflow from
36 adjacent basins, and historical data on groundwater extractions and groundwater surface
37 elevations suggest that there may not be groundwater available to support the water-intensive
38 technologies, such as those using wet or dry cooling. The basin's perennial yield is listed as
39 400 ac-ft/yr (490,000 m³/yr), and current withdrawals from the basin are almost four times
40 that estimated perennial yield (NDWR 2010a; NDWR 2010b). The estimate of basin's perennial
41 yield for Garnet Valley is based on a report done in 1968, and does not include the yield of the
42 carbonate aquifer beneath the basin fill in Garnet Valley. The quantity of water potentially
43 available within the carbonate-rock aquifer is not well understood, and is currently being studied.
44

45 Currently, all applications for new water rights are on hold pending studies on the
46 carbonate-rock aquifer system, per NDWR Order 1169. Water rights currently allocated by the

1 NDWR within the basin are over 8 times the estimated perennial yield of the basin-fill aquifer
2 (NDWR 2010a). In addition, water rights applications are pending for another 44,500 ac-ft/yr
3 (55 million m³/yr) in water allocations from the basin. Obtaining new water rights or transfer
4 of existing water rights within the Garnet Valley basin could present challenges for solar
5 development. Given the information presented here, wet cooling and dry cooling for the full
6 build-out scenario is not deemed feasible for the Dry Lake SEZ. To the extent possible, solar
7 development projects should implement water conservation practices to limit water needs.
8

9 Groundwater quality in the vicinity of the SEZ is known to have elevated concentrations
10 of TDS and other constituents. If groundwater were to be used for potable supply during
11 construction, it would need to be tested to verify the quality would comply with drinking water
12 standards.
13
14

15 **11.3.9.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness** 16

17 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
18 as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, will mitigate some impacts on water resources.
19 Programmatic design features would focus on coordinating with federal, state, and local agencies
20 that regulate the use of water resources to meet the requirements of permits and approvals
21 needed to obtain water for development, and conducting hydrological studies to characterize the
22 aquifer from which groundwater would be obtained (including drawdown effects, if a new point
23 of diversion is created). The greatest consideration for mitigating water impacts would be in the
24 selection of solar technologies. The mitigation of impacts would be best achieved by selecting
25 technologies with low water demands.
26

27 Proposed design features specific to the Dry Lake SEZ include the following:
28

- 29 • Wet-cooling and dry-cooling options would not be feasible unless further
30 hydrologic study of the basin reveals that more water is available, and other
31 technologies should incorporate water conservation measures;
32
- 33 • Land-disturbance activities should avoid impacts to the extent possible in the
34 vicinity of the ephemeral washes and the dry lake present on the site;
35
- 36 • Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid areas
37 identified as being within a 100-year floodplain, which totals 1,569 acres
38 (6.3 km²) of the proposed SEZ.
39
- 40 • Groundwater rights must be obtained from the NDWR;
41
- 42 • Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards
43 developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
44 (NDEP 2010);
45

1
2
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8

- Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in accordance with state standards (NDWR 2006); and
- Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water quality standards in accordance with the *Nevada Administrative Code* (445A.453-445A.455).

1 **11.3.10 Vegetation**
2

3 This section addresses vegetation that could occur or is known to occur within the
4 potentially affected area of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. The affected area considered in this
5 assessment includes the areas of direct and indirect effects. The area of direct effects was defined
6 as the area that would be physically modified during project development (i.e., where ground-
7 disturbing activities would occur) and includes only the SEZ. The area of indirect effects was
8 defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary where ground-disturbing activities
9 would not occur but that could be indirectly affected by activities in the area of direct effects.
10

11 Indirect effects considered in the assessment include effects from surface runoff, dust,
12 and accidental spills from the SEZ but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential
13 degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. This area of
14 indirect effects was identified on the basis of professional judgment and was considered
15 sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be subject to indirect effects. The
16 affected area is the area bounded by the areas of direct and indirect effects. These areas are
17 defined and the impact assessment approach is described in Appendix M.
18
19

20 **11.3.10.1 Affected Environment**
21

22 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located primarily within the Creosotebush–Dominated
23 Basins Level IV ecoregion (EPA 2007), which includes stream terraces, floodplains, alluvial
24 fans, and eroded washes, as well as isolated hills, mesas, and buttes (Bryce et al. 2003). Plant
25 communities are characterized by sparse creosotebush (*Larrea tridentata*), white bursage
26 (*Ambrosia dumosa*), and big galleta grass (*Pleuraphis rigida*); cacti, yucca (*Yucca* sp.), ephedra
27 (*Ephedra* sp.), and Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) are also common, although
28 barren areas occur. In addition, mesquite (*Prosopis* sp.) and acacia (*Acacia* sp.) are present, and
29 blackbrush (*Coleogyne ramosissima*) is common in areas near the Arid Footslopes ecoregion.
30 Riparian habitats include desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*), coyote willow (*Salix exigua*), and
31 mesquite, with salt cedar (*Tamarix* sp.), a non-native shrub/tree invading riparian areas. Small
32 areas of the northwestern margin of the SEZ are located in the Arid Footslopes Level IV
33 ecoregion. This ecoregion supports a diverse but sparse mixture of Mojave desert forbs,
34 succulents and shrubs, such as creosotebush, white bursage, *Yucca* species, including Joshua
35 tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), spiny menodora (*Menodora*
36 *spinescens*), Nevada ephedra (*Ephedra nevadensis*), big galleta, Indian ricegrass, and
37 annual fescue (*Vulpia myuros*) on alluvial fans, basalt flows, hills, and low mountains
38 (Bryce et al. 2003). Cacti, such as silver cholla (*Cylindropuntia echinocarpa*) and beavertail
39 (*Opuntia basilaris*), occur in rocky areas. Annual plants are abundant with sufficient winter
40 precipitation. The east-central portion of the SEZ is located within the Mojave Playas Level IV
41 ecoregion, which includes broad, nearly level alluvial flats, muddy lake plains, low terraces, sand
42 sheets, and sand dunes (Bryce et al. 2003). These playas are intermittently flooded and mostly
43 barren, with sparse, scattered, highly salt-tolerant vegetation on the margins. Velvet ash
44 (*Fraxinus velutina*), mesquite or other trees may occur on some playas with sufficient moisture.
45 Scattered creosotebush occurs in some locations. Areas surrounding the SEZ include the
46 Creosotebush–Dominated Basins and Arid Footslopes ecoregions.
47

1 These ecoregions are located within the Mojave Basin and Range Level III ecoregion
2 (see Appendix I). This ecoregion is characterized by broad basins and scattered mountains.
3 Communities of sparse, scattered shrubs and grasses including creosotebush, white bursage,
4 and big galleta grass occur in basins; Joshua tree, other *Yucca* species, and cacti occur on arid
5 footslopes; woodland and shrubland communities occur on mountain slopes, ridges, and hills
6 (Bryce et al. 2003). Creosotebush, all-scale (*Atriplex polycarpa*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*),
7 desert holly (*Atriplex hymenelytra*), white burrobrush (*Hymenoclea salsola*), shadscale (*Atriplex*
8 *confertifolia*), blackbrush, and Joshua tree are dominant species within the Mojave desertscrub
9 biome (Turner 1994). Precipitation in the Mojave Desert occurs primarily in winter. Many
10 ephemeral species (winter annuals) germinate in response to winter rains (Turner 1994). Annual
11 precipitation in the vicinity of the SEZ is low, averaging about 6.5 in. (16.4 cm) at Valley of Fire
12 State Park (see Section 11.3.13).

13
14 Land cover types described and mapped under the SWReGAP (USGS 2005a) were used
15 to evaluate plant communities in and near the SEZ. Each cover type encompasses a range of
16 similar plant communities. Land cover types occurring within the potentially affected area of the
17 proposed Dry Lake SEZ are shown in Figure 11.3.10.1-1. Table 11.3.10.1-1 lists the surface area
18 of each cover type within the potentially affected area.

19
20 Sonora-Mojave Creosote-White Bursage Desert Scrub is the predominant cover type
21 within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Additional cover types within the SEZ are given in
22 Table 11.3.10.1-1. During an August 2009 visit to the site, creosotebush and white bursage were
23 the dominant species observed in the desert scrub communities throughout most of the SEZ, with
24 scattered Mojave yucca (*Yucca schidigera*) in some areas. A large dry lake playa in the central
25 area of the SEZ was mostly barren, with saltbush (*Atriplex* sp.) along the perimeter. Thickets of
26 honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) occurred in swales near the playa. Cacti observed on the
27 SEZ included teddybear cholla (*Cylindropuntia bigelovii*) and beavertail. Sensitive habitats on
28 the SEZ include desert chenopod scrub/mixed salt desert scrub, desert dry washes, dry wash
29 woodland, wetland, and playa. The area has a history of livestock grazing, and the plant
30 communities on the SEZ have likely been affected by grazing.

31
32 The area of indirect effects, including the area within 5 mi (8 km) around the SEZ,
33 includes 12 cover types, which are listed in Table 11.3.10.1-1. The predominant cover type in
34 the area of indirect effects is Sonora-Mojave Creosote-White Bursage Desert Scrub.

35
36 One wetland mapped by the NWI is located within the central portion of the SEZ
37 (USFWS 2009a) (Figure 11.3.10.1-2). NWI maps are produced from high-altitude imagery and
38 are subject to uncertainties inherent in image interpretation (USFWS 2009a). This large sparsely
39 vegetated lacustrine wetland, Dry Lake, is mapped primarily as North American Warm Desert
40 Pavement, with small areas of Sonora-Mojave Creosote-White Bursage Desert Scrub, Sonora-
41 Mojave Mixed Salt Desert Scrub, North American Warm Desert Playa, and North American
42 Warm Desert Wash. Approximately 1,022 acres (4.1 km²) of this 3,310.5-acre (13.4-km²)
43 wetland is located within the SEZ. The remaining portion is located entirely within the area
44 of indirect effects. Numerous dry washes occur within the SEZ, terminating in the large playa.
45 These washes do not support wetland habitats, but many support communities of mesquite and
46

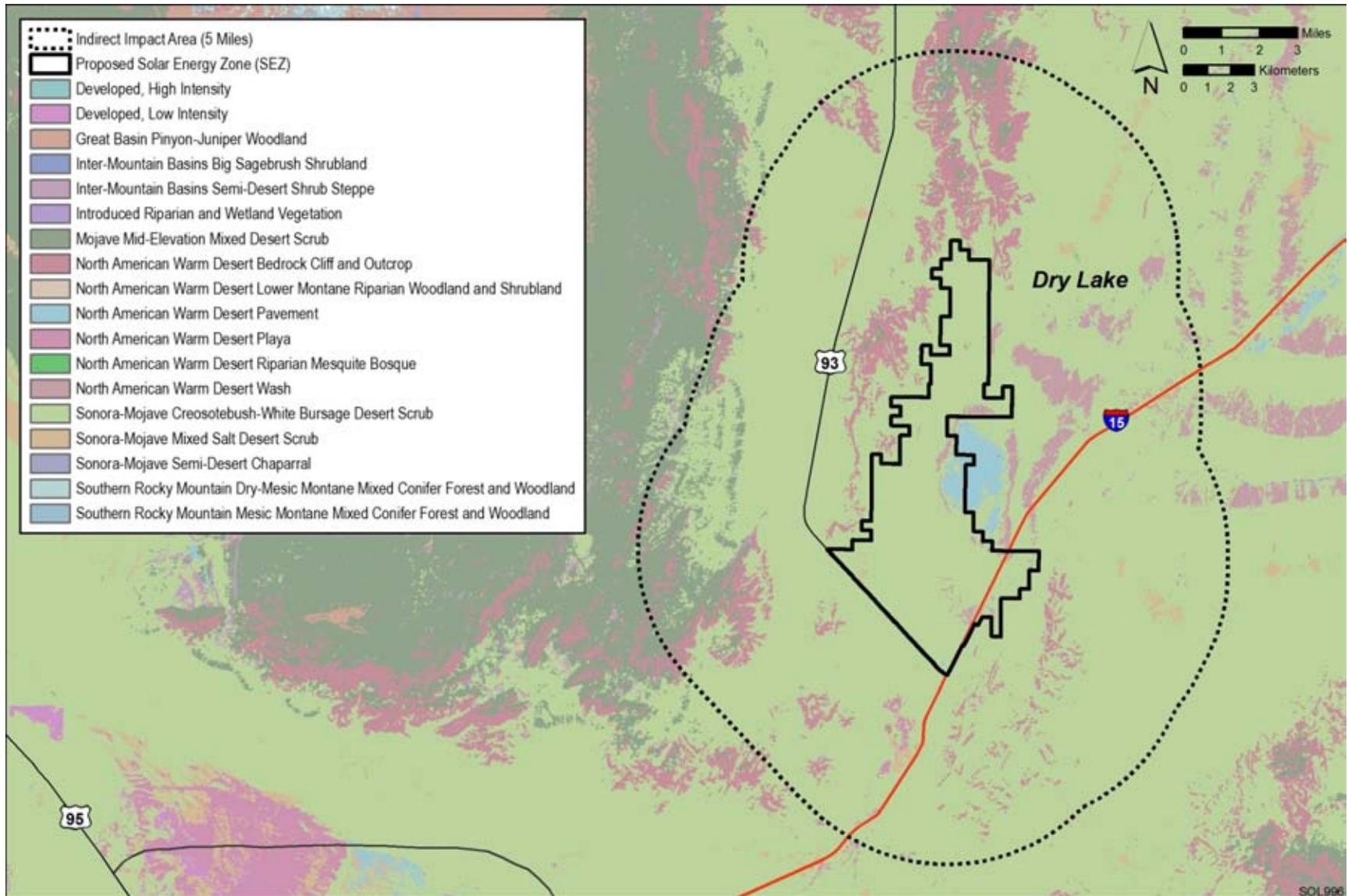


FIGURE 11.3.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (Source: USGS 2004)

TABLE 11.3.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Potentially Affected Area of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ and Potential Impacts

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Sonora-Mojave Creosotebush-White Bursage Desert Scrub: Occurs in broad valleys, lower bajadas, plains, and low hills in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts. Shrubs form a sparse to moderately dense cover (2 to 50%), although the ground surface may be mostly barren. The dominant species are typically creosotebush (<i>Larrea tridentata</i>) and white bursage (<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>). Other shrubs, dwarf-shrubs, and cacti may also be dominant or form sparse understories. Herbaceous species are typically sparse, but may be seasonally abundant.	14,613 acres ^f (0.5%, 1.0%)	118,001 acres (4.1%)	Small
North American Warm Desert Pavement: Consists of unvegetated to very sparsely vegetated (<2% plant cover) areas, usually in flat basins, with ground surfaces of fine to medium gravel coated with “desert varnish.” Desert scrub species are usually present. Herbaceous species may be abundant in response to seasonal precipitation.	430 acres (1.1%, 3.8%)	1,271 acres (3.1%)	Moderate
North American Warm Desert Wash: Consists of intermittently flooded linear or braided strips within desert scrub or grassland landscapes on bajadas, mesas, plains, and basin floors. Although often dry, washes are associated with rapid sheet and gully flow. The vegetation varies from sparse and patchy to moderately dense and typically occurs along the banks, but may occur within the channel. Shrubs and small trees are typically intermittent to open. Common upland shrubs often occur along the edges.	429 acres (0.7%, 1.0%)	3,419 acres (5.4%)	Small
Developed, Medium-High Intensity: Includes housing and commercial/industrial development. Impervious surfaces compose 50 to 100% of the total land cover.	128 acres (0.7%, 4.3%)	441 acres (2.3%)	Small
Sonora-Mojave Mixed Salt Desert Scrub: Extensive open-canopied shrublands in the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts, usually occurring around playas and in valley bottoms or basins with saline soils. Vegetation is typically composed of one or more <i>Atriplex</i> species; other salt-tolerant plants are often present or even co-dominant. Grasses occur at varying densities.	54 acres (0.1%, 0.3%)	1,064 acres (1.4%)	Small

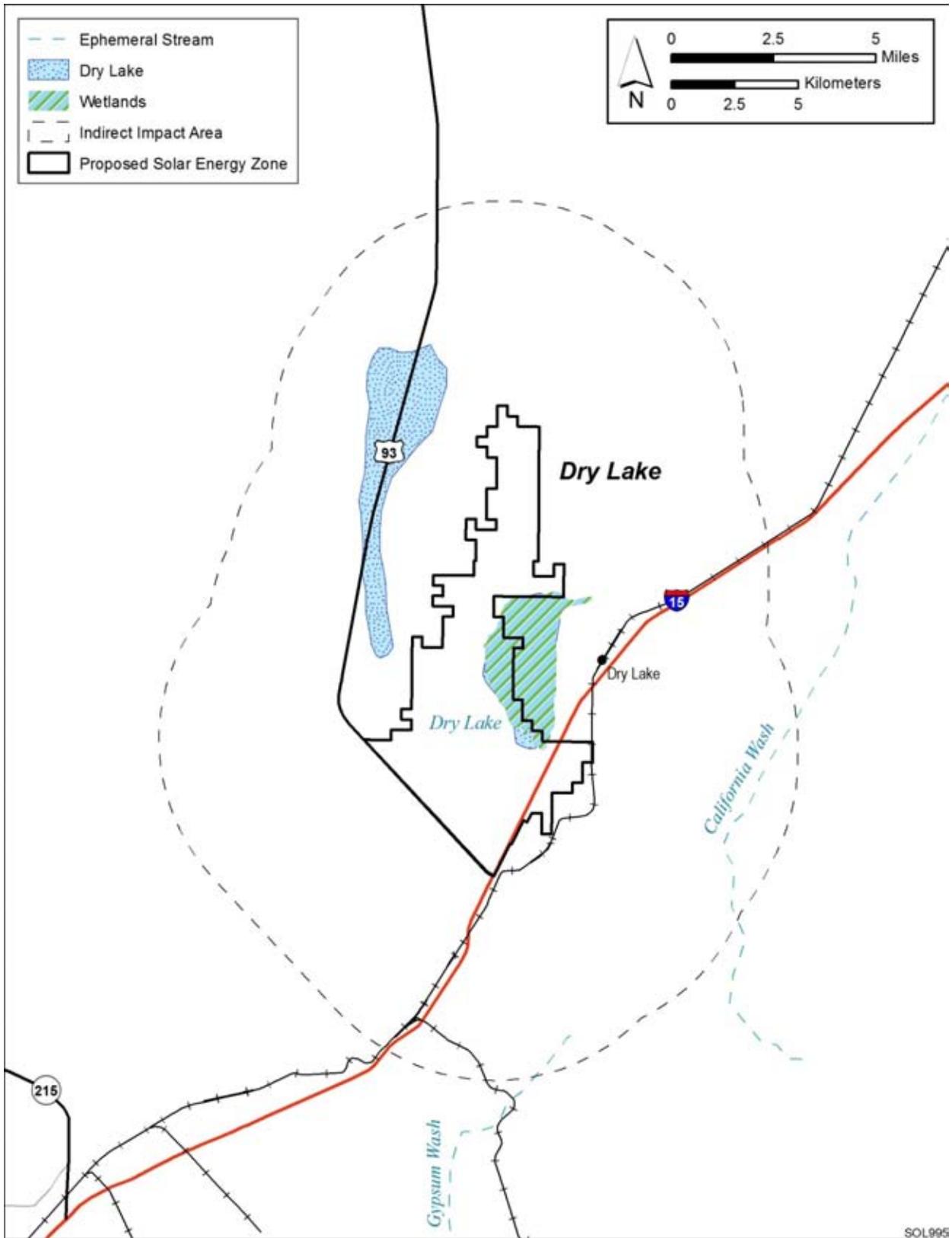
TABLE 11.3.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
North American Warm Desert Playa: Consists of barren and sparsely vegetated areas (generally <10% plant cover) that are intermittently flooded; salt crusts are common. Sparse shrubs occur around the margins, and patches of grass may form in depressions. In large playas, vegetation forms rings in response to salinity. Herbaceous species may be periodically abundant.	2 acres (<0.1%, <0.1%)	295 acres (0.5%)	Small
North American Warm Desert Bedrock Cliff and Outcrop: Occurs on subalpine to foothill steep cliff faces, narrow canyons, rock outcrops, and unstable scree and talus slopes. Consists of barren and sparsely vegetated areas (generally <10% plant cover) with desert species, especially succulents. Lichens are predominant in some areas.	0 acres	11,639 acres (3.5%)	Small
Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub: The vegetation composition is quite variable. Dominant species include shrubs forbs, and grasses and may include <i>Yucca</i> spp.	0 acres	6,309 acres (0.7%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe: Generally consists of perennial grasses with an open shrub and dwarf shrub layer.	0 acres	239 acres (0.5%)	Small
Introduced Riparian and Wetland Vegetation: Dominated by non-native riparian and wetland plant species.	0 acres	71 acres (0.5%)	Small
North American Warm Desert Riparian Mesquite Bosque: Occurs along perennial and intermittent streams as relatively dense riparian corridors composed of trees and shrubs. Honey mesquite (<i>Prosopis glandulosa</i>) and velvet mesquite (<i>P. velutina</i>) are the dominant trees. Vegetation is supported by groundwater when surface water is absent.	0 acres	7 acres (0.2%)	Small
Open Water: Plant or soil cover is generally less than 25%.	0 acres	1 acre (<0.1%)	Small

Footnotes on next page.

TABLE 11.3.10.1-1 (Cont.)

- a Land cover descriptions are from USGS (2005a). Full descriptions of land cover types, including plant species, can be found in Appendix I.
- b Area in acres, determined from USGS (2004).
- c Includes the area of the cover type within the SEZ, the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region (i.e., a 50-mi [80-km] radius from the center of the SEZ), and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type on BLM lands within the SEZ region. The SEZ region intersects portions of Nevada and Arizona. However, the SEZ and area of indirect effects occur only in Nevada.
- d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, and other factors from project facilities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. Includes the area of the cover type within the area of indirect effects and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region.
- e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and include (1) *small*: a relatively small proportion ($\leq 1\%$) of the cover type within the SEZ region would be lost; (2) *moderate*: an intermediate proportion (> 1 but $\leq 10\%$) of a cover type would be lost; (3) *large*: $> 10\%$ of a cover type would be lost.
- f To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.



1

2 **FIGURE 11.3.10.1-2 Wetlands within the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (Source: USFWS 2009a)**

1 other shrubs. The dry washes and playa typically contain water for short periods during or
 2 following precipitation events.

3
 4 Springs occur in the vicinity of the SEZ, including Moapa Warm Springs, northeast of the
 5 SEZ, and Corn Creek Spring, west of the SEZ (see Section 11.3.9). A large playa is located west
 6 of the SEZ in Hidden Valley, entirely within the area of indirect effects; this playa is separated
 7 from the SEZ by the Arrow Canyon Range.

8
 9 The State of Nevada maintains an official list of weed species designated as noxious.
 10 Table 11.3.10.1-2 provides a summary of the noxious weed species regulated in Nevada that are
 11 known to occur in Clark County (USDA 2010; Creech et al. 2010), which includes the proposed
 12 Dry Lake SEZ. Salt cedar (*Tamarix* sp.), included in Table 11.3.10.1-2, was observed on the SEZ
 13 in August 2009 near the edge of the playa. Mediterranean grass (*Schismus barbatus*), an invasive
 14 species observed to occur within much of the SEZ, is not included in this table.

15
 16 **TABLE 11.3.10.1-2 Designated Noxious Weeds of Nevada Occurring in Clark County**

Common Name	Scientific Name	Category
African/Sahara mustard ^{a,b}	<i>Brassica tournefortii</i>	B
African rue ^{a,b}	<i>Peganum harmala</i>	A
Camelthorn ^a	<i>Alhagi maurorum</i>	A
Canada thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	C
Crimson/Green fountaingrass ^a	<i>Pennisetum setaceum</i>	A
Diffuse knapweed ^a	<i>Centaurea diffusa</i>	B
Giant reed ^{a,b}	<i>Arundo donax</i>	A
Hoary cress ^a	<i>Cardaria draba</i>	C
Johnsongrass ^{a,b}	<i>Sorghum halepense</i>	C
Malta star thistle ^{a,b}	<i>Centaurea melitensis</i>	A
Mediterranean sage ^a	<i>Salvia aethiopsis</i>	A
Musk thistle	<i>Carduus nutans</i>	B
Perennial pepperweed ^a	<i>Lepidium latifolium</i>	C
Puncture vine ^{a,b}	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	C
Purple loosestrife ^a	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	A
Russian knapweed ^{a,b}	<i>Acroptilon repens</i>	B
Saltcedar ^{a,b}	<i>Tamarix</i> spp.	C
Scotch thistle ^{a,b}	<i>Onopordium acanthium</i>	B
Spotted knapweed ^a	<i>Centaurea maculosa/biebersteinii</i>	A
White horse-nettle/Silverleaf nightshade ^{a,b}	<i>Solanum elaeagnifolium</i>	B

^a Creech et al. (2010).

^b USDA (2010).

Source: NDA (2005).

1 The Nevada Department of Agriculture classifies noxious weeds into one of three
2 categories (NDA 2005):

- 3
- 4 • “Category A: Weeds not found or limited in distribution throughout the state;
5 actively excluded from the state and actively eradicated wherever found;
6 actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; control required by
7 the state in all infestations.”
- 8
- 9 • “Category B: Weeds established in scattered populations in some counties of
10 the state; actively excluded where possible, actively eradicated from nursery
11 stock dealer premises; control required by the state in areas where populations
12 are not well established or previously unknown to occur.”
- 13
- 14 • “Category C: Weeds currently established and generally widespread in many
15 counties of the state; actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises;
16 abatement at the discretion of the state quarantine officer.”
- 17
- 18

19 **11.3.10.2 Impacts**

20

21 The construction of solar energy facilities within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ would
22 result in direct impacts on plant communities due to the removal of vegetation within the facility
23 footprint during land-clearing and land-grading operations. Approximately 80% of the SEZ
24 (12,519 acres [50.7 km²]) would be expected to be cleared with full development of the SEZ.
25 The plant communities affected would depend on facility locations and could include any of
26 the communities occurring on the SEZ. Therefore, for this analysis, all the area of each cover
27 type within the SEZ is considered to be directly affected by removal with full development of
28 the SEZ.

29

30 Indirect effects (e.g., caused by surface runoff or dust from the SEZ) have the potential
31 to degrade affected plant communities and may reduce biodiversity by promoting the decline
32 or elimination of species sensitive to disturbance. Indirect effects can also cause an increase
33 in disturbance-tolerant species or invasive species. High impact levels could result in
34 the elimination of a community or the replacement of one community type by another. The
35 proper implementation of programmatic design features, however, would reduce indirect effects
36 to a minor or small level of impact.

37

38 Possible impacts from solar energy facilities on vegetation within the SEZ are described
39 in more detail in Section 5.10.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the
40 implementation of required design features described in Section A.2.2 of Appendix and from
41 any additional mitigation applied. Section 11.3.10.2.3, below, identifies design features of
42 particular relevance to the proposed Dry Lake SEZ.

1 **11.3.10.2.1 Impacts on Native Species**
2

3 The impacts of construction, operation, and decommissioning were considered small if
4 the impact affected a relatively small proportion ($\leq 1\%$) of the cover type in the SEZ region
5 (within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ); moderate (> 1 but $\leq 10\%$) if it could affect an
6 intermediate proportion of a cover type; and large if it could affect greater than 10% of a
7 cover type.
8

9 Solar facility construction and operation in the proposed Dry Lake SEZ would primarily
10 affect communities of the Sonora-Mojave Creosote-White Bursage Desert Scrub cover type.
11 Additional cover types that would be affected within the SEZ include North American Warm
12 Desert Pavement, North American Warm Desert Wash, Sonora-Mojave Mixed Salt Desert
13 Scrub, and North American Warm Desert Playa. Although the Developed, Medium-High
14 Intensity cover type occurs within the SEZ, these areas likely support few native plant
15 communities. Table 11.3.10.1-1 summarizes the potential impacts on land cover types resulting
16 from solar energy facilities in the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Many of these cover types are
17 relatively common in the SEZ region; however, North American Warm Desert Pavement is
18 relatively uncommon, representing 0.8% of the land area within the SEZ region. Desert
19 chenopod scrub/mixed salt desert scrub, desert dry washes, dry wash woodland, wetland, and
20 playa are important sensitive habitats on the SEZ.
21

22 The construction, operation, and decommissioning of solar projects within the proposed
23 Dry Lake SEZ would result in moderate impacts on the North American Warm Desert Pavement
24 cover type. Solar energy development would result in small impacts on all other cover types in
25 the affected area.
26

27 Because of the arid conditions, re-establishment of desert scrub communities in
28 temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult and might require extended periods of
29 time. In addition, noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize
30 adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in
31 widespread habitat degradation. Cryptogamic soil crusts occur in many of the shrubland
32 communities in the region and likely occur on the SEZ. Damage to these crusts, by the operation
33 of heavy equipment or other vehicles, can alter important soil characteristics, such as nutrient
34 cycling and availability, and affect plant community characteristics (Lovich and
35 Bainbridge 1999).
36

37 The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside
38 a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community
39 composition. Fugitive dust deposition could affect plant communities of each of the cover
40 types occurring within the indirect impact area identified in Table 11.3.10.1-1.
41

42 Communities associated with Dry Lake playa habitats or other intermittently flooded
43 areas within or downgradient from solar projects could be affected by ground-disturbing
44 activities. Surface drainage throughout the SEZ is directed toward Dry Lake playa. Site-clearing
45 and site-grading could disrupt surface water flow patterns, resulting in changes in the frequency,
46 duration, depth, or extent of inundation or soil saturation; could potentially alter playa plant

1 communities, including occurrences outside of the SEZ; and could affect community function.
2 Increases in surface runoff from a solar energy project site could also affect hydrologic
3 characteristics of these communities. The introduction of contaminants into these habitats could
4 result from spills of fuels or other materials used on a project site. Soil disturbance could result
5 in sedimentation in these areas, which could degrade or eliminate sensitive plant communities.
6 Grading could also affect desert dry wash habitats within the SEZ. Some desert dry washes in the
7 SEZ support communities of mesquite or other shrubs. Alteration of surface drainage patterns or
8 hydrology could adversely affect dry wash communities outside the SEZ. Vegetation within
9 these communities could be lost by erosion or desiccation.

10
11 Potential impacts on wetlands as a result of solar energy facility development are
12 described in Section 5.6.1. Approximately 1,022 acres (4.1 km²) of wetland habitat that has
13 been identified within the SEZ, associated with the Dry Lake playa, could be affected by project
14 development. Direct impacts on the wetland would occur if fill material were placed within the
15 playa for solar facility construction. Indirect impacts, as described above, could occur with
16 project construction near or upgradient from Dry Lake playa.

17
18 Although the use of groundwater within the Dry Lake SEZ for technologies with high
19 water requirements, such as wet-cooling systems, may be unlikely, groundwater withdrawals
20 for such systems could reduce groundwater elevations. Communities that depend on accessible
21 groundwater, such as mesquite communities, could become degraded or lost as a result of
22 lowered groundwater levels. The potential for impacts on springs in the vicinity of the SEZ, such
23 as Moapa Warm Springs or Corn Creek Springs, would need to be evaluated by project-specific
24 hydrological studies.

25 26 27 ***11.3.10.2.2 Impacts from Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plant Species***

28
29 On February 8, 1999, the President signed E.O. 13112, "Invasive Species," which directs
30 federal agencies to prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and
31 to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts of invasive species (*Federal*
32 *Register*, Volume 64, page 61836, Feb. 8, 1999). Potential impacts of noxious weeds and
33 invasive plant species resulting from solar energy facilities are described in Section 5.10.1.
34 Despite required design features to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, project disturbance
35 could potentially increase the prevalence of noxious weeds and invasive species in the affected
36 area of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, such that weeds could be transported into areas that were
37 previously relatively weed-free, which could result in reduced restoration success and possible
38 widespread habitat degradation. Invasive species, including salt cedar and Mediterranean grass,
39 occur within the SEZ. Additional species designated as noxious weeds in Nevada and known
40 to occur in Clark County are given in Table 11.3.10.1-2. Approximately 71 acres (0.3 km²) of
41 Introduced Riparian and Wetland Vegetation occurs within the area of indirect effects.

42
43 Past or present land uses may affect the susceptibility of plant communities to the
44 establishment of noxious weeds and invasive species. Existing roads, transmission lines, and
45 recreational OHV use within the SEZ area of potential impact would also likely contribute to
46 the susceptibility of plant communities to the establishment and spread of noxious weeds and

1 invasive species. Disturbed areas occur within the SEZ and may contribute to the establishment
2 of noxious weeds and invasive species. Approximately 128 acres (0.5 km²) of Developed,
3 Medium-High Intensity occurs within the SEZ and 441 acres (1.8 km²) in the area of indirect
4 effects.
5
6

7 **11.3.10.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

8

9 In addition to programmatic design features, SEZ-specific design features would reduce
10 the potential for impacts on plant communities. While specific practices are best established
11 when project details are considered, some SEZ-specific design features can be identified at this
12 time, as follows:
13

- 14 • An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species
15 control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan,
16 addressing habitat restoration, should be approved and implemented to
17 increase the potential for successful restoration of desert scrub and other
18 affected habitats, and minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species
19 such as salt cedar or Mediterranean grass. Invasive species control should
20 focus on biological and mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use
21 of herbicides.
22
- 23 • All dry wash, dry wash woodland, chenopod scrub, and playa communities
24 within the SEZ should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts
25 minimized and mitigated. Any yucca, cacti, or succulent plant species that
26 cannot be avoided should be salvaged. A buffer area should be maintained
27 around dry wash, dry wash woodland, playa, and wetland habitats to reduce
28 the potential for impacts.
29
- 30 • Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on dry
31 wash, dry wash woodland, wetland, and playa habitats, including downstream
32 occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation,
33 altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition. Appropriate
34 buffers and engineering controls would be determined through agency
35 consultation.
36
- 37 • Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect
38 impacts on groundwater-dependent communities, such as mesquite
39 communities. Potential impacts on springs should be determined through
40 hydrological studies.
41

42 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to other programmatic
43 design features, it is anticipated that a high potential for impacts from invasive species and
44 potential impacts on dry wash, dry wash woodland, chenopod scrub, mesquite bosque, riparian,
45 wetland, and playa, communities and springs would be reduced to a minimal potential for
46 impact.
47

1 **11.3.11 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota**
2

3 This section addresses wildlife (amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals) and aquatic
4 biota that could occur within the potentially affected area of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ.
5 Wildlife known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined
6 from SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were also determined
7 from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). The amount of aquatic habitat within the SEZ
8 region was determined by estimating the length of linear perennial stream and canal features and
9 the area of standing water body features (i.e., ponds, lakes, and reservoirs) within 50 mi (80 km)
10 of the SEZ using available GIS surface water datasets.

11
12 The affected area considered in this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect
13 effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified
14 during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur) within the
15 SEZ. The maximum developed area within the SEZ would be 12,519 acres (50.7 km²). No areas
16 of direct effect would occur for either a new transmission line or a new access road because
17 existing transmission line and road corridors are adjacent to or run through the SEZ.

18
19 The area of indirect effects was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ
20 boundary where ground-disturbing activities would not occur, but that could be indirectly
21 affected by activities in the area of direct effect (e.g., surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and
22 accidental spills in the SEZ). Areas of potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ that are
23 greater than the maximum of 12,519 acres (50.7 km²) of direct effect were also included as
24 part of the area of indirect effects. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with
25 increasing distance away from the SEZ. The area of indirect effect was identified on the basis
26 of professional judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area that would
27 potentially be subject to indirect effects. Areas of direct and indirect effect are defined and the
28 impact assessment approach is described in Appendix M.

29
30 The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is Sonora–Mojave
31 creosotebush–white bursage desert scrub (see Section 11.3.10). Potentially unique habitats in the
32 affected area include washes, playas, and bedrock cliff and rock outcrops (the bedrock and cliff
33 outcrops only occur within the area of indirect effects). A portion of Dry Lake occurs within the
34 SEZ, while the remainder of Dry Lake and an unnamed dry lake occur within the area of indirect
35 effects. Three ephemeral washes also occur within the SEZ (Section 11.3.9.1) Portions of
36 California Wash and Gypsum Wash occur within the area of indirect effects
37 (see Figure 11.3.10.1-2).

38
39
40 **11.3.11.1 Amphibians and Reptiles**

41
42
43 ***11.3.11.1.1 Affected Environment***
44

45 This section addresses amphibian and reptile species that are known to occur, or for
46 which potentially suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the

1 proposed Dry Lake SEZ. The list of amphibian and reptile species potentially present in the SEZ
2 area was determined from species lists available from the Nevada Natural Heritage Program
3 (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available from the California Wildlife
4 Habitat Relationships System (CDFG 2008) and SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types
5 suitable for each species were determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007).
6 See Appendix M for additional information on the approach used.

7
8 Based on species distributions within the area of the SEZ and habitat preferences of the
9 amphibian species, the Great Plains toad (*Bufo cognatus*) and red-spotted toad (*Bufo punctatus*)
10 would be expected to occur within the SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). Both toad species
11 would most likely occur in or near the dry lakes within the SEZ.

12
13 More than 25 reptile species occur within the area that encompasses the proposed Dry
14 Lake SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) is a federal and
15 state listed threatened species. This species is discussed in Section 11.3.12. Lizard species
16 expected to occur within the SEZ include the desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*),
17 Great Basin collared lizard (*Crotaphytus bicinctores*), long-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia*
18 *wislizenii*), side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus*
19 *occidentalis*), western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris*), and zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus*
20 *draconoides*). Snake species expected to occur within the SEZ are the coachwhip (*Masticophis*
21 *flagellum*), common kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula*), glossy snake (*Arizona elegans*),
22 gophersnake (*Pituophis catenifer*), groundsnake (*Sonora semiannulata*), long-nosed snake
23 (*Rhinocheilus lecontei*), and nightsnake (*Hypsiglena torquata*). The Mojave rattlesnake
24 (*Crotalus scutulatus*) and sidewinder (*Crotalus cerastes*) would be the most common poisonous
25 snake species expected to occur on the SEZ.

26
27 Table 11.3.11.1-1 provides habitat information for representative amphibian and reptile
28 species that could occur within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Special status amphibian and reptile
29 species are addressed in Section 11.3.12.

30 31 32 **11.3.11.1.2 Impacts**

33
34 The types of impacts that amphibians and reptiles could incur from construction,
35 operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in
36 Section 5.10.2.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of
37 required programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2 and through
38 any additional mitigation applied. Section 11.3.11.1.3, below, identifies SEZ-specific design
39 features of particular relevance to the proposed Dry Lake SEZ.

40
41 The assessment of impacts on amphibian and reptile species is based on available
42 information on the presence of species in the affected area, as presented in Section 11.3.11.1.1
43 following the analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and
44 coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific
45 impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional
46

TABLE 11.3.11.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Amphibian and Reptile Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Amphibians</i>				
Great Plains toad (<i>Bufo cognatus</i>)	Prairies and deserts. Often breeds in shallow temporary pools or quiet waters of streams, marshes, irrigation ditches, and flooded fields. About 4,005,500 acres ^g of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,529 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash and playa habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Red-spotted toad (<i>Bufo punctatus</i>)	Dry, rocky areas at lower elevations near desert springs and persistent pools along rocky arroyos, desert streams and oases, open grassland, scrubland oaks, and dry woodlands. About 4,116,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,529 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash and playa habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Lizards				
Desert horned lizard (<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>)	Deserts dominated by sagebrush, creosotebush, greasewood, or cactus. Occurs on sandy flats, alluvial fans, washes, and edge of dunes. Burrows in soil during periods of inactivity. About 4,453,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	144,976 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Great Basin collared lizard (<i>Crotaphytus bicinctores</i>)	Usually inhabits alluvia, lava flows, mountain slopes, canyons, buttes, rock outcrops, washes, and rocky plains. Limiting factors are presence of large boulders and open/sparse vegetation. About 4,300,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	142,979 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Long-nosed leopard lizard (<i>Gambelia wislizenii</i>)	Desert and semi-desert areas with scattered shrubs. Prefers sandy or gravelly flats and plains. Also prefers areas with abundant rodent burrows that they occupy when inactive. About 3,834,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,283 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Lizards (Cont.)				
Side-blotched lizard (<i>Uta stansburiana</i>)	Low to moderate elevations in washes, arroyos, boulder-strewn ravines, rocky cliff bases, and flat shrubby areas in canyon bottoms. Often along sandy washes. Usually in areas with a lot of bare ground. About 4,393,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	141,624 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western fence lizard (<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>)	Disturbed areas, roadsides, gravel beds, rock quarries, lava flows, outcrops, talus slopes, shrublands, riparian areas, and coniferous woodlands. About 3,641,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,914 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western whiptail (<i>Cnemidophorus tigris</i>)	Arid and semi-arid habitats with sparse plant cover. About 4,112,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	130,252 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Lizards (Cont.)				
Zebra-tailed lizard (<i>Callisaurus draconoides</i>)	Open, warm-desert habitats, especially dry washes and canyons with fine gravel and sand. About 4,004,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	133,119 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Snakes				
Coachwhip (<i>Masticophis flagellum</i>)	Creosotebush desert, shortgrass prairie, shrub-covered flats and hills. Sandy to rocky substrates. Avoids dense vegetation. About 3,478,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,727 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Common kingsnake (<i>Lampropeltis getula</i>)	Coniferous forests, woodlands, swampland, coastal marshes, river bottoms, farmlands, prairies, chaparral, and deserts. Uses rock outcrops and rodent burrows for cover. About 4,681,211 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	144,976 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Snakes (Cont.)				
Glossy snake (<i>Arizona elegans</i>)	Light shrubby to barren deserts, sagebrush flats, grasslands, and chaparral-covered slopes and woodlands. Prefers sandy grasslands, shrublands and woodlands. About 2,981,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,955 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Gophersnake (<i>Pituophis catenifer</i>)	Plains grasslands, sandhills, riparian areas, marshes, edges of ponds and lakes, rocky canyons, semi-desert and mountain shrublands, montane woodlands, rural and suburban areas, and agricultural areas. Likely inhabits pocket gopher burrows in winter. About 4,335,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,994 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Groundsnake (<i>Sonora semiannulata</i>)	Arid and semi-arid regions with rocky to sandy soils. River bottoms, desert flats, sand hummocks, and rocky hillsides. About 4,031,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,413 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Snakes (Cont.)				
Mojave rattlesnake (<i>Crotalus scutulatus</i>)	Mostly upland desert and lower mountain slopes. Barren desert, grassland, open juniper woodland, and scrubland; especially common in areas of scattered scrubby growth such as creosote and mesquite. About 5,017,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	145,616 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Nightsnake (<i>Hypsiglena torquata</i>)	Arid and semi-arid desert flats, plains, and woodlands; areas with rocky and sandy soils are preferred. During cold periods of the year, seeks refuge underground, in crevices, or under rocks. About 3,471,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,727 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Sidewinder (<i>Crotalus cerastes</i>)	Windblown sand habitats near rodent burrows. Most common in areas of sand hummocks topped with creosote, mesquite, or other desert plants. About 3,749,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,167 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.3.11.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 12,519 acres of direct effect within the SEZ was assumed.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 12,519 acres of direct effect was also added to the area of indirect effect. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- ^e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: $>1\%$ but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^f Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^g To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 required actions to avoid or mitigate impacts on amphibians and reptiles
2 (see Section 11.3.11.1.3).

3
4 In general, impacts on amphibians and reptiles would result from habitat disturbance
5 (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration) and from disturbance, injury, or mortality
6 to individual amphibians and reptiles. On the basis of the magnitude of impacts on representative
7 amphibians and reptiles summarized in Table 11.3.11.1-1, direct impacts on amphibian and
8 reptile species would be small for all species as 0.2 to 0.4% of potentially suitable habitats
9 identified for the species in the SEZ region would be lost. Larger areas of potentially suitable
10 habitats for the amphibian and reptile species occur within the area of potential indirect effects
11 (e.g., up to 4.2% of available habitat for the glossy snake). Other impacts on amphibians and
12 reptiles could result from surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust
13 generated by project activities, accidental spills, collection, and harassment. These indirect
14 impacts are expected to be negligible with implementation of programmatic design features.

15
16 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
17 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
18 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
19 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
20 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
21 particular importance for amphibian and reptile species would be the restoration of original
22 ground surface contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with semiarid
23 shrublands.

24 25 26 ***11.3.11.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

27
28 The successful implementation of programmatic design features presented in Appendix
29 A, Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on amphibians and reptiles, especially
30 for those species that utilize habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., washes and playas). Indirect
31 impacts could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic design features,
32 especially those engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive
33 dust. While SEZ-specific design features are best established when considering specific project
34 details, one design feature can be identified at this time:

- 35
36 • Dry lakes and wash habitats should be avoided.

37
38 If this SEZ-specific design feature is implemented in addition to the programmatic design
39 features, impacts on amphibian and reptile species could be reduced. However, because
40 potentially suitable habitats for all of the representative amphibian and reptile species occur
41 throughout the SEZ, additional species-specific mitigation of direct effects for those species
42 would be difficult or infeasible.

1 **11.3.11.2 Birds**

2
3
4 **11.3.11.2.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section addresses bird species that are known to occur, or for which potentially
7 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ.
8 The list of bird species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined from the Nevada
9 Natural Heritage Program (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available
10 from the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CDFG 2008) and SWReGAP
11 (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from SWReGAP
12 (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See Appendix M for additional information on the approach used.
13

14 Twelve bird species that could occur
15 on or in the affected area of the SEZ are
16 considered focal species in the *Desert Bird*
17 *Conservation Plan* (CalPIF 2009): ash-throated
18 flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), black-
19 tailed gnatcatcher (*Polioptila melanura*), black-
20 throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*),
21 burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), common
22 raven (*Corvus corax*), Costa’s hummingbird (*Calypte costae*), crissal thrasher (*Toxostoma*
23 *crissale*), ladder-backed woodpecker (*Picoides scalaris*), Le Conte’s thrasher (*Toxostoma*
24 *lecontei*), Lucy’s warbler (*Vermivora luciae*), phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*), and verdin
25 (*Auriparus flaviceps*). Habitats for most of these species are described in Table 11.3.11.2-1.
26 Because of their special species status, the burrowing owl and phainopepla are discussed in
27 Section 11.3.12.1.
28
29

<p style="text-align: center;">Desert Focal Bird Species</p> <p>Bird species whose requirements define spatial attributes, habitat characteristics, and management regimes representative of a healthy desert system (Chase and Geupel 2005)</p>

30 **Waterfowl, Wading Birds, and Shorebirds**

31
32 As discussed in Section 4.10.2.2.2, waterfowl (ducks, geese, and swans), wading birds
33 (herons and cranes), and shorebirds (avocets, gulls, plovers, rails, sandpipers, stilts, and terns) are
34 among the most abundant groups of birds in the six-state solar study area. However, within the
35 proposed Dry Lake SEZ, waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebird species would be mostly absent
36 to uncommon. Playa and wash habitats within the SEZ may attract shorebird species, but
37 Lake Mead, Muddy River, and larger named washes and dry lakes within 50 mi (80 km) of the
38 SEZ would provide more viable habitat for this group of birds. The killdeer (*Charadrius*
39 *vociferus*) is the shorebird species most likely to occur within the SEZ.
40
41

42 **Neotropical Migrants**

43
44 As discussed in Section 4.10.2.2.3, neotropical migrants represent the most diverse
45 category of birds within the six-state solar energy study area. Species expected to occur within
46

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Bird Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Shorebirds				
Killdeer (<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>)	Open areas such as fields, meadows, lawns, mudflats, and shores. Nests on ground in open dry or gravelly locations. About 302,000 acres ^g of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	132 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.04% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	733 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.2% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoidance of playa and wash habitats. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Neotropical Migrants				
Ash-throated flycatcher (<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>)	Common in scrub and woodland habitats including desert riparian and desert washes. Requires hole/cavity for nesting. Uses shrubs or small trees for foraging perches. About 4,143,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,129 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Bewick's wren (<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>)	Generally associated with dense, brushy habitats. Breeding occurs in brushy areas of open woodlands and other open habitats. It is a cavity nester with nests constructed in small enclosed areas such as tree cavities, nesting boxes, rock crevices, or the center of a brush pile. About 3,640,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	135,644 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Black-tailed gnatcatcher (<i>Polioptila melanura</i>)	Nests in bushes, mainly in wooded desert washes with dense mesquite, palo verde, ironwood, and acacia. Also occurs in desert scrub habitat. About 2,937,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,787 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.2% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Black-throated sparrow (<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>)	Chaparral and desert scrub habitats with sparse to open stands of shrubs. Often in areas with scattered Joshua trees. Nests in thorny shrubs or cactus. About 4,075,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,868 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Brewer's sparrow (<i>Spizella breweri</i>)	Prefers to nest in sagebrush, but also nests in other shrubs and cactus. During migration and winter, it occurs in low, arid vegetation, desert scrub, sagebrush, and creosotebush. About 3,805,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,861 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)				
Cactus wren (<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>)	Desert (especially areas with cholla cactus or yucca), mesquite, arid scrub, coastal sage scrub, and trees in towns in arid regions. Nests in <i>Opuntia</i> spp.; twiggy, thorny trees and shrubs; and sometimes in buildings. Nests may be used as winter roost. About 1,311,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	426 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.03% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	21,328 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.6% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation also provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Common poorwill (<i>Phalaenoptilus nutallii</i>)	Scrubby and brushy areas, prairie, desert, rocky canyons, open woodlands, and broken forests. Mostly in arid and semi-arid habitats. Nests in open areas on a bare site. About 3,568,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	136,443 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation also provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)				
Common raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	Occurs in most habitats. Trees and cliffs provide cover. Roosts primarily in trees. Nests on cliffs, bluffs, tall trees, or human-made structures. Forages in sparse, open terrain. About 4,319,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	128,098 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Costa's hummingbird (<i>Calypte costae</i>)	Desert and semi-desert areas, arid brushy foothills, and chaparral. Main habitats are desert washes, edges of desert riparian and valley foothill riparian areas, coastal shrub, desert scrub, desert succulent shrub, lower-elevation chaparral, and palm oasis. Also in mountains, meadows, and gardens during migration and winter. Most common in canyons and washes when nesting. Nests are located in trees, shrubs, vines, or cacti. About 3,952,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,129 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Crissal thrasher (<i>Toxostoma crissale</i>)	Riparian woodlands and shrublands; creosotebush, mixed desert and thorn scrub; juniper woodland and savannah; and pinyon-juniper woodlands. About 83,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	426 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	3,491 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.2% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid desert wash habitats. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Greater roadrunner (<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>)	Desert scrub, chaparral, edges of cultivated lands, and arid open areas with scattered brush. Requires thickets, large bushes, or small trees for shade, refuge, and roosting. Usually nests low in trees, shrubs, or clumps of cactus. Rarely nests on ground. About 4,628,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	143,043 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)				
Horned lark (<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>)	Common to abundant resident in a variety of open habitats. Breeds in grasslands, sagebrush, semi-desert shrublands, and alpine tundra. During migration and winter, inhabits the same habitats other than tundra, and occurs in agricultural areas. Usually occurs where plant density is low and there are exposed soils. About 3,889,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,522 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Ladder-backed woodpecker (<i>Picooides scalaris</i>)	Variety of habitats including deserts, arid scrub, riparian woodlands, mesquite, scrub oak, pinyon-juniper woodlands. Digs nest hole in rotted stub or dead or dying branches of various trees. Also nests in saguaro, agave, yucca, fence posts, and utility poles. Nests on ledges; branches of trees, shrubs, and cactus; and holes in trees or walls. About 4,116,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,129 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)				
Le Conte's thrasher (<i>Toxostoma lecontei</i>)	Open desert wash, alkali desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats. Prefers to nest and forage in arroyos and washes lined with dense stands of creosotebush and salt bush. About 3,817,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	130,013 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Lesser nighthawk (<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>)	Open country, desert regions, scrub, savanna, and cultivated areas. Usually near water, including open marshes, salt ponds, large rivers, rice paddies, and beaches. Roosts on low perches or the ground. Nests in the open on bare sites. About 4,345,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	144,441 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)				
Loggerhead shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	Open country with scattered trees and shrubs, savanna, desert scrub, desert riparian, Joshua tree, and occasionally, open woodland habitats. Perches on poles, wires, or fence posts (suitable hunting perches are important aspect of habitat). Nests in shrubs and small trees. About 4,281,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,439 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Lucy's warbler (<i>Vermivora luciae</i>)	Breeding habitat includes deserts, mesquite along streams, and riparian woodlands. Nests in tree cavities, behind bark and in abandoned woodpecker holes or verdin nests. During migration and winter, it inhabits dry washes, riparian forests, and thorn forests. About 83,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	426 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	3,491 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)				
Northern mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	Parkland, cultivated lands, second-growth habitats, desert scrub, and riparian areas at low elevations. Forages on ground in short, grassy to nearly barren substrates. About 4,621,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	143,555 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Rock wren (<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>)	Arid and semiarid habitats. It breeds in areas with talus slopes, scrublands, or dry washes. Nests, constructed of plant materials, are located in rock crevices and the nest entrance is paved with small rocks and stones. About 4,687,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	143,564 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>				
Sage sparrow (<i>Amphispiza belli</i>)	Prefers shrubland, grassland, and desert habitats. The nest, constructed of twigs and grasses, is located either low in a shrub or on the ground. About 486,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	485 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	2,860 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Say's phoebe (<i>Sayornis saya</i>)	Arid open country, deserts, sagebrush plains, dry barren foothills, canyons, cliffs, ranches, and rural homes. Nests in cliff crevices, holes in banks, sheltered ledges, tree cavities, under bridges and roofs, and in mines. About 4,274,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	138,901 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)				
Verdin (<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>)	Desert riparian, desert wash, desert scrub, and alkali desert scrub areas with large shrubs and small trees. Nests in shrubs, small trees, or cactus. About 3,818,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	130,013 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Western kingbird (<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>)	Occurs in a variety of habitats including riparian forests and woodlands, savannahs, shrublands, agricultural lands, deserts, and urban areas. Nesting occurs in trees, bushes, and other raised areas, such as buildings. Migrates to Central America or the southeastern United States for the winter. About 3,941,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,982 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Birds of Prey				
American kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius</i>)	Occurs in most open habitats, in various shrub and early successional forest habitats, forest openings, and various ecotones. Perches on trees, snags, rocks, utility poles and wires, and fence posts. Uses cavities in trees, snags, rock areas, banks, and buildings for nesting and cover. About 1,817,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	184 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	19,662 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.
Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)	Grasslands, shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine forests. Occasionally in most other habitats, especially during migration and winter. Nests on cliffs and sometimes trees in rugged areas, with breeding birds ranging widely over surrounding areas. About 1,810,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	482 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.03% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	22,930 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
Great horned owl (<i>Bubo virginianus</i>)	Needs large abandoned bird nest or large cavity for nesting. Usually lives on forest edges and hunts in open areas. In desert areas, requires wooded cliff areas for nesting. About 5,026,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	145,051 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Long-eared owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)	Nests and roosts in dense vegetation and hunts in open areas (e.g., creosotebush–bursage flats, desert scrub, grasslands, and agricultural fields). About 4,126,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,494 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)				
Red-tailed hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	Wide variety of habitats from deserts, mountains, and populated valleys. Open areas with scattered, elevated perch sites such as scrub desert, plains and montane grassland, agricultural fields, pastures urban parklands, broken coniferous forests, and deciduous woodland. Nests on cliff ledges or in tall trees. About 1,161,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	54 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	7,598 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.
Turkey vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>)	Occurs in open stages of most habitats that provide adequate cliffs or large trees for nesting, roosting, and resting. Migrates and forages over most open habitats. Will roost communally in trees, exposed boulders, and occasionally transmission line support towers. About 4,422,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	138,979 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Upland Game Birds				
Chukar (<i>Alectoris chukar</i>)	Steep, semi-arid slopes with rocky outcrops and shrubs with a grass and forb understory. Sources of water are required during hot, dry periods, with most birds during the brooding period found within 0.25 mi (0.4 km) of water. About 4,129,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,522 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash and playa habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Upland Game Birds</i> (Cont.)				
Gambel's quail (<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>)	Deserts, especially in areas with brushy or thorny growth, and adjacent cultivated areas. Usually occurs near water. Nests on the ground under cover of small trees, shrubs, and grass tufts. About 4,319,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	143,057 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash and playa habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Mourning dove (<i>Zenaida macroura</i>)	Habitat generalist, occurring in grasslands, shrublands, croplands, lowland and foothill riparian forests, ponderosa pine forests, deserts, and urban and suburban areas. Rarely in aspen and other forests, coniferous woodlands, and alpine tundra. Nests on ground or in trees. Winters mostly in lowland riparian forests adjacent to cropland. About 4,355,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,304 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
White-winged dove (<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>)	Nests in low to medium height trees with dense foliage and fairly open ground cover. Feeds on wild seeds, grains and fruit. About 3,902,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Upland Game Birds</i> (Cont.)				
Wild turkey (<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>)	Lowland riparian forests, foothill shrubs, pinyon-juniper woodlands, foothill riparian forests, and agricultural areas. About 408,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	426 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	3,659 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid development within desert wash habitat to the extent practicable.

- ^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 12,519 acres of direct effect within the SEZ was assumed.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 12,519 acres of direct effect was also added to the area of indirect effect. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- ^e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: ≤1% of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1% but ≤10% of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: >10% of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^f Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^g To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 the proposed Dry Lake SEZ include the ash-throated flycatcher, Bewick's wren (*Thryomanes*
2 *bewickii*), black-tailed gnatcatcher, black-throated sparrow, Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*),
3 cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*), common poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*),
4 common raven, Costa's hummingbird, crissal thrasher, greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx*
5 *californianus*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), ladder-backed woodpecker, Le Conte's
6 thrasher, lesser nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*),
7 Lucy's warbler, northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), rock wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*),
8 sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*), Say's phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), verdin, and western kingbird
9 (*Tyrannus verticalis*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007).

12 **Birds of Prey**

14 Section 4.10.2.2.4 provided an overview of the birds of prey (raptors, owls, and vultures)
15 within the six-state solar study area. Species that could occur within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ
16 include the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), great horned
17 owl (*Bubo virginianus*), long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), and
18 turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007). Several special
19 status birds of prey species are discussed in Section 11.3.12.

22 **Upland Game Birds**

24 Section 4.10.2.2.5 provided an overview of the upland game birds (primarily pheasants,
25 grouse, quail, and doves) that occur within the six-state solar study area. Upland game species
26 that could occur within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ include the chukar (*Alectoris chukar*),
27 Gambel's quail (*Callipepla gambelii*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), white-winged dove
28 (*Zenaida asiatica*), and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002;
29 USGS 2007).

31 Table 11.3.11.2-1 provides habitat information for representative bird species that could
32 occur within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Special status bird species are discussed in
33 Section 11.3.12.

36 **11.3.11.2.2 Impacts**

38 The types of impacts birds could incur from construction, operation, and
39 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
40 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
41 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2 and through any additional mitigation applied.
42 Section 11.3.11.2.3, below, identifies design features of particular relevance to the proposed Dry
43 Lake SEZ.

45 The assessment of impacts on bird species is based on available information on the
46 presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.3.11.2.1, following the

1 analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination
2 with federal or state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts
3 more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions
4 to avoid or mitigate impacts on birds (see Section 11.3.11.2.3).

5
6 In general, impacts on birds would result from habitat disturbance (i.e., habitat reduction,
7 fragmentation, and alteration), and from disturbance, injury, or mortality to individual birds.
8 Table 11.3.11.2-1 summarizes the magnitude of potential impacts on representative bird species
9 resulting from solar energy development in the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Direct impacts on
10 representative bird species would be small, since SEZ development could cause the loss of less
11 than 0.01 to 0.5% of their potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ region. Larger areas of
12 potentially suitable habitat for bird species occur within the area of potential indirect effects
13 (e.g., up to 4.2% of potentially suitable habitat for the black-tailed gnatcatcher, crissal thrasher,
14 and Lucy's warbler). Other impacts on birds could result from collision with vehicles and
15 infrastructure (e.g., buildings and fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed
16 areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species,
17 accidental spills, and harassment. Indirect impacts on areas outside the SEZ (for example,
18 impacts caused by dust generation, erosion, and sedimentation) are expected to be negligible
19 with implementation of programmatic design features.

20
21 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
22 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
23 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
24 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
25 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
26 particular importance for bird species would be the restoration of original ground surface
27 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with semiarid shrublands.

30 ***11.3.11.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

31
32 The successful implementation of programmatic design features presented in Appendix
33 A, Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on birds, especially for those species
34 that depend on habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., wash and playa habitats). Indirect impacts
35 could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic design features, especially
36 those engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust.
37 While SEZ-specific design features important in reducing impacts on birds are best established
38 when considering specific project details, some design features can be identified at this time:

- 39
40 • The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding
41 between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds
42 will be followed.
- 43
44 • Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation
45 regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the

1 USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and
2 Golden Eagle Protection Act.

- 3
- 4 • Dry lakes and wash habitats should be avoided.
- 5

6 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to the programmatic
7 design features, impacts on bird species could be reduced. However, as potentially suitable
8 habitats for a number of the bird species occur throughout much of the SEZ, additional species-
9 specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.

10

11

12 **11.3.11.3 Mammals**

13

14

15 ***11.3.11.3.1 Affected Environment***

16

17 This section addresses mammal species that are known to occur, or for which potentially
18 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ.
19 The list of mammal species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined from the Nevada
20 Natural Heritage Program (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available
21 from the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CDFG 2008) and SWReGAP
22 (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from SWReGAP
23 (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See Appendix M for additional information on the approach used.

24

25 Over 55 species of mammals have ranges that encompass the area of the proposed Dry
26 Lake SEZ (NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007); however, suitable habitats for a number of these species
27 are limited or nonexistent within the SEZ (USGS 2007). Similarly to the overview of mammals
28 provided for the six-state solar energy study area (Section 4.10.2.3), the following discussion for
29 the SEZ emphasizes big game and other mammal species that (1) have key habitats within or
30 near the SEZ; (2) are important to humans (e.g., big game, small game, and furbearer species);
31 and/or (3) are representative of other species that share important habitats.

32

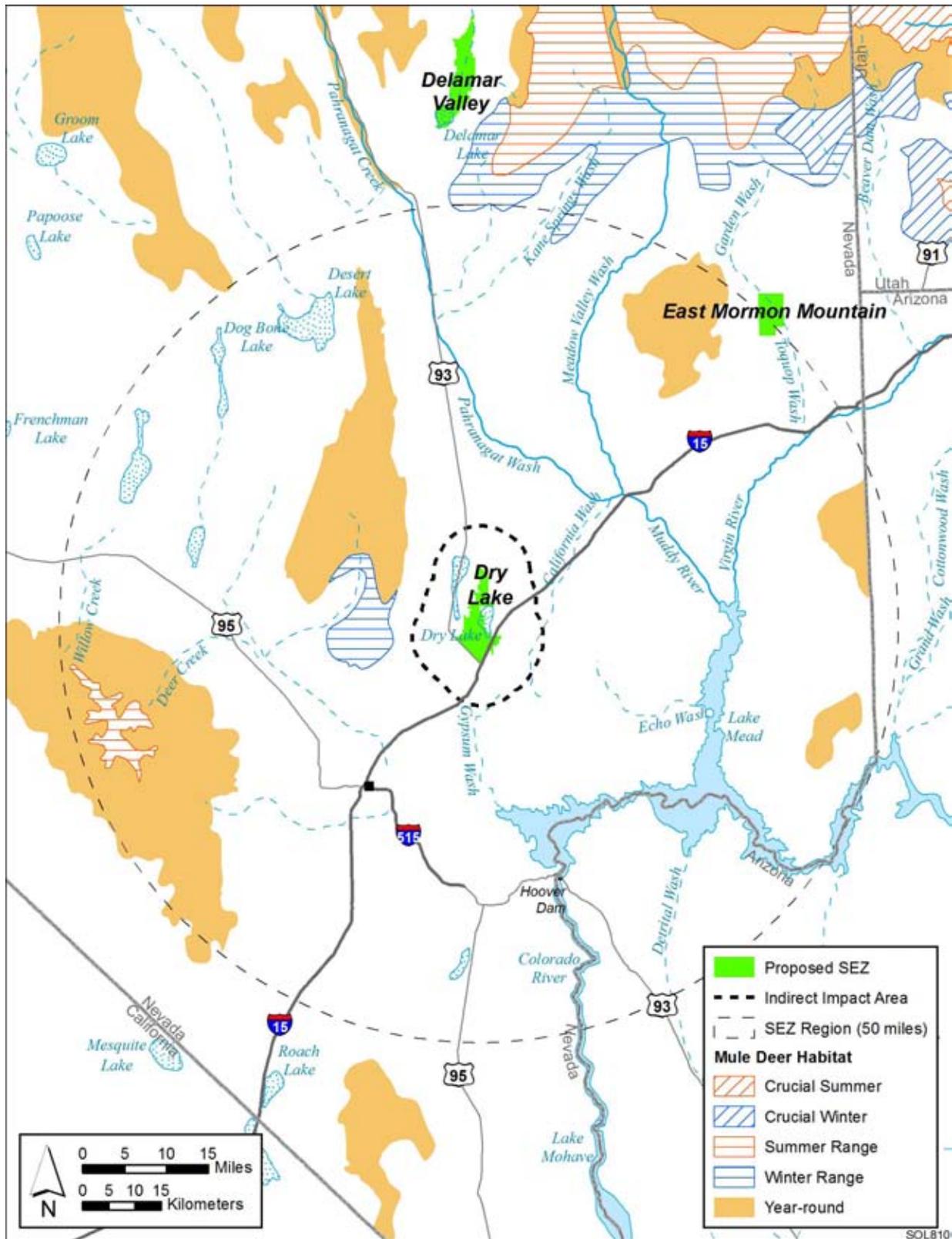
33

34 **Big Game**

35

36 The big game species that could occur within the vicinity of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ
37 include cougar (*Puma concolor*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), and Nelson's bighorn sheep
38 (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007). Due to its special species
39 status, Nelson's bighorn sheep is addressed in Section 11.3.12. Potentially suitable habitat for the
40 cougar and mule deer occur throughout most of the SEZ. Figure 11.3.11.3-1 shows the location
41 of the SEZ relative to mapped range of mule deer habitat.

42



1

2 **FIGURE 11.3.11.3-1 Location of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ Relative to the Mapped Range of**
 3 **Mule Deer (Source: NDOW 2010)**

1 **Other Mammals**
2

3 A number of small game and furbearer species occur within the area of the proposed Dry
4 Lake SEZ. Species that could occur within the area of the SEZ would include the American
5 badger (*Taxidea taxus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*),
6 coyote (*Canis latrans*, common), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), gray fox (*Urocyon*
7 *cinereoargenteus*), kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*), and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) (CDFG 2008;
8 NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007).
9

10 The nongame (small) mammals include rodents, bats, mice, and shrews. Representative
11 species for which potentially suitable habitat occurs within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ include
12 Botta’s pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), cactus mouse (*Peromyscus eremicus*), canyon mouse
13 (*P. crinitis*), deer mouse (*P. maniculatus*), desert kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys deserti*), desert shrew
14 (*Notiosorex crawfordi*), desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida*), little pocket mouse (*Perognathus*
15 *longimembris*), long-tailed pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus formosus*), Merriam’s pocket mouse
16 (*Dipodomys merriami*), northern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys leucogaster*), southern
17 grasshopper mouse (*O. torridus*), western harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*), and
18 white-tailed antelope squirrel (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002;
19 USGS 2007). Bat species that may occur within the area of the SEZ include the big brown bat
20 (*Eptesicus fuscus*), Brazilian free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*), California myotis (*Myotis*
21 *californicus*), hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), long-legged myotis (*M. volans*), silver-haired bat
22 (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), and western pipistrelle (*Parastrellus hesperus*) (CDFG 2008;
23 NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007). However, roost sites for the bat species (e.g., caves, hollow trees,
24 rock crevices, or buildings) would be limited to absent within the SEZ. Several other special
25 status bat species that could occur within the SEZ area are addressed in Section 11.3.12.1.
26

27 Table 11.3.11.3-1 provides habitat information for representative mammal species that
28 could occur within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Special status mammal species are discussed in
29 Section 11.3.12.
30

31
32 **11.3.11.3.2 Impacts**
33

34 The types of impacts mammals could incur from construction, operation, and
35 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
36 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
37 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any additional mitigation applied.
38 Section 11.3.11.3.3, below, identifies design features of particular relevance to mammals for the
39 proposed Dry Lake SEZ.
40

41 The assessment of impacts on mammal species is based on available information on the
42 presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.3.11.3.1 following the analysis
43 approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination with state
44 natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts more thoroughly.
45

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Mammal Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Big Game				
Cougar (<i>Puma concolor</i>)	Most common in rough, broken foothills and canyon country, often in association with montane forests, shrublands, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. About 4,545,800 acres ^g of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	139,147 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Mule deer (<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>)	Most habitats, including coniferous forests, desert shrub, chaparral, and grasslands with shrubs. Greatest densities in shrublands on rough, broken terrain that provides abundant browse and cover. About 4,124,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	130,619 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Small Game and Furbearers				
American badger (<i>Taxidea taxus</i>)	Open grasslands and deserts, meadows in subalpine and montane forests, alpine tundra. Digs burrows in friable soils. Most common in areas with abundant populations of ground squirrels, prairie dogs, and pocket gophers. About 4,119,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,413 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)</i>				
Black-tailed jackrabbit (<i>Lepus californicus</i>)	Open plains, fields, and deserts with scattered thickets or patches of shrubs. Also open, early stages of forests and chaparral habitats. Rests during the day in shallow depressions, and uses shrubs for cover. About 4,530,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	141,870 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Bobcat (<i>Lynx rufus</i>)	Most habitats other than subalpine coniferous forest and montane meadow grasslands. Most common in rocky country from deserts through ponderosa forests. About 4,284,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	130,252 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Coyote (<i>Canis latrans</i>)	All habitats at all elevations. Least common in dense coniferous forest. Where human control efforts occur, they are restricted to broken, rough country with abundant shrub cover and a good supply of rabbits or rodents. About 4,883,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	145,616 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)				
Desert cottontail (<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>)	Abundant to common in grasslands, open forests, and desert shrub habitats. Can occur in areas with minimal vegetation as long as adequate cover (e.g., rock piles, fallen logs, fence rows) is present. Thickets and patches of shrubs, vines, and brush also used as cover. About 3,299,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,955 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Gray fox (<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>)	Deserts, open forests, and brush. Prefers wooded areas, broken country, brushlands, and rocky areas. Tolerant of low levels of residential development. About 3,679,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	135,869 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Kit fox (<i>Vulpes macrotis</i>)	Desert and semi-desert areas with relatively open vegetative cover and soft soils. Seeks shelter in underground burrows. About 4,055,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,657 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)</i>				
Red fox (<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>)	Most common in open woodlands, pasturelands, riparian areas, and agricultural lands. About 3,228,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	120,116 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
<i>Nongame (small) Mammals</i>				
Big brown bat (<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>)	Most habitats from lowland deserts to timberline meadows. Roosts in hollow trees, rock crevices, mines, tunnels, and buildings. About 3,786,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,296 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Botta's pocket gopher (<i>Thomomys bottae</i>)	Variety of habitats including shortgrass plains, oak savanna, agricultural lands, and deserts. Burrows are more common in disturbed areas such as roadways and stream floodplains. About 3,056,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,948 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Brazilian free-tailed bat (<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>)	Cliffs, deserts, grasslands, old fields, savannas, shrublands, woodlands, and suburban/urban areas. Roosts in buildings, caves, and hollow trees. May roost in rock crevices, bridges, signs, or cliff swallow nests during migration. Large maternity colonies inhabit caves, buildings, culverts, and bridges. About 3,724,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	136,135 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Cactus mouse (<i>Peromyscus eremicus</i>)	Variety of areas including desert scrub, semi-desert chaparral, desert wash, semi-desert grassland, and cliff and canyon habitats. About 4,194,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,439 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
California myotis (<i>Myotis californicus</i>)	Desertscrub, semi-desert shrublands, lowland riparian, swamps, riparian suburban areas, plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, woodlands, and forests. Roosts in caves, mine tunnels, hollow trees, and loose rocks. About 3,370,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	135,573 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small) Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Canyon mouse (<i>Peromyscus crinitus</i>)	Associated with rocky substrates in a variety of habitats including desert scrub, sagebrush shrublands, woodlands, cliffs and canyons, and volcanic rock and cinder lands. Source of free water not required. About 3,889,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,283 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Deer mouse (<i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i>)	Tundra; alpine and subalpine grasslands; plains grasslands; open, sparsely vegetated deserts; warm temperate swamps and riparian forests; and Sonoran desert scrub habitats. About 4,456,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	138,024 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Desert kangaroo rat (<i>Dipodomys deserti</i>)	Most arid areas with deep sands such as stabilized sand dunes, sandy patches in salt desert scrub, and bottoms of desert washes. About 65,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	426 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.07% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	3,413 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats.

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Desert shrew (<i>Notiosorex crawfordi</i>)	Usually in arid areas with adequate cover such as semi-arid grasslands, shortgrass plains, desert scrub, chaparral slopes, shortgrass plains, oak savannas and woodlands, and alluvial fans. About 4,330,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	143,057 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Desert woodrat (<i>Neotoma lepida</i>)	Sagebrush scrub; chaparral; deserts and rocky slopes with scattered cactus, yucca, pine-juniper, or other low vegetation; creosotebush desert; Joshua tree woodlands; scrub oak woodlands, pinyon-juniper woodlands; and riparian zones. Most abundant in rocky areas with Joshua trees. Dens built of debris on ground, among cacti or yucca, along cliffs, among rocks, or occasionally in trees. About 4,620,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	144,680 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Hoary bat (<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>)	Chaparral, shortgrass plains, scrub-grassland, desertscrub, forests and woodlands. Usually roosts in trees, also in caves, rock crevices, and houses. About 3,659,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,367 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small) Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Little pocket mouse (<i>Perognathus longimembris</i>)	Mostly sandy and gravelly soils, but also stony soils and rarely rocky sites. About 3,962,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,361 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Long-legged myotis (<i>Myotis volans</i>)	Prefers pine forest, desert, and riparian habitats. Old buildings, rock crevices, and hollow trees used for daytime roosting and winter hibernation. It forages in open areas, such as forest clearings. About 3,768,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,727 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Long-tailed pocket mouse (<i>Chaetodipus formosus</i>)	Common in sagebrush, desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats with rocky or stony groundcover. About 4,163,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	142,502 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Merriam's kangaroo rat (<i>Dipodomys merriami</i>)	Plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, desertscrub, shortgrass plains, oak and juniper savannahs, mesquite dunes, and creosote flats. About 3,994,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	133,062 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Northern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys leucogaster</i>)	Occurs in grasslands, sagebrush deserts, overgrazed pastures, weedy roadside ditches, sand dunes, and other habitats with sandy soil and sparse vegetation. About 4,039,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,413 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Silver-haired bat (<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>)	Urban areas, chaparral, alpine and subalpine grasslands, forests, scrub-grassland, oak savannah and desertscrub habitats. Roosts under bark, in hollow trees, caves and mines. Forages over clearings and open water. About 3,793,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,296 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Southern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys torridus</i>)	Low, arid, shrub and semiscrub vegetation of deserts. About 3,952,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	131,432 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western harvest mouse (<i>Reithrodontomys megalotis</i>)	Various habitats including scrub-grasslands, temperate swamps and riparian forests, salt marshes, shortgrass plains, oak savannah, dry fields, agricultural areas, deserts, and desertscrub. Grasses are the preferred cover. About 2,181,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	117,980 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western pipistrelle (<i>Parastrellus hesperus</i>)	Deserts and lowlands, desert mountain ranges, desert scrub flats, and rocky canyons. Roosts mostly in rock crevices, sometimes mines and caves, and rarely in buildings. Suitable roosts occur in rocky canyons and cliffs. Most abundant bat in desert regions. About 3,403,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,296 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
White-tailed antelope squirrel (<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>)	Low deserts, semi-desert and montane shrublands, plateaus, and foothills in areas with sparse vegetation and hard gravelly surfaces. Spends nights and other periods of inactivity in underground burrows. About 4,221,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	141,863 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Yuma myotis (<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>)	Riparian areas, grasslands, semi-desert shrubland, mountain brush, woodlands, and deserts. It occurs where there is open water, regardless of the habitat. Roosts in caves, mines, cliffs, crevices, buildings, and swallow nests. About 3,543,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,519 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	132,101 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

- ^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 12,519 acres of direct effect within the SEZ was assumed.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 12,519 acres of direct effect was also added to the area of indirect effect. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.3.11.3-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: $>1\%$ but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^f Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^g To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions to avoid or
2 mitigate impacts on mammals (see Section 11.3.11.3.3).

3
4 Table 11.3.11.3-1 summarizes the magnitude of potential impacts on representative
5 mammal species resulting from solar energy development (with the inclusion of programmatic
6 design features) in the proposed Dry Lake SEZ.

7 8 9 **Cougar**

10
11 Up to 12,519 acres (50.7 km²) of potentially suitable cougar habitat could be lost by solar
12 energy development within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. This represents about 0.3% of
13 potentially suitable cougar habitat within the SEZ region. About 140,000 acres (567 km²) of
14 potentially suitable cougar habitat occurs within the area of indirect effect. Overall, impacts on
15 cougar from solar energy development in the SEZ would be small.

16 17 18 **Mule Deer**

19
20 Based on land cover analyses, up to 12,519 acres (50.7 km²) of potentially suitable mule
21 deer habitat could be lost by solar energy development within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. This
22 represents about 0.3% of potentially suitable mule deer habitat within the SEZ region. Over
23 130,000 acres (526 km²) of potentially suitable mule deer habitat occurs within the area of
24 indirect effect. Based on mapped mule deer ranges, the closest year-round range is about 8 mi
25 (13 km) from the SEZ; the closest winter range is about 7 mi (11 km) from the SEZ; and the
26 closest summer range is about 37 mi (60 km) from the SEZ (Figure 11.3.11.3-1). Therefore, solar
27 energy development within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ would not be expected to have direct or
28 indirect effects on the range of mule deer. Overall, impacts on mule deer from solar energy
29 development in the SEZ would be small.

30 31 32 **Other Mammals**

33
34 Direct impacts on other representative mammal species (i.e., small game, furbearers, and
35 small [nongame] mammals) would be small as 0.07 to 0.6% of their potentially suitable habitat
36 within the SEZ region would be lost. Larger areas of potentially suitable habitat for these species
37 occur within the area of potential indirect effects (i.e., up to 5.4% for the western harvest mouse).

38 39 40 **Summary**

41
42 Overall, direct impacts on mammal species would be small, as 0.6% or less of potentially
43 suitable habitats for the representative mammal species would be lost (Table 11.3.11.3-1). Larger
44 areas of potentially suitable habitat for mammal species occur within the area of potential
45 indirect effects (e.g., up to 5.4% of potentially suitable habitat for the western harvest mouse).
46 Other impacts on mammals could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure

1 (e.g., fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by
2 project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment.
3 Indirect impacts on areas outside the SEZ (for example, impacts caused by dust generation,
4 erosion, and sedimentation) would be negligible with implementation of programmatic design
5 features.

6
7 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
8 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
9 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
10 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
11 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
12 particular importance for mammal species would be the restoration of original ground surface
13 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with semiarid shrublands.

14 15 16 ***11.3.11.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

17
18 The implementation of programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section
19 A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on mammals. Indirect impacts could be reduced to
20 negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those engineering controls that
21 would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While SEZ-specific design features
22 important for reducing impacts on mammals are best established when considering project-
23 specific details, design features that can be identified at this time are:

- 24
25 • Fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free
26 movement of mammals, particularly big game species.
- 27
28 • Playa and wash habitats should be avoided.

29
30 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to other programmatic
31 design features, impacts on mammals could be reduced. Any residual impacts are anticipated to
32 be small given the relative abundance of potentially suitable habitats in the SEZ region.
33 However, potentially suitable habitats for a number of the mammal species occur throughout
34 much of the SEZ; therefore, species-specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would
35 be difficult or infeasible.

36 37 38 **11.3.11.4 Aquatic Biota**

39 40 41 ***11.3.11.4.1 Affected Environment***

42
43 This section addresses aquatic habitats and biota known to occur on the proposed
44 Dry Lake SEZ itself or within an area that could be affected, either directly or indirectly, by
45 activities associated with solar energy development within the SEZ. There are no perennial or
46 intermittent streams within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Although ephemeral washes may cross

1 the SEZ, these drainages only contain water following rainfall and typically do not support
2 wetland or riparian habitats. Approximately 981 acres (4 km²) of Dry Lake are located within the
3 SEZ along the eastern border. Dry Lake is the only water body present in the SEZ. Although it
4 rarely has standing water, temporary ponding may occur, especially after rainfall. Dry lakes and
5 associated wetlands in desert regions typically do not support aquatic habitat, but they may
6 contain aquatic biota adapted to desiccating conditions (Graham 2001). On the basis of
7 information from ephemeral pools in the American Southwest, ostracods (seed shrimp) and small
8 planktonic crustaceans (e.g., copepods or cladocerans) are expected to be present, and larger
9 branchiopod crustaceans such as fairy shrimp could occur (Graham 2001). Various types of
10 insects that have aquatic larval stages, such as dragonflies and a variety of midges and other flies,
11 may also occur depending on pool longevity, distance to permanent water features, and the
12 abundance of other invertebrates for prey (Graham 2001). However, more site-specific data is
13 needed to fully evaluate aquatic biota present in Dry Lake.
14

15 There are no perennial water bodies or stream features within the area of indirect effects.
16 There are 6,185 acres (25 km²) of dry lakes present in the area of indirect effects, along with
17 associated wetlands. Portions of two intermittent streams (California Wash and Gypsum Wash)
18 totaling 7 mi (11 km) are present within the area of indirect effects. California Wash carries
19 water into the Muddy River, a perennial stream containing federally endangered fish species
20 such as the Moapa dace (*Moapa coriacea*) and Virgin River chub (*Gila seminuda*). Gypsum
21 Wash drains water from upland areas into Lake Mead. Both streams are typically dry and are not
22 expected to contain permanent aquatic habitat or communities. However, such ephemeral or
23 intermittent stream reaches may contain a diverse seasonal community of fish and invertebrates,
24 with the latter potentially present in a dormant state even in dry periods (Levick et al. 2008).
25 More site-specific data is needed to fully evaluate aquatic biota present in California Wash and
26 Gypsum Wash.
27

28 Outside of the potential indirect effects area, but within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ, there
29 are 125,352 acres (507 km²) of permanent lake (Lake Mead), 10,798 acres (44 km²) of the
30 Colorado River, and 37,244 (151 km²) of dry lake. There are also several stream features,
31 including 131 mi (211 km) of perennial streams and 276 mi (444 km) of intermittent streams.
32 The nearest perennial stream (Muddy River) and permanent water body (Lake Meade) are both
33 more than 14 mi (24 km) away from the SEZ. Within the SEZ and the area of potential indirect
34 effects, dry lakes are the primary surface water features present; they represent approximately
35 16% of dry lake habitat available within the overall analysis area. Several springs are located
36 within 50 mi (80 km) of the Dry Lake SEZ, including springs on the north shore of Lake Meade,
37 and springs within the Desert NWR and the Moapa Valley NWR. Historically, some springs on
38 the north shore of Lake Meade contained native fishes like the speckled dace (*Rhinichthys*
39 *osculus*), but introduced fishes like cichlids have reduced or eliminated native species
40 (Courtenay and Deacon 1983). Springs within the Desert NWR contain a diverse community of
41 spring snails as well as the endangered Pahump poolfish (*Empetrichthys latos*), which is present
42 in Corn Creek. Non-native fish species such as goldfish and crayfish are also present in the
43 Desert NWR. The Moapa Valley NWR also contains stream and spring systems that support four
44 species of protected native fish: Moapa dace, Virgin River chub (*Gila seminuda*), Moapa White
45 River springfish, and the Moapa speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus moapa*). Non-native species
46 of fish exist in the Moapa NWR, primarily in the Muddy River and its tributaries, and include

1 blue tilapia (*Oreochromis aurea*), shortfin molly (*Poecilia mexicana*), and mosquitofish
2 (*Gambusia affinis*). Highly seasonal populations of aquatic gastropod snails exist in the Muddy
3 River and associated warm springs, several of which, such as the Moapa pebblesnail
4 (*Fluminicola avernalis*, the grated tryonia (*Tryonia clathrata*) are species of concern. The Moapa
5 Warm Springs riffle beetle (*Stenelmis moapae*), the Amargosa naucorid (*Pelocoris shoshone*
6 *shoshone*), and the Moapa naucorid (*Usingerina moapensis*) are aquatic invertebrates found in
7 the Moapa Valley NWR and all are species of concern. Preferred habitat for aquatic invertebrates
8 in Moapa Valley NWR varies from fast moving waters with clean cobble bottom to marshy pool
9 habitats.

11.3.11.4.2 Impacts

10
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12
13
14 The types of impacts that could occur on aquatic habitats and biota due to development
15 of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in detail in Section 5.10.3. Effects particularly
16 relevant to aquatic habitats and communities are water withdrawal and changes in water,
17 sediment, and contaminant inputs associated with runoff.

18
19 No permanent water bodies or streams are present within the boundaries of the Dry Lake
20 SEZ, and the nearest perennial surface waters are greater than 14 mi (22 km) from the SEZ
21 boundary. Therefore, no direct impacts on these features are expected. Dry Lake and its
22 associated wetlands, as well as several washes, are present within the SEZ, and runoff of water
23 and sediment as well as airborne particulate deposition into these features is possible, especially
24 if ground disturbance occurs near Dry Lake. However, the surface water features in the SEZ are
25 typically dry and are not connected to any permanent surface water. Surveys of ephemeral and
26 intermittent surface water features within the SEZ would be necessary to determine the potential
27 for impacts on aquatic biota. California Wash and Gypsum Wash are intermittent streams located
28 in the area of indirect effects that could receive runoff and fugitive dust from solar development
29 activities within the SEZ. Neither California Wash nor Gypsum Wash is likely to contain aquatic
30 habitat, but both streams flow into perennial surface waters, and soils entering these streams
31 could potentially affect aquatic habitat and biota at downstream locations. The implementation
32 of commonly used engineering practices to control water runoff and sediment deposition into
33 streams and water bodies would help to minimize the potential for impacts on aquatic organisms.

34
35 In arid environments, reductions in the quantity of water in aquatic habitats are of
36 particular concern. Water quantity in aquatic habitats could also be affected if significant
37 amounts of surface water or groundwater were utilized for power plant cooling water, for
38 washing mirrors, or for other needs. The greatest need for water would occur if technologies
39 employing wet cooling, such as parabolic trough or power tower, were developed at the site; the
40 associated impacts would ultimately depend on the water source used (including groundwater
41 from aquifers at various depths). There are no permanent surface waters in the proposed
42 Dry Lake SEZ or area of indirect effects. Obtaining cooling water from other perennial surface
43 water features in the region could affect water levels and, as a consequence, aquatic organisms in
44 those water bodies. Groundwater is generally more than 100 ft (30 m) below ground and does
45 not supply water to any surface water feature except the Colorado River via a subsurface
46 connection to the California Wash Basin. Thus, groundwater withdrawals for solar energy needs

1 could affect surface water levels and aquatic habitat in the Colorado River. In addition,
2 groundwater withdrawals could alter the size and chemical and physical conditions of
3 groundwater-dependent springs (including those on the north shore of Lake Meade and within
4 Desert NWR and Moapa NWR) in the vicinity of the SEZ, and adversely affect associated
5 aquatic communities. Historically, groundwater withdrawals have resulted in the loss or
6 reduction of native species in desert springs. Consequently, the effect of groundwater
7 withdrawals for solar energy development on pool and spring aquatic communities is of
8 particular concern. Additional details regarding the volume of water required and the types of
9 organisms present in potentially affected water bodies would be required in order to further
10 evaluate the potential for impacts from water withdrawals.

11
12 As identified in Section 5.10.3, water quality in aquatic habitats could be affected by the
13 introduction of contaminants such as fuels, lubricants, or pesticides/herbicides during site
14 characterization, construction, operation, or decommissioning for a solar energy facility.
15 Contaminants could potentially enter Dry Lake and wetlands within the SEZ, especially if heavy
16 machinery is used in or nearby these features. However, these areas are typically dry; therefore
17 no impacts on aquatic communities are expected. The introduction of contaminants can be
18 minimized by avoiding construction near Dry Lake. Contaminants are not likely to affect aquatic
19 habitat and biota, given the distance (14 mi [22 km]) and lack of hydrologic connection of the
20 SEZ to any perennial surface water.

21 22 23 ***11.3.11.4.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

24
25 The implementation of programmatic design features presented in Appendix A,
26 Section A.2.2, could greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects on aquatic biota and
27 aquatic habitats from development and operation of solar energy facilities. While the most
28 SEZ-specific design features are best established when specific project details are being
29 considered, SEZ-specific design features that can be identified at this time are as follows:

- 30
31 • Appropriate engineering controls should be implemented to minimize the
32 amount of surface water runoff and fugitive dust reaching California Wash
33 and Gypsum Wash.
- 34
35 • Minimize or eliminate the impact of groundwater withdrawals on streams near
36 the SEZ such as the Muddy River and springs such as those along the north
37 shore of Lake Meade and within Desert NWR and Moapa NWR.

38
39 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to programmatic design
40 features and if the utilization of water from groundwater or surface water sources is adequately
41 controlled to maintain sufficient water levels in aquatic habitats, the potential impacts on aquatic
42 biota and habitats from solar energy development at the Dry Lake SEZ would be negligible.

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1 **11.3.12 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Rare Species)**
2

3 This section addresses special status species that are known to occur, or for which
4 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ.
5 Special status species include the following types of species³:
6

- 7 • Species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA;
- 8
- 9 • Species that are proposed for listing, are under review, or are candidates for
10 listing under the ESA;
- 11
- 12 • Species that are listed by the BLM as sensitive;
- 13
- 14 • Species that are listed by the State of Nevada⁴; and
- 15
- 16 • Species that have been ranked by the State of Nevada as S1 or S2, or species
17 of concern by the State of Nevada or the USFWS; hereafter referred to as
18 “rare” species.
19

20 Special status species known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the Dry Lake SEZ center
21 (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined from natural heritage records available through
22 NatureServe Explorer (NatureServe 2010), information provided by the NDOW NNHP
23 (Miskow 2009; NDCNR 2004, 2009a, 2009b), SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007), and the
24 USFWS ECOS (USFWS 2010). Information reviewed consisted of county-level occurrences as
25 determined from NatureServe, element occurrences provided by the NNHP, as well as modeled
26 land cover types and predicted suitable habitats for the species within the 50-mi (80-km) region
27 as determined from the SWReGAP. The 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region intersects Clark and Lincoln
28 Counties, Nevada, as well as Mohave County, Arizona. However, the SEZ and affected area
29 occurs only in Clark County, Nevada. See Appendix M for additional information on the
30 approach used to identify species that could be affected by development within the SEZ.
31
32

33 **11.3.12.1 Affected Environment**
34

35 The affected area considered in this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect
36 effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified
37 during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur). For the
38 Dry Lake SEZ, the area of direct effects included only the SEZ itself. Due to the proximity of
39 existing infrastructure, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside of
40 the SEZ are not assessed, assuming that the existing transmission infrastructure might be used to

³ See Section 4.6.4 for definitions of these species categories. Note that some of the categories of species included here do not fit BLM’s definition of special status species as defined in BLM Manual 6840 (BLM 2008d). These species are included here to ensure broad consideration of species that may be most vulnerable to impacts.

⁴ State-listed species for the state of Nevada are those protected under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants).

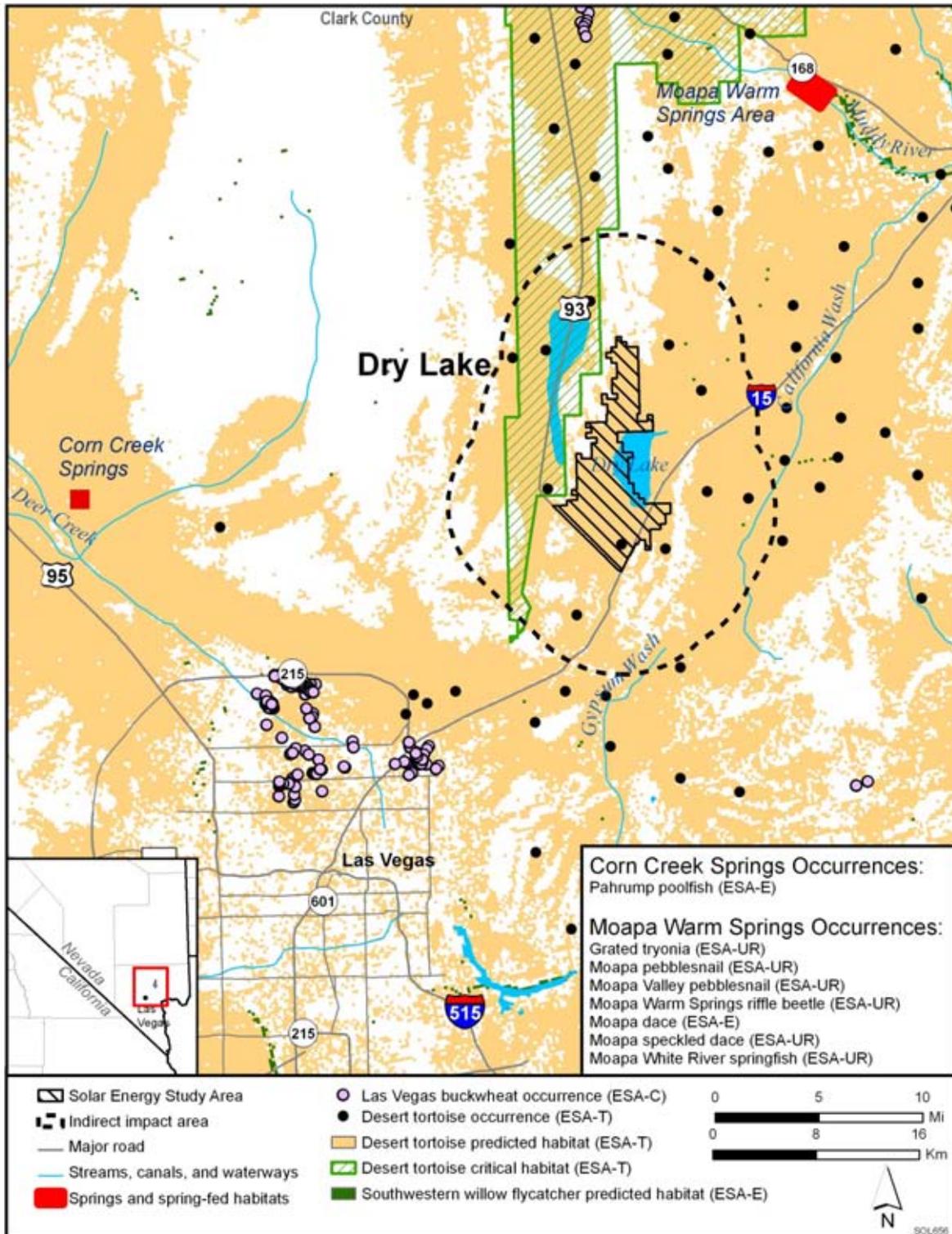
1 connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-specific analysis
2 would be conducted for new transmission construction or line upgrades. Similarly, the impacts of
3 construction or upgrades to access roads were not assessed for this SEZ due to the proximity of
4 an existing federal highway (see Section 11.3.1.2 for a discussion of development assumptions
5 for this SEZ). The area of indirect effects was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ
6 boundary. Indirect effects considered in the assessment included effects from groundwater
7 withdrawals, surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and accidental spills from the SEZ, but did not
8 include ground-disturbing activities. For the most part, the potential magnitude of indirect effects
9 would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. This area of indirect effects was
10 identified on the basis of professional judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound
11 the area that would potentially be subject to indirect effects. The affected area includes both the
12 direct and indirect effects areas.

13
14 The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is Sonora-Mojave creosote
15 desert scrub (see Section 11.3.10). Potentially unique habitats in the affected area in which
16 special status species may reside include cliff and rock outcrops, desert washes, playas, and
17 riparian habitats. There are no permanent aquatic habitats known to occur on the SEZ or within
18 5 mi (8 km) from the SEZ boundary. However, a portion of one dry lake playa (Dry Lake) occurs
19 on the SEZ; an additional unnamed dry lake playa and an intermittent stream (California Wash)
20 occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary.

21
22 In scoping comments on the proposed Dry Lake SEZ (Stout 2009), the USFWS
23 expressed concern that groundwater withdrawals from the Garnet Valley groundwater basin
24 associated with solar energy development on the SEZ may reduce the regional groundwater
25 supply that supports spring-fed aquatic habitats in the SEZ region, including habitats in the
26 Pahranaagat and Moapa Valleys. This includes species that occur in aquatic and riparian habitat
27 associated with the following springs: Moapa Warm Springs (including Big Muddy Spring) and
28 Corn Creek Spring (Figure 11.3.12.1-1). Although these areas are outside of the affected area as
29 defined above, they are included in the evaluation because of the possible effect of groundwater
30 withdrawals.

31
32 All special status species known to occur within the Dry Lake SEZ region (i.e., within
33 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ) are listed, with their status, nearest recorded occurrence,
34 and habitats in Appendix J. Of these species, 62 could be affected by solar energy development
35 on the SEZ (including those dependent on groundwater discharge in the region), based on
36 recorded occurrences or the presence of potentially suitable habitat in the area. These species,
37 their status, and their habitats are presented in Table 11.3.12.1-1. For many of the species listed
38 in the table (especially plants), their predicted potential occurrence in the affected area is based
39 only on a general correspondence between mapped land cover types and descriptions of species
40 habitat preferences. This overall approach to identifying species in the affected area probably
41 overestimates the number of species that actually occur in the affected area. For many of the
42 species identified as having potentially suitable habitat in the affected area, the nearest known
43 occurrence is more than 20 mi (32 m) from the SEZ.

44
45 Based on NNHP records and information provided by the USFWS, the following seven
46 special status species are known to occur within the affected area of the Dry Lake SEZ:



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FIGURE 11.3.12.1-1 Known or Potential Occurrences of Species Listed as Endangered or Threatened under the ESA, Candidates for Listing under the ESA, or Species under Review for ESA Listing in the Affected Area of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (Sources: Miskow 2009; USGS 2007)

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Special Status Species That Could Be Affected by Solar Energy Development on the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants						
Ackerman milkvetch	<i>Astragalus ackermanii</i>	NV-S2	Endemic to the Sheep and Pintwater ranges of southern Nevada in crevices and ledges of carbonate cliffs in mixed shrub, sagebrush, and juniper woodland at elevations between 4,000 and 6,200 ft. ^h Nearest recorded occurrence is 16 mi ⁱ northwest of the SEZ in the Desert NWR. About 4,304,500 acres ^j of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	137,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the areas of direct effects; translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. Note that these same potential mitigations apply to all special status plants.
Alkali mariposa lily	<i>Calochortus striatus</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S1	Restricted to wetlands in the western Mojave Desert including alkaline seeps, springs, and meadows at elevations between 2,600 and 4,600 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 21 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 79,850 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	375 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Antelope Canyon goldenbush	<i>Ericameria cervina</i>	NV-S1	Rock crevices and talus in shadscale and Douglas-fir-bristlecone pine woodland on calcareous substrates and ash flow tuff. Elevation ranges between 3,100 and 8,800 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 35 mi east of the SEZ. About 556,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	11,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Plants (Cont.)</i>						
Bearded screwmoss	<i>Pseudocrossidium crinitum</i>	NV-S1	Known from only 12 occurrences in Nevada on or near gypsiferous deposits and outcrops or limestone boulders, especially on east to north facing slopes of loose, uncompacted soil and associated with other mosses and lichens at elevations between 1,300 and 2,300 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 18 mi east of the SEZ. About 334,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	11,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Beaver dam breadroot	<i>Pediomelum castoreum</i>	FWS-SC	Dry, sandy desert communities. Nearest recorded occurrence is 19 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 65,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	425 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	3,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Charleston goldenbush	<i>Ericameria compacta</i>	NV-S2	Endemic to the Spring and Sheep ranges southern Nevada, where the species is known from 10 occurrences on forested carbonate slopes, and adjacent ridges and low outcrops, within the subalpine and montane conifer communities at elevations between 2,850 and 11,300 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 18 mi northwest of the SEZ in the Desert NWR. About 409,350 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	11,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Dune sunflower	<i>Helianthus deserticola</i>	NV-S2	Sand dunes on dry, open, deep, loose sandy soils of aeolian deposits, vegetated dunes, and dune skirt areas, on flats and gentle slopes of all aspects, generally in alkaline areas. Elevation ranges between 1,325 and 4,900 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 22 mi east of the SEZ along the Muddy River. About 105,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	850 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	4,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and desert pavement habitats on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Gold Butte moss	<i>Didymodon nevadensis</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Gypsiferous deposits and outcrops or limestone boulders, especially on east-to north-facing slopes of loose soil, and associated with other mosses and lichens. Elevation ranges between 1,300 and 2,300 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi southeast of the SEZ in the Lake Mead NRA. About 359,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	11,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Halfring milkvetch	<i>Astragalus mohavensis</i> var. <i>hemigyris</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada on carbonate gravels and derivative soils on terraced hills and ledges, open slopes, and along washes within the creosote-bursage, blackbrush, and mixed-shrub habitat communities. Elevation ranges between 3,000 and 5,600 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi northwest of the SEZ in the Desert N WR. About 422,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	425 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	15,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Plants (Cont.)</i>						
Las Vegas bearpoppy ^k	<i>Arctomecon californica</i>	NV-P; FWS-SC	Open, dry, spongy or powdery, often dissected or hummocked soils with high gypsum content, typically with well-developed soil crust, in areas of generally low relief on all aspects and slopes, with a sparse cover of other gypsum-tolerant species. Elevation ranges between 1,050 and 3,650 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 5 mi south of the SEZ. About 65,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	425 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	1,250 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert pavement habitat on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Las Vegas buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum corymbosum</i> var. <i>nilesii</i>	ESA-C; BLM-S; NV-S1	Restricted to southern Nevada in the vicinity of Las Vegas on or near gypsum soils, in washes, drainages, or in areas of generally low relief. Elevation ranges between 1,900 and 3,850 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 12 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 63,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	425 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	3,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations a. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be developed in coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Littlefield milkvetch	<i>Astragalus preussii</i> var. <i>laxiflorus</i>	NV-S1	Endemic to the Lake Mead region of Arizona and Nevada and disjunctly in California on alkaline clay flats and gravelly washes within shadscale and chenopod scrub at elevations between 2,300 and 2,450 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 13 mi southeast of the SEZ. About 122,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	3,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and playa habitats on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Meadow Valley sandwort	<i>Eremogone stenomeres</i>	NV-S2	Endemic to Clark and Lincoln counties, Nevada on limestone cliffs at elevations between 2,950 and 3,950 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 1 mi west of the SEZ. About 334,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	11,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Mottled milkvetch	<i>Astragalus lentiginosus</i> var. <i>stramineus</i>	NV-S1	Restricted to the lower Virgin River Valley in Mohave County, Arizona, and Clark County, Nevada, on sandy and gravelly flats and dunes at elevations between 2,000 and 3,000 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 40 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 65,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	425 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	1,275 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert pavement habitat on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
New York Mountains catseye	<i>Cryptantha tumulosa</i>	NV-S2	Gravelly or clay, granitic or carbonate substrates within Mojave desert scrub, creosotebush scrub, and pinyon-juniper woodland at elevation between 4,500 and 9,900 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 10 mi northwest of the SEZ in the Desert NWR. About 4,066,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	127,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Parish's phacelia	<i>Phacelia parishii</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Aquatic habitats and wetlands in moist to superficially dry, open, flat, mostly barren, salt-crusted silty-clay soils on valley bottoms, lake deposits, playa edges in proximity to seepage areas surrounded by saltbush scrub vegetation. Elevation ranges from 2,200 to 5,950 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 19 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 81,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	4,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and playa habitats on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Rock phacelia	<i>Phacelia petrosa</i>	BLM-S; NV-S2	Dry limestone and volcanic talus slopes of foothills, washes, and gravelly canyon bottoms on substrates derived from calcareous material. Inhabits mixed desert scrub, creosotebush, and blackbrush at elevations between 2,500 and 5,800 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 9 mi west of the SEZ in the Desert NWR. About 4,242,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	142,750 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of potential mitigations applicable to all special status plant species.
Rosy two-tone beard-tongue	<i>Penstemon bicolor ssp. roseus</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Calcareous, granitic, or volcanic soils in washes, roadsides, scree at outcrop bases, rock crevices, or similar places receiving runoff, within creosote-bursage, blackbrush, and mixed-shrub. Elevation ranges between 1,800 and 4,850 ft. Known to occur on the SEZ and throughout the affected area. About 524,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	550 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	15,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitats on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Rough dwarf greasebush	<i>Glossopetalon pungens</i> var. <i>pungens</i>	BLM-S; NV-S2	Endemic to the Spring and Sheep ranges in southern Nevada, where the species is known from seven occurrences in the crevices of carbonate cliffs and outcrops, generally avoiding southerly exposures, within pinyon-juniper, mountain mahogany, and montane conifer communities. Elevation ranges from 4,400 to 7,800 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 17 mi west of the SEZ in the DNWR. About 606,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	11,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Rough fringemoss	<i>Crossidium seriatum</i>	NV-S2	Known from only eight occurrences in Nevada in sandstone and gypsiferous bluffs, outcrops, rock piles, and soils, often protected on the north or east sides of rocks or shrubs, or at bases of bluffs at elevations between 1,300 and 2,450 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi southeast of the SEZ in the Lake Mead NRA. About 399,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	12,875 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Sheep fleabane	<i>Erigeron ovinus</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to Mount Irish and the Sheep and Groom ranges in southern Nevada, where the species is known from fewer than 15 occurrences in crevices of carbonate cliffs and ridgeline outcrops within pinyon-juniper and montane conifer woodland. Elevation ranges from 3,600 to 8,400 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 17 mi northwest of the SEZ in the Desert NWR. About 576,650 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	11,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Sheep Mountain milkvetch	<i>Astragalus amphioxys</i> var. <i>musimonum</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Restricted to the foothills of the Sheep Mountains in southern Nevada (historically occurred in Arizona). Occurs in carbonate alluvial gravels, particularly along drainages, roadsides, and in other microsites with enhanced runoff, at elevations between 4,400 and 6,000 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 6 mi northwest of the SEZ in the Desert NWR. About 3,884,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	131,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Silverleaf sunray	<i>Enceliopsis argophylla</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Nearly entirely confined to Clark County, Nevada, in dry, open, relatively barren areas on gypsum badlands, volcanic gravels, or loose sands, within creosote-bursage habitat. Elevation ranges from 1,200 to 2,400 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi east of the SEZ. About 89,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	425 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	1,265 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert pavement habitat on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Sticky buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum viscidulum</i>	NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Known only from Clark County, Nevada, and Mohave County, Arizona, on deep, loose sandy soils in washes, flats, roadsides, steep aeolian slopes, and stabilized dunes. Elevation ranges from 1,200 to 2,200 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 21 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 65,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	425 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	3,375 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Sweet moustache moss	<i>Trichostomum sweetii</i>	NV-S1	Known from only two occurrences in Nevada on sandstone bluffs and sandstone-derived soil, often shaded by rocks at elevations between 2,000 and 2,230 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 21 mi southeast of the SEZ in the Lake Mead NRA. About 65,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	1,265 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Threecorner milkvetch	<i>Astragalus geyeri</i> var. <i>triquetrus</i>	NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Known only from Clark County, Nevada, and Mohave County, Arizona on open, deep sandy soils, desert washes, or dunes, generally stabilized by vegetation and/or a gravel veneer. Elevations range from 1,500 to 2,500 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is about 1 mi east of the SEZ. About 105,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	850 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	4,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and pavement habitats on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Virgin River thistle	<i>Cirsium virginense</i>	NV-S1	Known from only a few locations in Washington County, Utah, Mohave County, Arizona, and Clark County, Nevada, in open, moist, alkaline clay soils of seep and spring areas or gypsum knolls at elevations between 1,950 and 6,550 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 34 mi east of the SEZ. About 60,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
White bearpoppy	<i>Arctomecon merriamii</i>	BLM-S	Endemic to the Mojave Desert of California and Nevada in barren gravelly areas, rocky slopes, and limestone outcrops at elevations between 2,000 and 5,900 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 19 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 358,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	11,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Yellow two-tone beard-tongue	<i>Penstemon bicolor ssp. bicolor</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to Clark County, Nevada, on mostly BLM lands in the vicinity of Las Vegas on calcareous or carbonate soils in washes, roadsides, rock crevices, or outcrops at elevations between 2,500 and 5,500 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from a dry lake approximately 2 mi west of the SEZ. About 524,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	550 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	15,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Ackerman milkvetch for a list of other potential mitigations.
Invertebrates						
Grated tryonia	<i>Tryonia clathrata</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-S2	Endemic to the Muddy River spring system in southeastern Nevada on algae and detritus substrates of slow moving freshwater spring systems. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Big Muddy Spring, approximately 15 mi north of the SEZ. About 500 acres of potentially suitable habitat associated with the Warm Springs Area occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but approximately 500 acres of potentially suitable habitat in the Warm Springs Area could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. The impact of water withdrawal on the Garnet Valley regional groundwater system that supports aquatic and mesic habitat in the SEZ region would depend on the volume of water withdrawn to support solar energy development on the SEZ. Avoiding or limiting withdrawals from this regional groundwater system could reduce impacts on this species to negligible levels. Note that these potential mitigation measures apply to all special status species with habitats dependent upon groundwater that may be affected by development on the SEZ. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>						
Moapa pebblesnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis avernalis</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to Moapa Springs in Clark County, Nevada, in freshwater springs and brooks. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Big Muddy Spring, approximately 15 mi north of the SEZ. About 500 acres of potentially suitable habitat associated with the Warm Springs Area occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but approximately 500 acres of potentially suitable habitat in the Warm Springs Area could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See graded tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW.
Moapa Valley pebblesnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis carinifera</i>	ESA-UR; NV-S1	Endemic to the Moapa Valley in Clark County, Nevada, in freshwater spring-fed habitats. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Big Muddy Spring, approximately 15 mi north of the SEZ. About 28 mi of potentially suitable habitat associated with the Warm Springs Area and Muddy River occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but approximately 28 mi of potentially suitable habitat in the Muddy River could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See graded tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in coordination with the USFWS and NDOW.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>						
Moapa Warm Spring riffle beetle	<i>Stenelmis moapa</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-S1	Endemic to the Warm Springs Area of Clark County, Nevada, in swift, shallow waters of freshwater warm outlet springs on gravel substrates. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Big Muddy Spring, approximately 15 mi north of the SEZ. About 500 acres of potentially suitable habitat associated with the Warm Springs Area occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but approximately 500 acres of potentially suitable habitat in the Warm Springs Area could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See graded tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW.
Mojave gypsum bee	<i>Andrena balsamorhizae</i>	BLM-S; NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada on gypsum soils associated with habitats of its single larval host plant, silverleaf sunray. Such habitats include warm desert shrub communities on dry slopes and sandy washes. Nearest recorded occurrence is 8 mi south of the SEZ. About 3,819,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	127,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats on the SEZ or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats may reduce impacts on this species.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>						
Mojave poppy bee	<i>Perdita meconis</i>	BLM-S; NV-S2	Known only from Clark County, Nevada where the species is dependent on poppy plants (genus <i>Arctomecon</i>). in roadsides, washes, and barren desert areas on gypsum soils. Nearest recorded occurrence is in the vicinity of Lake Mead, approximately 17 mi south of the SEZ. About 418,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	550 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	13,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats on the SEZ or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats may reduce impacts on this species.
Pahranagat naucorid	<i>Pelocoris shoshone shoshone</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Known only to occur in the Muddy and White River Basins in southern Nevada in quiet waters of warm spring-fed habitats. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Big Muddy Spring, approximately 15 mi north of the SEZ. Approximately 68 mi of potentially suitable habitat in the Muddy and White River Basins occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but approximately 68 mi of potentially suitable habitat in the Muddy and White River Basins could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See grated tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Invertebrates (Cont.)						
Red-tailed blazing star bee	<i>Megandrena mentzeliae</i>	NV-S2	Endemic to southern Nevada, where it is known only from Clark County. The species is primarily associated with the host plant <i>Mentzelia tricuspis</i> . Such habitats include open, dry, barren areas with gypsum to gravelly soils. Nearest recorded occurrence is 13 mi northwest of the SEZ in the Desert NWR. About 105,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	425 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	1,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert pavement habitat on the SEZ could reduce impacts. Pre-disturbance surveys, avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats, or compensatory mitigation of occupied habitats on the SEZ may also reduce impacts on this species.
Spring Mountains springsnail	<i>Pyrgulopsis deaconi</i>	BLM-S; NMV-S1	Endemic to freshwater springs of the Spring Mountains in southern Nevada. Known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. The amount of suitable habitat in the SEZ region has not been determined.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but suitable habitat elsewhere in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See graded tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Invertebrates (Cont.)						
Warm Springs naucorid	<i>Limnocoris moapensis</i>	NV-S1	Endemic to southern Nevada, where it is restricted to the Warm Springs Area among the pebble beds of quiet waters or stream outlets. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Big Muddy Spring, approximately 15 mi north of the SEZ. Approximately 500 acres of potentially suitable habitat in the Warm Springs Area occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but approximately 500 acres of potentially suitable habitat in the Warm Springs Area could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See graded tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.
Fish						
Moapa dace	<i>Moapa coriacea</i>	ESA-E; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to Clark County, Nevada, where the species is restricted to 6 mi of aquatic habitat in the warm spring area at the headwaters of the Muddy River. Preferred habitat includes spring pools, outflows, and the main stem of the Muddy River, where the water is clear and warm. Nearest recorded occurrences are from Moapa and Big Muddy Springs, approximately 15 mi north of the SEZ. Approximately 6 mi of potentially suitable habitat in the Warm Springs Area and Muddy River occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but approximately 6 mi of potentially suitable habitat in the Warm Springs Area and Muddy River could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See graded tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Fish (Cont.)						
Moapa speckled dace	<i>Rhinichthys osculus moapae</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to Clark County, Nevada, where it is restricted to the Muddy River in shallow cobble riffles. Nearest recorded occurrences are from Muddy River, approximately 15 mi northeast of the SEZ. Approximately 28 mi of potentially suitable habitat in the Muddy River occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but approximately 28 mi of potentially suitable habitat in the Muddy River could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See graded tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW.
Moapa White River springfish	<i>Crenichthys baileyi moapae</i>	ESA-UR; NV-P; NV-S2	Endemic to southern Nevada, where it is restricted to five warm-water springs in the upper Muddy River in spring pools and backwaters in spring outflows. More abundant in and near the springs than in the river. Nearest recorded occurrences are from Muddy River, approximately 15 mi northeast of the SEZ. Approximately 500 acres of potentially suitable habitat in the Warm Springs Area occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but approximately 500 acres of potentially suitable habitat in the Warm Springs Area could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See graded tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Fish (Cont.)						
Pahrump poolfish	<i>Empetrichthys latos latos</i>	ESA-E; NV-P; NV-S1	Historically endemic to the Pahrump Valley in southern Nye County, Nevada. It is currently extirpated from its native range. Introduced populations occur in three spring-fed habitats in Clark and White Pine Counties, Nevada: Corn Creek Springs, Shoshone Springs, and an irrigation reservoir fed by Sandstone Spring. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Corn Creek Springs in the Desert NWR, approximately 23 mi west of the SEZ. Approximately 5 acres of potentially suitable habitat in Corn Creek Springs occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres within the 5-mi area surrounding the SEZ, but approximately 5 acres of potentially suitable habitat in Corn Creek Springs could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See graded tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW.
Amphibians						
Southwestern toad	<i>Bufo microscaphus</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Woodlands and low-elevation riparian habitats in association with permanent or semipermanent water bodies including streams, ditches, flooded fields, irrigated croplands, and permanent reservoirs. Nearest recorded occurrences are along the Meadow Valley Wash, approximately 50 mi north of the SEZ. About 19,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	50 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat). Additional potentially suitable riparian habitats in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Habitats may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See graded tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent special status species.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Reptiles Desert tortoise	<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	ESA-T; NV-P; NV-S2	Desert creosotebush communities on firm soils for digging burrows along riverbanks, washes, canyon bottoms, creosote flats, and desert oases. Known to occur on the SEZ and throughout the affected area. About 2,762,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	15,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	106,250 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats on the SEZ; translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW.
Gila monster	<i>Heloderma suspectum</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; CA-S1; NV-S2	Rocky, deeply incised areas of desert scrub, thorn scrub, desert riparian, oak woodland, and semidesert grassland. Occurs in lower mountain slopes, rocky bajadas, canyon bottoms, and arroyos at elevations below 3,950 ft. Known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. About 3,175,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	14,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	124,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats on the SEZ; translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Birds						
American peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in SEZ region in open habitats, including deserts, shrublands, and woodlands associated with high, near vertical cliffs and bluffs above 200 ft. When not breeding, activity is concentrated in areas with ample prey, such as farmlands, marshes, lakes, rivers, and urban areas. Nearest recorded occurrences are from the metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 22 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 4,171,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	14,900 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	137,700 acres of potentially suitable foraging or nesting habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Crissal thrasher	<i>Toxostoma crissale</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in SEZ region. Nests in dense thickets of mesquite or low trees in desert riparian and desert wash habitats. Also occurs in washes within pinyon-juniper habitats. Known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. About 81,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	350 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	3,440 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat (4.2% of available potentially suitable habitat).	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and riparian habitat on the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats (especially nesting habitats) on the SEZ or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Birds (Cont.)						
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Winter resident in SEZ region in grasslands, sagebrush, and saltbrush habitats, as well as the periphery of pinyon-juniper woodland. Known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. About 417,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	340 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	15,150 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
LeConte's thrasher	<i>Toxostoma lecontei</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in SEZ region in saltbush-cholla scrub communities in desert flats, dunes, or alluvial fans. Known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. About 3,817,950 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	15,000 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	127,500 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats (especially nesting habitats) on the SEZ or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Birds (Cont.)</i> Phainopepla	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in project area in desert scrub, mesquite, pinyon-juniper woodland, desert riparian areas and orchards. Nests in trees or shrubs. Nearest recorded occurrences are from the Meadow Valley Wash and Muddy River systems, approximately 20 mi east of the SEZ. About 1,038,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	340 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	9,850 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat). Additional potentially suitable riparian habitats in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. Potentially suitable nesting habitat in riparian habitats in the Moapa and Pahrnagat Valleys may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See grated tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent species. In addition, pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats (especially nesting habitats) on the SEZ or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats on the SEZ could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Birds (Cont.)						
Southwestern willow flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	ESA-E; NV-P; NV-S1	Summer breeding resident in SEZ region in riparian shrublands and woodlands. Nests in thickets, scrubby and brushy areas, open second growth, swamps, and open woodlands. Nearest recorded occurrences are from the Muddy and Virgin River systems, approximately 20 mi east of the SEZ. About 183,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	50 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat). Additional potentially suitable riparian habitats in the SEZ region could be affected by groundwater withdrawals.	Small to large overall impact. No direct impact. Potentially suitable nesting habitat in riparian habitats in the Moapa and Pahrnagat Valleys may be affected by groundwater withdrawal. See graded tryonia for potential mitigation measures applicable to all groundwater-dependent species. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW.
Western burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia hypugaea</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Summer breeding resident in SEZ region in open grasslands and prairies, as well as disturbed sites such as golf courses, cemeteries, and airports throughout the SEZ region. Nests in burrows constructed by mammals (prairie dog, badger, and the like). Known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. About 4,034,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	14,750 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	125,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact on foraging and nesting habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied burrows and habitats in the area of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Mammals						
Big free-tailed bat	<i>Nyctinomops macrotis</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Year-round resident in SEZ region. Roosts in rock crevices on cliff faces or in buildings. Forages primarily in coniferous forests and arid shrublands to feed on moths. Known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. About 4,048,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	15,600 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	141,575 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Brazilian free-tailed bat	<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>	BLM-S; NV-P	Year-round resident in SEZ region. Forages in desert grassland, old field, savanna, shrubland, and woodland habitats as well as urban areas. Roosts in old buildings, caves, mines, and hollow trees. Known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. About 3,722,850 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	15,200 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	133,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>						
Nelson's bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis nelsoni</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Open, steep rocky terrain in mountainous habitats of the eastern Mojave and Sonoran Deserts in California. Rarely uses desert lowlands, but may use them as corridors for travel between mountain ranges. Known to occur in the Sheep Mountains, approximately 5 mi west of the SEZ, and potentially suitable year-round habitat occurs within the affected area. May utilize portions of the SEZ as migratory corridors. About 593,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	8,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct affect. Impacts could be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to important movement corridors within the area of direct effects.
Pallid bat	<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in SEZ region in low elevation desert communities, including grasslands, shrublands, and woodlands. Roosts in caves, crevices, and mines. Nearest recorded occurrences are from the Desert NWR, approximately 10 mi west of the SEZ. About 3,706,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	15,100 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	134,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Mammals (Cont.)						
Silver-haired bat	<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in SEZ region in high-elevation (1,600 to 8,500 ft) forested areas of aspen, cottonwood, white fir, pinyon-juniper, subalpine fir, willow, and spruce. May also forage in arid shrublands. Roosts in tree foliage, cavities, under loose bark, caves, mines, and under rock ledges. Rarely hibernates in caves. Nearest recorded occurrences are from the Muddy River, approximately 15 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 3,586,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	14,800 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	130,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Spotted bat	<i>Euderma maculatum</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in SEZ region near forests and shrubland habitats throughout the SEZ region. Roosts and hibernates in caves and rock crevices. Nearest recorded occurrences are from the vicinity of Las Vegas, approximately 16 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 4,404,950 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	15,000 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	139,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Mammals (Cont.)						
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S2	Year-round resident in SEZ region near forests and shrubland habitats below 9,000 ft elevation throughout the SEZ region. Roosts in caves, mines, and buildings for day roosting. Nearest recorded occurrences are from the Desert NWR, approximately 10 mi west of the SEZ. About 3,861,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	14,900 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	131,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western mastiff bat	<i>Eumops perotis</i>	NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S1	Summer resident in project area in many open semiarid habitats, including conifer and deciduous woodlands, shrublands, grasslands, chaparral, and urban areas. Roosts in crevices in cliff faces, buildings, and tall trees. Nearest occurrences are from the vicinity of Las Vegas, approximately 20 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 97,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	200 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Mammals (Cont.)						
Western small-footed myotis	<i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in SEZ region in woodland and riparian habitats at elevations below 9,000 ft. Roosts in caves, buildings, mines, and crevices of cliff faces. Nearest recorded occurrences are from the Desert NWR, approximately 10 mi west of the SEZ. About 4,325,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	14,900 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	137,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

- ^a BLM-S = listed as a sensitive species by the BLM; ESA-C = candidate for listing under the ESA; ESA-E = listed as endangered under the ESA; ESA-T = listed as threatened under the ESA; ESA-UR = under review for listing under the ESA; FWS-SC = USFWS species of concern; NV-P = protected in the State of Nevada under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants); NV-S1 = ranked as S1 in the State of Nevada; NV-S2 = ranked as S2 in the State of Nevada.
- ^b For plant species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP land cover types. For terrestrial vertebrate species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^c Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. Impacts of access road and transmission line construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this evaluation due to the proximity of existing infrastructure to the SEZ.
- ^d Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^e Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from groundwater withdrawal, surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from project developments. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. Indirect effects on groundwater-dependent species were considered outside these defined areas.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.3.12.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert ft to m, multiply by 0.3048.
- ⁱ To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.
- ^j To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.
- ^k Species in bold text have been recorded or have designated critical habitat within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary.

1 Las Vegas bearpoppy, Meadow Valley sandwort, rosy two-tone beardtongue, threecorner
2 milkvetch, yellow two-tone beardtongue, desert tortoise, and Nelson’s bighorn sheep. In addition
3 to these species, there are 13 groundwater-dependent species or species with habitats that may be
4 dependent on groundwater discharge from the Garnet Valley groundwater basin. These species
5 include grated tryonia, Moapa pebblesnail, Moapa Valley pebblesnail, Moapa Warm Spring
6 riffle beetle, Pahranaagat naucorid, Spring Mountain springsnail, Warm Springs naucorid, Moapa
7 dace, Moapa speckled dace, Moapa White River springfish, Pahrump poolfish, phainopepla, and
8 southwestern willow flycatcher.

9
10
11 ***11.3.12.1.1 Species Listed under the Endangered Species Act That Could Occur in the***
12 ***Affected Area***
13

14 In scoping comments on the proposed Dry Lake SEZ (Stout 2009), the USFWS
15 expressed concern for impacts of project development within the SEZ on habitat for the Mojave
16 population of the desert tortoise—a species listed as threatened under the ESA. The USFWS also
17 expressed concern that groundwater withdrawals for development on the SEZ from the Garnet
18 Valley regional groundwater system might also reduce the groundwater supply that supports
19 aquatic and riparian habitats for various ESA-listed species in the SEZ region. The following
20 ESA-listed species that may occur outside the area of indirect effects but that could be affected
21 by groundwater withdrawals within the SEZ are considered: Moapa dace (endangered), Pahrump
22 poolfish (endangered), and southwestern willow flycatcher (endangered). These species are
23 discussed below, and information on their habitats is presented in Table 11.3.12.1-1; additional
24 basic information on life history, habitat needs, and threats to populations of these species is
25 provided in Appendix J.

26
27
28 **Desert Tortoise**
29

30 The Mojave population of the desert tortoise is listed as threatened under the ESA and is
31 known to occur in the SEZ region in desert shrubland habitats. The species is known to occur on
32 the SEZ and within the area of indirect effects; designated critical habitat occurs immediately
33 adjacent to the western boundary of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ in the Mormon Mesa critical
34 habitat unit (Figure 11.3.12.1-1). Desert tortoise surveys in the Mormon Mesa critical habitat
35 unit conducted by the USFWS have indicated a desert tortoise density of about 1.6 to 3.2
36 individuals per km² (Stout 2009). Extrapolated across the size of the Dry Lake SEZ, the USFWS
37 has estimated that the Dry Lake SEZ may support up to 213 desert tortoises.

38
39 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 121,250 acres
40 (491 km²) of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the affected area; 15,000 acres
41 (61 km²) occurs within the SEZ and 106,250 acres (430 km²) occurs in the area of indirect
42 effects. The USGS desert tortoise model (Nussear et al. 2009) identifies the SEZ as having
43 overall high habitat suitability for desert tortoise (suitability score greater than or equal to 0.8 out
44 of 1.0). According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 2,762,500 acres
45 (11,180 km²) of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the SEZ region
46 (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
47

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

The southwestern willow flycatcher is a small neotropical migrant bird listed as endangered under the ESA that inhabits riparian shrublands, woodlands, and thickets in the southwestern United States. The nearest recorded occurrence of this species is from riparian areas along the Muddy River, approximately 20 mi (32 km) east of the SEZ. Potentially suitable breeding and foraging habitats for this species within the Moapa Valley are dependent upon surface discharges from the Garnet Valley regional groundwater system. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ. However, approximately 50 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat is expected to occur within the area of indirect effects within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. This potentially suitable riparian habitat and other potentially suitable riparian habitat in the SEZ region, especially along the Muddy River, could be affected by groundwater withdrawals. Approximately 183,400 acres (742 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs throughout the SEZ region (Figure 11.3.12.1-1).

Groundwater-Dependent Species

The USFWS (Stout 2009) identified the potential for impacts on various species that could result from groundwater withdrawals from the Garnet Valley groundwater basin that would serve solar energy development on the Dry Lake SEZ. As discussed previously and on the basis of the analysis presented in Section 11.3.9.2, three ESA-listed species could be affected by groundwater withdrawals on the Dry Lake SEZ: Moapa dace, Pahrump poolfish, and southwestern willow flycatcher. The southwestern willow flycatcher is discussed above.

Moapa Dace. The Moapa dace is a small fish listed as endangered under the ESA. This species is endemic to the Muddy (Moapa) River and associated thermal spring systems within the Warm Springs Area of Clark County, Nevada. Historically, the Moapa dace inhabited 25 springs and approximately 10 mi (16 km) of the upper Muddy River system. Currently, the species is restricted to 3 springs and less than 6 mi (10 km) of the Muddy River system. Preferred habitats include spring pools, outflows, and the main stem of the Muddy River, where water is clear and warm. Habitat use varies with age—juveniles tend to occur in spring pools and outflows, while adults tend to occur in outflows and in the Muddy River. This species is known to occur in spring habitats of the Warm Springs Area, approximately 15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.12.1-1; Table 11.3.12.1-1). Critical habitat for this species has not been designated.

Pahrump Poolfish. The Pahrump poolfish is a small fish listed as endangered under the ESA. This species is endemic to the Pahrump Valley in southern Nye County, Nevada. Natural populations of this species have been extirpated, but introduced populations exist in three spring-fed habitats in Clark and White Pine Counties, Nevada: Corn Creek Springs (Desert NWR), Shoshone Springs, and an irrigation reservoir fed by Sandstone Spring (Spring Mountain State Park). The introduced population in Corn Creek Springs is located approximately 23 mi (37 km)

1 west of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.12.1-1; Table 11.3.12.1-1). This habitat is about 5 acres (<0.1 km²)
2 in size and represents the only available potentially suitable habitat for this species in the SEZ
3 region. Critical habitat for this species has not been designated.
4
5

6 ***11.3.12.1.2 Species That Are Candidates for Listing under the ESA*** 7

8 In scoping comments on the proposed Dry Lake SEZ (Stout 2009), the USFWS did not
9 mention any species that are candidates for listing under the ESA that may be affected by solar
10 energy development on the Dry Lake SEZ. However, there is one ESA candidate species—the
11 Las Vegas buckwheat—that may occur within the affected area of the Dry Lake SEZ. This
12 species is endemic to southern Nevada in the vicinity of Las Vegas. It inhabits areas of
13 gypsum soils, washes, drainages, or areas of low relief at elevations between 1,900 and 3,850 ft
14 (580 and 1,175 m). The nearest recorded occurrence of this species is approximately 12 mi
15 (19 km) southwest of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.12.1-1; Table 11.3.12.1-1). Additional basic
16 information on life history, habitat needs, and threats to populations of this species is provided
17 in Appendix J.
18
19

20 ***11.3.12.1.3 Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA*** 21

22 The USFWS identified three invertebrate species (mollusks) under review for ESA listing
23 that may be indirectly affected by solar energy development within the SEZ (Stout 2009): grated
24 tryonia, Moapa pebblesnail, and Moapa Valley pebblesnail. These species do not occur within
25 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but they do occur in aquatic habitats dependent on
26 groundwater discharge from the Garnet Valley regional groundwater system in the Warm
27 Springs Area and the Moapa Valley, which could be affected by groundwater withdrawals on
28 the Dry Lake SEZ. In addition to these species, the Moapa Warm Springs riffle beetle, Moapa
29 speckled dace, and Moapa White River springfish are other species under review for ESA listing
30 with habitats dependent upon this same groundwater system (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Appendix J
31 provides basic information on life history, habitat needs, and threats to populations of these
32 species. General information on each species is provided below.
33
34

35 **Grated Tryonia** 36

37 The grated tryonia is an aquatic snail known from the Muddy River system in southern
38 Nevada. The nearest known occurrence of this species is from Big Muddy Spring, approximately
39 15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.12.1-1).
40
41

42 **Moapa Pebblesnail** 43

44 The Moapa pebblesnail is an aquatic snail restricted to the Moapa Springs in Clark
45 County, Nevada. The nearest known occurrence of this species is from Big Muddy Spring,
46 approximately 15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.12.1-1).
47

1 **Moapa Valley Pebblesnail**

2
3 The Moapa Valley pebblesnail is a freshwater mollusk restricted to spring-fed habitats in
4 the Moapa Valley of southern Nevada. The nearest known occurrence of this species is from
5 Big Muddy Spring, approximately 15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.12.1-1).

6
7
8 **Moapa Warm Springs Riffle Beetle**

9
10 The Moapa Warm Springs riffle beetle is an aquatic insect restricted to the Warm Springs
11 Area of Clark County, Nevada. The nearest known occurrence of this species is from Big Muddy
12 Spring, approximately 15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.12.1-1).

13
14
15 **Moapa Speckled Dace**

16
17 The Moapa speckled dace is a fish restricted to the Muddy River system in Clark County,
18 Nevada. The nearest known occurrence of this species is from the Muddy River, approximately
19 15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.12.1-1).

20
21
22 **Moapa White River Springfish**

23
24 The Moapa White River springfish is restricted to warm water springs in the upper
25 Muddy River. The nearest known occurrence of this species is from the Muddy River,
26 approximately 15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.12.1-1).

27
28
29 ***11.3.12.1.4 BLM-Designated Sensitive Species***

30
31 A total of 35 BLM-designated sensitive species may occur in the affected area of the
32 Dry Lake SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1), including the following: (1) plants: alkali mariposa lily,
33 Gold Butte moss, halfring milkvetch, Las Vegas buckwheat, Parish’s phacelia, rosy two-tone
34 beardtongue, rough dwarf greasebush, sheep fleabane, Sheep Mountain milkvetch, silverleaf
35 sunray, white bearpoppy, and yellow two-tone beardtongue; (2) invertebrates: grated tryonia,
36 Moapa Warm Spring riffle beetle, Mojave gypsum bee, Mojave poppy bee, Pahrnagat naucorid,
37 and Spring Mountains springsnail; (3) fish: Moapa speckled dace; (4) amphibian: southwestern
38 toad; (5) reptile: Gila monster; (6) birds: American peregrine falcon, crissal thrasher, ferruginous
39 hawk, LeConte’s thrasher, phainopepla, and western burrowing owl; and (7) mammals: big free-
40 tailed bat, Brazilian free-tailed bat, Nelson’s bighorn sheep, pallid bat, silver-haired bat, spotted
41 bat, Townsend’s big-eared bat, and western small-footed bat. The occurrences of the following
42 4 BLM-designated sensitive species have been previously discussed because of their known or
43 pending status under the ESA (Sections 11.3.12.1.1, 11.3.12.1.2, and 11.3.12.1.3): Las Vegas
44 buckwheat, grated tryonia, Warm Springs riffle beetle, and Moapa speckled dace. Of the
45 remaining 31 BLM-designated sensitive species with potentially suitable habitat in the affected
46 area, occurrences of the following species intersect the affected area of the Dry Lake SEZ: rosy

1 two-tone beardtongue, yellow two-tone beardtongue, and Nelson’s bighorn sheep. Habitats in
2 which BLM-designated sensitive species are found, the amount of potentially suitable habitat in
3 the affected area, and known locations of the species relative to the SEZ are presented in Table
4 11.3.12.1-1. These species as related to the SEZ are described in the remainder of this section.
5 Additional life history information for these species is provided in Appendix J.
6
7

8 **Alkali Mariposa Lily**

9

10 The alkali mariposa lily is a perennial forb restricted to wetlands in the western Mojave
11 Desert. It inhabits alkaline seeps, springs, and meadows at elevations between 2,600 and 4,600 ft
12 (792 and 1,400 m). This species is known to occur about 21 mi (34 km) southwest of the SEZ.
13 According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable habitat does not occur on the
14 SEZ; however, potentially suitable riparian and wetland habitat may occur in the area of indirect
15 effects (within 5 mi [8 km] of the SEZ boundary) (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
16
17

18 **Gold Butte Moss**

19

20 The Gold Butte moss is a bryophyte (moss) known only from Nevada and Texas on
21 gypsiferous deposits and outcrops or limestone boulders. This species is typically associated with
22 other mosses and lichens at elevations between 1,300 and 2,300 ft (400 and 700 m). This species
23 is known to occur about 15 mi (24 km) southwest of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land
24 cover model, potentially suitable habitat does not occur on the SEZ; however, potentially
25 suitable rocky cliffs and outcrops may occur in the area of indirect effects (within 5 mi [8 km] of
26 the SEZ boundary) (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
27
28

29 **Halfring Milkvetch**

30

31 The halfring milkvetch is a perennial forb endemic to Nevada on carbonate gravels and
32 derived soils on terraced hills, ledges, open slopes, and along washes at elevations between
33 3,000 and 5,600 ft (915 and 1,700 m). This species is known to occur about 15 mi (24 km)
34 northwest of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable habitat
35 for this species may occur on the SEZ and throughout other portions of the affected area
36 (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
37
38

39 **Parish’s Phacelia**

40

41 The Parish’s phacelia is an annual forb known from Arizona, California, and Nevada.
42 This species inhabits wetlands and other mesic sites such as valley bottoms, lake deposits, and
43 playa edges. This species is known to occur about 19 mi (30 km) southwest of the SEZ.
44 According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable habitat for this species may
45 occur on the SEZ and throughout other portions of the affected area (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
46
47

1 **Rosy Two-Tone Beardtongue**

2
3 The rosy two-tone beardtongue is a perennial forb known from Arizona, California, and
4 Nevada. This species occurs on calcareous, granitic, or volcanic substrates in washes, roadsides,
5 scree and outcrop bases, rock crevices, or similar places receiving enhanced runoff at elevations
6 between 1,800 and 4,850 ft (550 and 1,480 m). This species is known to occur on the SEZ and
7 throughout the affected area. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable
8 habitat for this species may occur on the SEZ and in portions of the area of indirect effects
9 (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

10
11
12 **Rough Dwarf Greasebush**

13
14 The rough dwarf greasebush is a perennial shrub endemic to the Spring and Sheep ranges
15 in southern Nevada. This species inhabits crevices of carbonate cliffs and outcrops, generally
16 within pinyon-juniper and montane coniferous woodlands. This species is known to occur about
17 17 mi (27 km) west of the SEZ in the Desert National Wildlife Range. According to the
18 SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable habitat does not occur on the SEZ; however,
19 potentially suitable habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects (within 5 mi [8 km] west of
20 the SEZ boundary [Table 11.3.12.1-1]).

21
22
23 **Sheep Fleabane**

24
25 The sheep fleabane is a perennial forb endemic to Mount Irish and the Sheep and Groom
26 ranges in southern Nevada. This species inhabits crevices of carbonate cliffs and outcrops,
27 generally within pinyon-juniper and montane coniferous woodlands. This species is known to
28 occur about 17 mi (27 km) northwest of the SEZ in the Desert NWR. According to the
29 SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable habitat does not occur on the SEZ; however,
30 potentially suitable habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects (within 5 mi [8 km] west of
31 the SEZ boundary [Table 11.3.12.1-1]).

32
33
34 **Sheep Mountain Milkvetch**

35
36 The Sheep Mountain milkvetch is a perennial forb known from the foothills of the Sheep
37 Mountains in southern Nevada. This species occurs on carbonate alluvial gravels, drainages,
38 roadsides, and other microsites with enhanced runoff at elevations between 4,400 and 6,000 ft
39 (1,340 and 1,830 m). This species is known to occur about 6 mi (10 km) northwest of the SEZ.
40 According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable habitat for this species may
41 occur on the SEZ and throughout other portions of the affected area (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

42
43
44 **Silverleaf Sunray**

45
46 The silverleaf sunray is a perennial forb primarily known from southern Nevada. This
47 species occurs in dry, open, relatively barren areas on gypsum badlands, volcanic gravels, or

1 loose sands at elevations between 1,200 and 2,400 ft (365 and 730 m). This species is known to
2 occur about 15 mi (24 km) east of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model,
3 potentially suitable habitat for this species may occur on the SEZ and throughout other portions
4 of the affected area (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

7 **White Bearpoppy**

8
9 The white bearpoppy is a perennial forb endemic to the Mojave Desert of California and
10 Nevada. This species inhabits barren gravelly areas, rocky slopes, and limestone outcrops at
11 elevations between 2,000 and 5,900 ft (610 and 1,800 m). This species is known to occur as near
12 as 19 mi (30 km) southwest of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model,
13 potentially suitable habitat does not occur on the SEZ; however, potentially suitable habitat may
14 occur in the area of indirect effects (within 5 mi [8 km] west of the SEZ boundary
15 [Table 11.3.12.1-1]).

18 **Yellow Two-Tone Beardtongue**

19
20 The yellow two-tone beardtongue is a perennial forb endemic to Clark County, Nevada
21 on mostly BLM lands in the vicinity of Las Vegas. This species occurs on calcareous or
22 carbonate soils in washes, roadsides, rock crevices, or outcrops at elevations between 2,500 and
23 5,500 ft (760 and 1,675 m). This species is known to occur in the affected area of the SEZ about
24 2 mi (3 km) west of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable
25 habitat for this species may occur on the SEZ and in portions of the area of indirect effects
26 (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

29 **Mojave Gypsum Bee**

30
31 The Mojave gypsum bee is an insect endemic to Nevada, where the species is restricted
32 to gypsum soils associated with habitats of its single larval host plant, silverleaf sunray. Such
33 habitats include warm desert shrub communities, dry, open, relatively barren areas on gypsum
34 badlands, and volcanic gravels. This species is known to occur about 8 mi (13 km) south of the
35 SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable habitat for this species
36 may occur on the SEZ and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

39 **Mojave Poppy Bee**

40
41 The Mojave poppy bee is an insect known only from Clark County, Nevada, where it is
42 dependent on poppy plants (*Arctemocon* spp.). Such habitats include roadsides, washes, and
43 barren desert areas. The nearest recorded occurrence of this species is from the vicinity of
44 Lake Mead approximately 17 mi (27 km) south of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land
45 cover model, potentially suitable habitat for this species may occur on the SEZ and in portions
46 of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

1 **Gila Monster**

2
3 The Gila monster is a desert lizard with a scattered distribution in the Mojave and
4 Sonoran Deserts. This species inhabits areas of rocky, deeply incised topography, including
5 canyon bottoms, rocky bajadas, washes, desert scrub, desert riparian areas, oak woodlands, and
6 semi-arid grasslands. This species is known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. According to the
7 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable habitat for this species may occur on
8 the SEZ and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

9
10
11 **American Peregrine Falcon**

12
13 The American peregrine falcon occurs throughout the western United States in areas with
14 high vertical cliffs and bluffs that overlook large open areas such as deserts, shrublands, and
15 woodlands. Nests are usually constructed on rock outcrops and cliff faces. Foraging habitat
16 varies from shrublands and wetlands to farmland and urban areas. Nearest occurrences of this
17 species are in the vicinity of Las Vegas about 22 mi (35 km) southwest of the SEZ. According to
18 the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable year-round foraging habitat for the
19 American peregrine falcon may occur within the affected area of the Dry Lake SEZ. Most of the
20 suitable habitat for this species in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by desert
21 shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no potentially
22 suitable nesting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ, but approximately 11,600 acres
23 (47 km²) of potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.

24
25
26 **Crissal Thrasher**

27
28 The crissal thrasher is a year-round resident in the deserts of southeastern California,
29 southern Nevada, and western Arizona. The species is known to occur in Clark County, Nevada.
30 This species nests and forages in dense thickets of mesquite or low trees in desert riparian and
31 desert wash habitats. Individuals may occasionally occur in pinyon-juniper habitats. According
32 to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable year-round foraging and nesting
33 habitat for the crissal thrasher may occur on the SEZ and in portions of the area of indirect
34 effects (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

35
36
37 **Ferruginous Hawk**

38
39 The ferruginous hawk occurs throughout the western United States. According to the
40 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable winter foraging habitat for this species
41 occurs only within the affected area of the Dry Lake SEZ. This species inhabits open grasslands,
42 sagebrush flats, desert scrub, and the edges of pinyon-juniper woodlands. This species is known
43 to occur in Clark County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model,
44 suitable foraging habitat for the ferruginous hawk may occur on the SEZ and in portions of the
45 area of indirect effects (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

1 **LeConte’s Thrasher**

2
3 The LeConte’s thrasher is an uncommon year-round resident in Arizona, southern
4 California, and southern Nevada. This species inhabits saltbush-cholla scrub communities in
5 desert flats, dunes, or alluvial fans. This species is known to occur in Clark County, Nevada.
6 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable year-round foraging
7 and nesting habitat for the LeConte’s thrasher may occur on the SEZ and in portions of the area
8 of indirect effects (Table 11.3.12.1-1). The availability of nest sites within the affected area has
9 not been determined, but desert scrub habitat that may be suitable for either foraging or nesting
10 occurs throughout the affected area.
11

12
13 **Phainopepla**

14
15 The phainopepla occurs in the southwestern United States and Mexico in desert scrub,
16 mesquite, and pinyon-juniper woodland communities, as well as desert riparian areas and
17 orchards. Nests are typically constructed in trees and shrubs 3 to 45 ft (1 to 15 m) above the
18 ground. This species is known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP
19 habitat suitability model, potentially suitable foraging or nesting habitat for this species may
20 occur on the SEZ and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Potentially
21 suitable nesting habitat in riparian areas in the Moapa Valley and other locations outside of the
22 5-mi (8-km) area surrounding the SEZ could be affected by groundwater withdrawals from the
23 Garnet Valley regional groundwater system for construction and operations of solar energy
24 facilities on the Dry Lake SEZ.
25

26
27 **Western Burrowing Owl**

28
29 The western burrowing owl forages in grasslands, shrublands, open disturbed areas,
30 and nests in burrows usually constructed by mammals. This species occurs in Clark County,
31 Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the western burrowing owl,
32 potentially suitable year-round foraging and nesting habitat may occur in the affected area of the
33 Dry Lake SEZ. Potentially suitable foraging and breeding habitat is expected to occur on the
34 SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.3.12.1-1). The availability of nest sites
35 (burrows) within the affected area has not been determined, but shrubland habitat that may be
36 suitable for either foraging or nesting occurs throughout the affected area.
37

38
39 **Big Free-Tailed Bat**

40
41 The big free-tailed bat is a year-round resident in the Dry Lake SEZ region, where it
42 forages in a variety of habitats including coniferous forests and desert shrublands. The species
43 roosts in rock crevices or in buildings. This species is known to occur in Clark County, Nevada.
44 The SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the big free-tailed bat indicates that potentially
45 suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area
46 (Table 11.3.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no

1 potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ, but approximately
2 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
3 effects.
4

6 **Brazilian Free-Tailed Bat**

7
8 The Brazilian free-tailed bat is known from isolated locations throughout the
9 southwestern United States and is considered to be a year-round resident in the Dry Lake SEZ
10 region. The species roosts in buildings, caves, mines, and hollow trees. Foraging occurs in desert
11 grasslands, old fields, savannas, shrublands, woodlands, and urban areas. This species is known
12 to occur in Clark County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model,
13 potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected
14 area (Table 11.3.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is
15 no potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ, but approximately
16 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
17 effects.
18

19 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

20
21
22 The Nelson's bighorn sheep is one of several subspecies of bighorn sheep known to occur
23 in the southwestern United States. This species occurs in desert mountain ranges in Arizona,
24 California, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah. The Nelson's bighorn sheep uses primarily montane
25 shrubland, forest, and grassland habitats and may utilize desert valleys as corridors for travel
26 between range habitats. This species is known to occur in the Sheep Mountains, approximately
27 5 mi (8 km) west of the Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model,
28 potentially suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ. However, information
29 provided by the NDOW indicates that a portion of the year-round range for the Nelson's bighorn
30 sheep intersects the SEZ. Despite the apparent lack of suitable habitat on the SEZ, this species
31 may utilize portions of the Dry Lake SEZ as a migratory corridor between mountain ranges.
32 Potentially suitable habitat for the Nelson's bighorn sheep occurs in the area of indirect effects
33 (within 5 mi [8 km] outside the SEZ boundary [Table 11.3.12.1-1]).
34
35

36 **Pallid Bat**

37
38 The pallid bat is a large pale bat with large ears common in desert grasslands and
39 shrublands in the southwestern United States. It roosts in caves, crevices, and mines. The species
40 is a year-round resident throughout the Dry Lake SEZ region. The nearest recorded occurrence is
41 from the Desert NWR, approximately 10 mi (16 km) west of the SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat
42 may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.3.12.1-1). On the basis
43 of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no potentially suitable roosting habitat
44 (rocky cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ, but approximately 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially
45 suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
46
47

1 **Silver-Haired Bat**

2
3 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, the silver-haired bat is a year-
4 round resident in the Dry Lake SEZ region, where it occurs in montane forested habitats such as
5 aspen, pinyon-juniper, and spruce communities. Foraging may occur in desert shrubland habitats.
6 This species roosts in tree foliage, cavities, or under loose bark. The species is known to occur
7 about 15 mi (24 km) northeast of the SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat may occur on the SEZ
8 and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.3.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of
9 SWReGAP land cover types, there is no potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs,
10 outcrops, and woodlands) on the SEZ, but approximately 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially
11 suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
12

13
14 **Spotted Bat**

15
16 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, the spotted bat is a year-round
17 resident in the Dry Lake SEZ region, where it occurs in a variety of forested and shrubland
18 habitats. It roosts in caves and rock crevices. The species is known to occur in the vicinity of
19 Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 16 mi (26 km) southwest of the SEZ. Potentially suitable
20 habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.3.12.1-1). On
21 the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no potentially suitable roosting
22 habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ, but approximately 11,600 acres (47 km²) of
23 potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
24

25
26 **Townsend’s Big-Eared Bat**

27
28 The Townsend’s big-eared bat is widely distributed throughout the western United States.
29 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, the species forages year-round in a wide
30 variety of desert and nondesert habitats in the Dry Lake SEZ region. The species roosts in caves,
31 mines, tunnels, buildings, and other man-made structures. The nearest recorded occurrence is
32 from the Desert National Wildlife Range, approximately 10 mi (16 km) west of the SEZ.
33 Potentially suitable habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area
34 (Table 11.3.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no
35 potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ, but approximately
36 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
37 effects.
38

39
40 **Western Small-Footed Bat**

41
42 The western small-footed bat is widely distributed throughout the western United States.
43 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, this species is a year-round resident in
44 southern Nevada, where it occupies a wide variety of desert and nondesert habitats, including
45 cliffs and rock outcrops, grasslands, shrubland, and mixed woodlands. The species roosts in
46 caves, mines, tunnels, beneath boulders or loose bark, buildings, and other man-made structures.

1 The nearest recorded occurrence is from the Desert NWR, approximately 10 mi (16 km) west of
2 the SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected
3 area (Table 11.3.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is
4 no potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ, but approximately
5 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
6 effects.

9 **Groundwater-Dependent Species**

10
11 Four BLM-designated sensitive species not present within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ
12 boundary do occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge from the Garnet Valley regional
13 groundwater system. Groundwater pumped from that system for solar energy development on
14 the Dry Lake SEZ could affect aquatic and riparian habitats dependent on that groundwater.
15 The following BLM-designated sensitive species inhabit areas dependent upon groundwater
16 discharge in the SEZ region: Pahrnagat Naucorid, Spring Mountains springsnail, southwestern
17 toad, and phainopepla. The phainopepla is discussed above.

18
19
20 ***Pahrnagat Naucorid.*** The Pahrnagat naucorid is an aquatic insect known to occur only
21 in the Muddy and White River Basins in southern Nevada. It inhabits warm quiet waters of
22 spring-fed systems. The nearest recorded occurrence is from Big Muddy Spring, approximately
23 15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

24
25
26 ***Spring Mountains Springsnail.*** The Spring Mountains springsnail is endemic to
27 freshwater springs of the Spring Mountains in southern Nevada. This species is known to occur
28 in Clark County, Nevada. The amount of suitable habitat for this species in the SEZ region has
29 not been determined (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

30
31
32 ***Southwestern Toad.*** The southwestern toad is an amphibian that occupies scattered
33 habitats in Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. It occurs in woodlands and low-elevation
34 riparian habitats in association with permanent or semipermanent water bodies. The nearest
35 recorded occurrence of this species is from riparian areas along the Meadow Valley Wash,
36 approximately 50 mi (80 km) north of the SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

37 38 39 **11.3.12.1.5 State-Listed Species**

40
41 There are 18 species listed by the State of Nevada that may occur in the Dry Lake SEZ
42 affected area (Table 11.3.12.1-1). These state-listed species include the following: (1) plants:
43 Las Vegas bearpoppy, sticky buckwheat, and threecorner milkvetch; (2) fish: Moapa dace,
44 Moapa speckled dace, Moapa White River springfish, and Pahrump poolfish; (3) reptile: desert
45 tortoise; (4) birds: American peregrine falcon, LeConte's thrasher, phainopepla, and
46 southwestern willow flycatcher; and (5) mammals: Brazilian free-tailed bat, pallid bat, spotted

1 bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, and western mastiff bat. All these species are protected in Nevada
2 under NRS 501 or NRS 527. Of these species, the following four have not been previously
3 described because of their status under the ESA or BLM: Las Vegas bearpoppy, sticky
4 buckwheat, threecorner milkvetch, and western mastiff bat. These species as related to the SEZ
5 are described in this section and in Table 11.3.12.1-1. Additional life history information for
6 these species is provided in Appendix J.

9 **Las Vegas Bearpoppy**

10
11 The Las Vegas bearpoppy is a perennial forb known from only northwestern Arizona and
12 southern Nevada. This species occurs in open, dry, spongy or powdery, or hummocked soils with
13 high gypsum content, typically with well-developed soil crust, in areas of generally low relief
14 with a sparse cover of other gypsum-tolerant species. This species is known to occur in the
15 affected area of the Dry Lake SEZ, as near as 5 mi (8 km) south of the SEZ. According to the
16 SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs on the SEZ and
17 in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

19 **Sticky Buckwheat**

20
21
22 The sticky buckwheat is a perennial forb known only from Clark County, Nevada, and
23 Mohave County, Arizona. This species is dependent on sand dune communities, where it occurs
24 on deep, loose sandy soils in washes, flats, roadsides, steep aeolian slopes, and stabilized dunes
25 at elevation between 1,200 and 2,200 ft (365 and 670 m). The nearest recorded occurrences of
26 this species are approximately 21 mi (34 km) northeast of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP
27 land cover model, potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs on the SEZ and in portions
28 of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

31 **Threecorner Milkvetch**

32
33 The threecorner milkvetch is a perennial forb known only from Clark County, Nevada,
34 and Mohave County, Arizona. This species inhabits open, deep sandy soils, desert washes, or
35 dunes, generally stabilized by vegetation and/or a gravel veneer at elevations between 1,500 and
36 2,500 ft (455 and 760 m). The threecorner milkvetch was identified in the scoping comments
37 by the USFWS for the Dry Lake SEZ (Stout 2009); it is a USFWS species of concern. This
38 species is known to occur in the affected area of the SEZ, about 1 mi (1.6 km) east of the SEZ.
39 According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs
40 on the SEZ and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

43 **Western Mastiff Bat**

44
45 The western mastiff bat is an uncommon year-round resident in Arizona and southern
46 California; the species is a summer resident in southern Nevada. The western mastiff bat

1 occupies a wide variety of open semiarid habitats, including conifer and deciduous woodlands,
2 shrublands, grasslands, chaparral, and urban areas. The species roosts in crevices in cliff faces,
3 buildings, and tall trees. Nearest occurrences are from the vicinity of Las Vegas, approximately
4 20 mi southwest of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially
5 suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ. However, potentially suitable
6 foraging or roosting habitat may occur in portions of the area of indirect effects
7 (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
8
9

10 **11.3.12.1.6 Rare Species**

11
12 There are 60 rare species (i.e., state rank of S1 or S2 in Nevada or a species of concern
13 by the USFWS or State of Nevada) that may be affected by solar energy development on the
14 Dry Lake SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Of these species, 15 have not been discussed previously:
15 (1) plants: Ackerman milkvetch, Antelope Canyon goldenbush, bearded screwmoss, beaver dam
16 breadroot, Charleston goldenbush, dune sunflower, Littlefield milkvetch, Meadow Valley
17 sandwort, mottled milkvetch, New York Mountains catseye, rough fringemoss, sweet moustache
18 moss, and Virgin River thistle; and (2) invertebrates: red-tailed blazing star bee and Warm
19 Springs naucorid. These species as related to the SEZ are described in Table 11.3.12.1-1.
20
21

22 **11.3.12.2 Impacts**

23
24 The potential for impacts on special status species from utility-scale solar energy
25 development within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is presented in this section. The types of
26 impacts that special status species could incur from construction and operation of utility-scale
27 solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.4.
28

29 The assessment of impacts on special status species is based on available information on
30 the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.3.12.1, following the
31 analysis approach described in Appendix M. It is assumed that, prior to development, surveys
32 would be conducted to determine the presence of special status species and their habitats in and
33 near areas where ground-disturbing activities would occur. Additional NEPA assessments, ESA
34 consultations, and coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address
35 project-specific impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in
36 additional required actions to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts on special status species
37 (see Section 11.3.12.3).
38

39 Solar energy development within the Dry Lake SEZ could affect a variety of habitats
40 (see Sections 11.3.9 and 11.3.10). These impacts on habitats could in turn affect special status
41 species dependent on those habitats. Based on NNHP records, the following 7 special status
42 species are known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary: Las Vegas bearpoppy,
43 Meadow Valley sandwort, rosy two-tone beardtongue, threecorner milkvetch, yellow two-tone
44 beardtongue, desert tortoise, and Nelson's bighorn sheep. There are 15 species that occur more
45 than 5 mi (8 km) from the SEZ boundary in aquatic and riparian habitats (particularly within the
46 Moapa Valley) that could be affected by groundwater withdrawals from the Garnet Valley

1 regional groundwater system. These species include the following: (1) invertebrates: graded
2 tryonia, Moapa pebblesnail, Moapa Valley pebblesnail, Moapa Warm Spring riffle beetle,
3 Pahranaagat naucorid, Spring Mountain springsnail, and Warm Springs naucorid; (2) fish: Moapa
4 dace, Moapa speckled dace, Moapa White River springfish, Pahrump poolfish; (3) amphibian:
5 southwestern toad; and (4) birds: phainopepla and southwestern willow flycatcher. Withdrawals
6 from this regional groundwater system may be needed to support construction and operations of
7 solar energy facilities on the Dry Lake SEZ, and these could in turn affect special status species
8 with habitats dependent on groundwater. Other special status species may occur on the SEZ or
9 within the affected area based on the presence of potentially suitable habitat. As discussed in
10 Section 11.3.12.1, this approach to identifying the species that could occur in the affected area
11 probably overestimates the number of species that actually occur in the affected area, and may
12 therefore overestimate impacts on some special status species.

13
14 Impacts on special status species could occur during all phases of development
15 (construction, operation, and decommissioning and reclamation) of a utility-scale solar energy
16 project within the SEZ. Construction and operation activities could result in short- or long-term
17 impacts on individuals and their habitats, especially if these activities are sited in areas where
18 special status species are known to or could occur. As presented in Section 11.3.1.2, impacts of
19 access road and transmission line construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this
20 evaluation due to the proximity of existing infrastructure to the SEZ.

21
22 Direct impacts would result from habitat destruction or modification. It is assumed that
23 direct impacts would occur only within the SEZ, where ground-disturbing activities are expected
24 to occur. Indirect impacts could result from groundwater withdrawals, surface water and
25 sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental
26 spills, harassment, and lighting. No ground-disturbing activities associated with project
27 developments are anticipated to occur within the area of indirect effects. Decommissioning of
28 facilities and reclamation of disturbed areas after operations cease could result in short-term
29 negative impacts on individuals and habitats adjacent to project areas, but long-term benefits
30 would accrue if original land contours and native plant communities were restored in previously
31 disturbed areas.

32
33 The successful implementation of programmatic design features (discussed in
34 Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would reduce direct impacts on some special status species,
35 especially those that depend on habitat types that can be easily avoided (e.g., desert dunes,
36 washes, and playas). Indirect impacts on special status species could be reduced to negligible
37 levels by implementing programmatic design features, especially those engineering controls that
38 would reduce groundwater consumption, runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust.

39 40 41 ***11.3.12.2.1 Impacts on Species Listed under the ESA***

42
43 In scoping comments on the proposed Dry Lake SEZ (Stout 2009), the USFWS
44 expressed concern for impacts of project development within the SEZ on habitat for the
45 Mojave population of the desert tortoise—a species listed as threatened under the ESA. In
46 addition, three other species listed under the ESA may be affected by solar energy development

1 (particularly groundwater withdrawals) on the Dry Lake SEZ: Moapa dace, Pahrump poolfish,
2 and southwestern willow flycatcher. Impacts on these species are discussed below and
3 summarized in Table 11.3.12.1-1.
4

6 **Desert Tortoise**

7

8 The Mojave population of the desert tortoise is listed as threatened under the ESA and the
9 species is known to occur on the Dry Lake SEZ and within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary
10 (Figure 11.3.12.1-1). According to the USFWS (Stout 2009), desert tortoise populations have the
11 potential to occur on the Dry Lake SEZ, and designated critical habitat for this species occurs in
12 the Mormon Mesa critical habitat unit west of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.12.1-1). According to the
13 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 15,000 acres (61 km²) of potentially suitable
14 habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations of solar energy
15 development on the SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents about 0.5% of
16 available suitable habitat of the desert tortoise in the region. About 106,250 acres (430 km²) of
17 suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area represents about 3.8% of
18 the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
19

20 Based on estimates of desert tortoise density in the Mormon Mesa critical habitat unit
21 adjacent to the western border of the SEZ, the USFWS estimated that full-scale solar energy
22 development on the SEZ may directly affect up to 213 desert tortoises on the SEZ
23 (USFWS 2009b). In addition to direct impacts, development on the SEZ could indirectly affect
24 desert tortoises by fragmenting and degrading habitats between the Mormon Mesa critical habitat
25 unit and other potentially suitable habitats in the vicinity of the Dry Lake SEZ. Fragmentation
26 would be exacerbated by the installation of exclusionary fencing at the perimeter of the SEZ or
27 individual project areas.
28

29 The overall impact on the desert tortoise from construction, operation, and
30 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
31 small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of direct
32 effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The implementation
33 of programmatic design features alone is unlikely to reduce these impacts to negligible levels.
34 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats for this species is not a feasible means of mitigating
35 impacts, because these habitats (desert scrub) are widespread throughout the area of direct
36 effects. Pre-disturbance surveys to determine the abundance of desert tortoises on the SEZ, to
37 remove them from the affected area, and the implementation of a desert tortoise translocation
38 plan and compensation plan could be used to reduce direct impacts.
39

40 Development of actions to reduce impacts (e.g., reasonable and prudent alternatives,
41 reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions of incidental take statements) for the
42 desert tortoise, including development of a survey protocol, avoidance measures, minimization
43 measures, and, potentially, translocation actions, and compensatory mitigation, would require
44 formal consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the ESA. Consultation with the NDOW
45 should also occur to determine any state mitigation requirements.
46

1 There are inherent dangers to tortoises associated with their capture, handling, and
2 translocation from the SEZ. These actions, if done improperly, can result in injury or death. To
3 minimize these risks and as stated above, the desert tortoise translocation plan should be
4 developed in consultation with the USFWS, and follow the *Guidelines for Handling Desert*
5 *Tortoises During Construction Projects* (Desert Tortoise Council 1994) and other current
6 translocation guidance provided by the USFWS. Consultation will identify potentially suitable
7 recipient locations, density thresholds for tortoise populations in recipient locations, procedures
8 for pre-disturbance clearance surveys and tortoise handling, as well as disease testing and post-
9 translocation monitoring and reporting requirements. Despite some risk of mortality or decreased
10 fitness, translocation is widely accepted as a useful strategy for the conservation of the desert
11 tortoise (Field et al. 2007).

12
13 To offset impacts of solar development on the SEZ, compensatory mitigation may be
14 needed to balance the acreage of habitat lost with acquisition of lands that would be improved
15 and protected for desert tortoise populations (USFWS 1994). Compensation can be accomplished
16 by improving the carrying capacity for the desert tortoise on the acquired lands. Other mitigation
17 actions may include funding for the habitat enhancement of the desert tortoise on existing federal
18 lands. Consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW would be necessary to determine the
19 appropriate mitigation ratio to acquire, enhance, and preserve desert tortoise compensation lands.

20 21 22 **Southwestern Willow Flycatcher**

23
24 The southwestern willow flycatcher is listed as endangered under the ESA and is known
25 to occur in the Moapa and Virgin River Valleys, approximately 20 mi (32 km) east of the
26 Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, suitable habitat for this
27 species does not occur on the SEZ. However, approximately 50 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially
28 suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ; this
29 area represents less than 0.1% of the available suitable habitat in the SEZ region
30 (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

31
32 Riparian habitats in the vicinity of the Dry Lake SEZ (particularly within the Moapa
33 Valley) that may provide suitable nesting and foraging habitat for the southwestern willow
34 flycatcher may be affected by spring discharges associated with the Garnet Valley regional
35 groundwater system. Withdrawals from this system for solar energy development on the
36 Dry Lake SEZ could reduce groundwater discharge in these riparian areas, thus affecting habitat
37 availability and quality for the southwestern willow flycatcher. As discussed for below for other
38 groundwater-dependent species, impacts on this species could range from small to large
39 depending upon the solar energy technology deployed, the scale of development within the SEZ,
40 and the cumulative rate of groundwater withdrawals (Table 11.3.12.1-1). However, direct
41 impacts on this species or its habitats are not likely to occur, because suitable habitats do not
42 exist on the SEZ.

43
44 The implementation of programmatic design features and complete avoidance or
45 limitations of groundwater withdrawals from the regional groundwater system could reduce

1 impacts on the southwestern willow flycatcher to small or negligible levels. Impacts can be
2 better quantified for specific projects once water needs are identified.

3
4 Development of actions to reduce impacts (e.g., reasonable and prudent alternatives,
5 reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions of incidental take statements) for the
6 southwestern willow flycatcher, including development of a survey protocol, avoidance
7 measures, minimization measures, and, potentially, compensatory mitigation, would require
8 formal consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the ESA. Consultation with the NDOW
9 should also occur to determine any state mitigation requirements.

12 **Groundwater-Dependent Species**

13
14 There are two species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA that do not occur
15 within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary but do occur in areas dependent on groundwater
16 discharge from the Garnet Valley basin: the Moapa dace (endangered) and the Pahrump poolfish
17 (endangered). Groundwater withdrawn from this basin for construction and operations of solar
18 energy facilities on the Dry Lake SEZ could affect aquatic and riparian habitats within the SEZ
19 region, including habitat for the ESA-listed species dependent on groundwater. Such impacts
20 would result from the lowering of the water table and alteration of hydrologic processes.

21
22 Impacts of groundwater depletion from solar energy development in the Dry Lake SEZ
23 cannot be quantified without identification of the cumulative amount of groundwater
24 withdrawals needed to support development on the SEZ. Consequently, the overall impact on
25 these species could range from small to large and would depend in part on the solar energy
26 technology deployed, the scale of development within the SEZ, the type of cooling system used,
27 and the degree of influence water withdrawals in the SEZ on drawdown and surface water
28 discharges in habitats supporting these species (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

29
30 The implementation of programmatic design features and complete avoidance or
31 limitations of groundwater withdrawals from the regional groundwater system would reduce
32 impacts on the groundwater-dependent species to small or negligible levels. Impacts can be
33 better quantified for specific projects once water needs are identified through application of a
34 regional groundwater model.

37 ***11.3.12.2.2 Impacts on Species That Are Candidates for Listing under the ESA***

38
39 In scoping comments on the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, the USFWS did not mention any
40 species that are candidates for listing under the ESA that may be affected by solar energy
41 development on the SEZ (Stout 2009). However, one ESA candidate species—the Las Vegas
42 buckwheat—may occur within the affected area of the Dry Lake SEZ. This species is endemic
43 to southern Nevada in the vicinity of Las Vegas. The Las Vegas buckwheat inhabits areas of
44 gypsum soils, washes and drainages, or areas of low relief at elevations between 1,900 and
45 3,850 ft (580 and 1,175 m). The nearest recorded occurrence of this species is approximately
46 12 mi (19 km) southwest of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.12.1-1; Table 11.3.12.1-1). According to the

1 SWReGAP land cover model, approximately 425 acres (2 km²) of potentially suitable desert
2 wash habitat on the SEZ may be directly affected by construction and operations of solar energy
3 development on the SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents about 0.7% of
4 available suitable habitat in the region. About 3,400 acres (14 km²) of potentially suitable desert
5 wash habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area represents about 5.4% of the
6 available potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

7
8 The overall impact on the Las Vegas buckwheat from construction, operation, and
9 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
10 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
11 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
12 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

13
14 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat on the SEZ could reduce
15 direct impacts on this species. In addition, pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing
16 disturbance to occupied habitats on the SEZ could reduce impacts. If avoidance or minimization
17 is not a feasible option, plants could be translocated from the area of direct effects to protected
18 areas that would not be affected directly or indirectly by future development. Alternatively, or in
19 combination with translocation, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and
20 implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the
21 protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats
22 lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or more of these options
23 could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development. The potential for impact and
24 need for mitigation should be developed in coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW.

25 26 27 ***11.3.12.2.3 Impacts on Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA***

28
29 There are six species currently under review for ESA listing that may be affected by solar
30 energy development on the Dry Lake SEZ: the grated tryonia, Moapa pebblesnail, Moapa Valley
31 pebblesnail, Moapa Warm Springs riffle beetle, Moapa speckled dace, and Moapa White River
32 springfish. These species do not occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, but they do
33 occur in the Muddy (Moapa) River system, which is located between 15 and 20 mi (24 and
34 32 km) north and northeast of the Dry Lake SEZ and is hydrologically connected to groundwater
35 in the Garnet Valley. Groundwater from the Garnet Valley basin may be used to support solar
36 energy development on the Dry Lake SEZ. Potential impacts on these species (which could
37 range from small to large) and mitigations that could reduce those impacts would be similar to
38 those described for groundwater-dependent ESA-listed species in Section 11.3.12.2.1. For all
39 these species, potential impacts and mitigation options should be discussed with the USFWS
40 prior to project development.

41 42 43 ***11.3.12.2.4 Impacts on BLM-Designated Sensitive Species***

44
45 There are 30 BLM-designated sensitive species that are not previously discussed as listed
46 under the ESA, candidates, or under review for ESA listing. Impacts on these BLM-designated

1 sensitive species that may be affected by solar energy development on the Dry Lake SEZ are
2 discussed below.

3
4
5 **Alkali Mariposa Lily**
6

7 The alkali mariposa lily is known to occur approximately 21 mi (34 km) southwest of the
8 Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable alkaline
9 seeps and springs do not occur on the SEZ. However, approximately 375 acres (2 km²) of
10 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents 0.5% of the
11 available suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
12

13 The overall impact on the alkali mariposa lily from construction, operation, and
14 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
15 small, because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of direct effects
16 and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design features is
17 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
18

19
20 **Gold Butte Moss**
21

22 The Gold Butte moss is known to occur approximately 15 mi (24 km) southeast of the
23 Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable rocky cliffs
24 and outcrops do not occur on the SEZ. However, approximately 11,600 acres (47 km²) of
25 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents 3.2% of the
26 available suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
27

28 The overall impact on the Gold Butte moss from construction, operation, and
29 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
30 small, because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of direct effects
31 and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design features is
32 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
33

34
35 **Halfring Milkvetch**
36

37 The halfring milkvetch is known to occur approximately 15 mi (24 km) northwest of the
38 Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, approximately 425 acres (2 km²)
39 of potentially suitable desert wash habitat on the SEZ may be directly affected by construction
40 and operations of solar energy development (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area
41 represents about 0.7% of available suitable habitat in the region. About 15,000 acres (61 km²) of
42 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area represents
43 about 3.6% of the available potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
44

45 The overall impact on the halfring milkvetch from construction, operation, and
46 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered

1 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
2 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
3 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
4

5 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat on the SEZ may reduce direct
6 impacts to negligible levels. Impacts also could be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance
7 surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects.
8 If avoidance or minimization is not a feasible option, plants could be translocated from the area
9 of direct effects to protected areas that would not be affected directly or indirectly by future
10 development. Alternatively, or in combination with translocation, a compensatory mitigation
11 plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats.
12 Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable
13 habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy
14 that uses one or more of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of
15 development.
16
17

18 **Parish's Phacelia**

19
20 The Parish's phacelia is known to occur approximately 19 mi (30 km) southwest of the
21 Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, approximately 430 acres (2 km²)
22 of potentially suitable desert wash and playa habitats on the SEZ may be directly affected by
23 construction and operations of solar energy development (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects
24 area represents about 0.5% of available suitable habitat in the region. About 4,100 acres
25 (17 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area
26 represents about 5.0% of the available potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region
27 (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
28

29 The overall impact on the Parish's phacelia from construction, operation, and
30 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
31 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
32 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
33 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
34

35 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and playa habitats in the area of
36 direct effects and the implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the
37 halfring milkvetch could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need for
38 mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-
39 disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
40
41

42 **Rosy Two-Tone Beardtongue**

43
44 The rosy two-tone beardtongue is known to occur on the Dry Lake SEZ and in other
45 portions of the affected area. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, approximately
46 550 acres (2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ may be directly affected by

1 construction and operations of solar energy development on the SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This
2 direct effects area is mostly desert wash habitat and represents 0.1% of available suitable habitat
3 in the region. About 15,500 acres (63 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
4 potential indirect effects; this area represents about 3.0% of the available suitable habitat in the
5 SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

6
7 The overall impact on the rosy two-tone beardtongue from construction, operation, and
8 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
9 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
10 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
11 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

12
13 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects
14 and the implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the halfring milkvetch
15 could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need for mitigation, other
16 than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys
17 for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

18 19 20 **Rough Dwarf Greasebush**

21
22 The rough dwarf greasebush is known to occur approximately 17 mi (27 km) west of the
23 Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable rocky cliff
24 and outcrop and pinyon-juniper habitats for this species do not occur on the SEZ. However,
25 approximately 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect
26 effects (within 5 mi [8 km] of the SEZ); this area represents 1.9% of the available suitable habitat
27 in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

28
29 The overall impact on the rough dwarf greasebush from construction, operation, and
30 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
31 small, because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of direct effects
32 and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design features is
33 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

34 35 36 **Sheep Fleabane**

37
38 The sheep fleabane is known to occur approximately 17 mi (27 km) northwest of the
39 Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable rocky cliff
40 and outcrop and pinyon-juniper habitats for this species do not occur on the SEZ. However,
41 approximately 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect
42 effects within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ; this area represents 2.0% of the available suitable habitat
43 in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

44
45 The overall impact on the sheep fleabane from construction, operation, and
46 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered

1 small, because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of direct effects
2 and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design features is
3 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
4
5

6 **Sheep Mountain Milkvetch**

7

8 The Sheep Mountain milkvetch is known to occur about 6 mi (10 km) northwest of the
9 Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, approximately 12,500 acres
10 (51 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ may be directly affected by construction and
11 operations of solar energy development on the SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area
12 represents 0.3% of available suitable habitat in the region. About 131,100 acres (531 km²) of
13 potentially suitable grassland habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area
14 represents about 3.4% of the available suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
15

16 The overall impact on the Sheep Mountain milkvetch from construction, operation, and
17 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
18 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
19 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
20 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
21

22 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats (desert shrublands) is not a feasible means
23 of mitigating impacts on this species, because potentially suitable shrubland habitat is
24 widespread throughout the area of direct effects and in other portions of the SEZ region. For this
25 and all other special status plant species, impacts may be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance
26 surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects.
27 If avoidance or minimization is not feasible, plants could be translocated from the area of direct
28 effects to protected areas that would not be affected directly or indirectly by future development.
29 Alternatively, or in combination with translocation, a compensatory mitigation plan could be
30 developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could
31 involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate
32 for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that uses one or more of
33 these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development.
34
35

36 **Silverleaf Sunray**

37

38 The silverleaf sunray is known to occur about 15 mi (24 km) east of the Dry Lake SEZ.
39 According to the SWReGAP land cover model, approximately 425 acres (2 km²) of potentially
40 suitable desert pavement habitat on the SEZ may be directly affected by construction and
41 operations of solar energy development (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents
42 0.5% of available suitable habitat in the region. About 1,265 acres (5 km²) of potentially suitable
43 habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area represents about 1.4% of the
44 available suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
45

1 The overall impact on the silverleaf sunray from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
3 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
4 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
5 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
6

7 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert pavement habitat on the SEZ and the
8 implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the Sheep Mountain milkvetch
9 could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need for mitigation, other
10 than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys
11 for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
12
13

14 **White Bearpoppy**

15
16 The white bearpoppy is known to occur approximately 19 mi (30 km) southwest of the
17 Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable rocky cliff
18 and outcrops do not occur on the SEZ. However, approximately 11,600 acres (47 km²) of
19 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ;
20 this area represents 3.2% of the available suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
21

22 The overall impact on the white bearpoppy from construction, operation, and
23 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
24 small, because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of direct effects
25 and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design features is
26 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
27
28

29 **Yellow Two-Tone Beardtongue**

30
31 The yellow two-tone beardtongue is known to occur approximately 2 mi (3 km) west of
32 the Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, approximately 550 acres
33 (2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ may be directly affected by construction and
34 operations of solar energy development on the SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area
35 is mostly desert wash habitat and represents 0.1% of available suitable habitat in the region.
36 About 15,500 acres (63 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential
37 indirect effects; this area represents about 3.0% of the available suitable habitat in the SEZ
38 region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
39

40 The overall impact on the yellow two-tone beardtongue from construction, operation, and
41 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
42 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
43 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
44 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
45

1 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects
2 and the implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the halfring milkvetch
3 could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need for mitigation, other
4 than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys
5 for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
6
7

8 **Mojave Gypsum Bee** 9

10 The Mojave gypsum bee is known to occur about 8 mi (13 km) south of the Dry Lake
11 SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, approximately 12,500 acres (51 km²) of
12 potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ may be directly affected by construction and operations
13 of solar energy development (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents 0.3% of
14 available suitable habitat in the region. About 127,300 acres (515 km²) of potentially suitable
15 habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area represents about 3.3% of the
16 available suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
17

18 The overall impact on the Mojave gypsum bee from construction, operation, and
19 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
20 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
21 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
22 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
23

24 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats (desert shrublands and washes) is not a
25 feasible means of mitigating impacts on this species, because potentially suitable shrubland
26 habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effects and in other portions of the SEZ
27 region. Direct impacts could be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or
28 minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects. If avoidance or
29 minimization is not feasible, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and
30 implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the
31 protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats
32 lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that uses one or more of these options
33 could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development.
34
35

36 **Mojave Poppy Bee** 37

38 The Mojave poppy bee is known to occur about 17 mi (27 km) south of the Dry Lake
39 SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, approximately 550 acres (2 km²) of
40 potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ may be directly affected by construction and operations
41 of solar energy development (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area is mostly desert wash
42 habitat and represents 0.1% of available suitable habitat in the region. About 13,300 acres
43 (54 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area
44 represents about 3.2% of the available suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
45

1 The overall impact on the Mojave poppy bee from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
3 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
4 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
5 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
6

7 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat on the SEZ could reduce
8 direct impacts on this species. Direct impacts could also be reduced by conducting pre-
9 disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of
10 direct effects. If avoidance or minimization is not feasible, a compensatory mitigation plan could
11 be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation
12 could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to
13 compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that uses one
14 or more of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development.
15

16 **Gila Monster**

17
18
19 The Gila monster is known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. According to the
20 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 14,700 acres (59 km²) of potentially suitable
21 habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
22 This direct effects area represents about 0.5% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region.
23 About 124,100 acres (502 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect
24 effects; this area represents about 3.9% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region
25 (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
26

27 The overall impact on the Gila monster from construction, operation, and
28 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
29 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
30 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
31 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
32 impacts on this species to negligible levels.
33

34 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats (desert scrub) is not a feasible means of
35 mitigating impacts on this species, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout
36 the area of direct effects and in other portions of the SEZ region. Direct impacts could be
37 reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to
38 occupied habitats in the area of direct effects. If avoidance or minimization is not feasible,
39 individuals could be translocated from the area of direct effects to protected areas that would not
40 be affected directly or indirectly by future development. Alternatively, or in combination with
41 translocation, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate
42 direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement
43 of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A
44 comprehensive mitigation strategy that uses one or more of these options could be designed to
45 completely offset the impacts of development.
46
47

1 **American Peregrine Falcon**

2
3 The American peregrine falcon is a year-round resident in the Dry Lake SEZ region
4 and is known to occur about 22 mi (35 km) southwest of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP
5 habitat suitability model, approximately 14,900 acres (60 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on
6 the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This
7 direct effects area represents 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
8 137,700 acres (557 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects;
9 this area represents about 2.8% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region
10 (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Most of this area could serve as foraging habitat (open shrublands). On
11 the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable nest sites for this
12 species (rocky cliffs and outcrops) do not occur on the SEZ, but approximately 11,600 acres
13 (47 km²) of this habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects.
14

15 The overall impact on the American peregrine falcon from construction, operation, and
16 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
17 small, because direct effects would occur only on potentially suitable foraging habitat and the
18 amount of this habitat in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable
19 foraging habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is
20 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.
21 Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitats (desert shrublands) is not a feasible means
22 of mitigating impacts on this species, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread
23 throughout the area of direct effects and in other portions of the SEZ region.
24
25

26 **Crissal Thrasher**

27
28 The crissal thrasher is a year-round resident in the Dry Lake SEZ region and is known
29 to occur in Clark County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model,
30 approximately 350 acres (1.5 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could be directly
31 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents
32 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 3,440 acres (14 km²) of potentially
33 suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 4.2% of the
34 potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This potentially suitable
35 habitat on the SEZ and within the area of indirect effects may represent potentially suitable
36 nesting or foraging habitat for this species.
37

38 The overall impact on the crissal thrasher from construction, operation, and
39 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
40 small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat in the area of direct effects represents
41 less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of
42 programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this
43 species to negligible levels.
44

45 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and riparian habitat on the SEZ could
46 reduce impacts on the crissal thrasher. In addition, impacts could be reduced by conducting pre-

1 disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats (especially
2 nests) in the area of direct effects. If avoidance or minimization is not feasible, a compensatory
3 mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied
4 habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or
5 suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation
6 strategy that used one or both of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts
7 of development.
8
9

10 **Ferruginous Hawk**

11
12 The ferruginous hawk is a winter resident in the Dry Lake SEZ region and is known to
13 occur in Clark County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model,
14 approximately 340 acres (1.5 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ could be
15 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area
16 represents 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 15,150 acres (61 km²) of
17 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 3.6%
18 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
19

20 The overall impact on the ferruginous hawk from construction, operation, and
21 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
22 small, because direct effects would occur only on potentially suitable foraging habitat and the
23 amount of this habitat in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable
24 foraging habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is
25 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.
26 Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitats (desert shrublands) is not a feasible means
27 of mitigating impacts on this species, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread
28 throughout the area of direct effects and in other portions of the SEZ region.
29
30

31 **LeConte's Thrasher**

32
33 The LeConte's thrasher is a year-round resident in the Dry Lake SEZ region and is
34 known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model,
35 approximately 15,000 acres (61 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could be directly
36 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents
37 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 127,500 acres (516 km²) of
38 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 3.3%
39 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This potentially suitable
40 habitat on the SEZ and within the area of indirect effects may represent potentially suitable
41 nesting or foraging habitat for this species.
42

43 The overall impact on the LeConte's thrasher from construction, operation, and
44 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
45 small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat in the area of direct effects represents
46 less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of

1 programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this
2 species to negligible levels.

3
4 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats (desert scrub) is not a feasible means of
5 mitigating impacts on this species, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout
6 the area of direct effects and in other portions of the SEZ region. However, impacts could be
7 reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to
8 occupied habitats (especially nests) in the area of direct effects. If avoidance or minimization is
9 not feasible, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate
10 direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement
11 of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A
12 comprehensive mitigation strategy that uses one or both of these options could be designed to
13 completely offset the impacts of development.

14 15 16 **Phainopepla**

17
18 The phainopepla is a year-round resident in the Dry Lake SEZ region and is known to
19 occur in Clark County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model,
20 approximately 340 acres (1.5 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could be directly
21 affected by construction and operations of solar energy development (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This
22 direct effects area represents less than 0.1% of available suitable habitat of the phainopepla in
23 the SEZ region. About 9,850 acres (40 km²) of suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential
24 indirect effects; this area represents about 0.9% of the available suitable habitat in the region
25 (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

26
27 Riparian habitats in the Moapa Valley that may provide suitable nesting and foraging
28 habitat for the phainopepla may be affected by spring discharges associated with the Garnet
29 Valley regional groundwater basin. Solar energy development on the SEZ may require water
30 from the same regional groundwater basin that supports these riparian habitats. As discussed for
31 groundwater-dependent species in Section 11.3.12.2.1, impacts on this species could range from
32 small to large depending upon the solar energy technology deployed, the scale of development
33 within the SEZ, and the cumulative rate of groundwater withdrawals (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

34
35 The implementation of programmatic design features and complete avoidance or
36 limitation of groundwater withdrawals from the regional groundwater system would reduce
37 impacts on the phainopepla to small or negligible levels. Impacts can be better quantified for
38 specific projects once water needs are identified. In addition, avoiding or minimizing disturbance
39 to riparian areas on the SEZ would reduce direct impacts on the phainopepla. Impacts also could
40 be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to
41 occupied habitats (especially nests) in the area of direct effects. If avoidance or minimization is
42 not feasible, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate
43 direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement
44 of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A
45 comprehensive mitigation strategy that uses one or both of these options could be designed to
46 completely offset the impacts of development.

1 **Western Burrowing Owl**
2

3 The western burrowing owl is a year-round resident in the Dry Lake SEZ region and is
4 known to occur in Clark County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model,
5 approximately 14,750 acres (60 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could be directly
6 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents
7 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 125,500 acres (508 km²) of
8 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 3.1%
9 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Most of this area could
10 serve as foraging and nesting habitat (shrublands). The abundance of burrows suitable for nesting
11 in the affected area has not been determined.
12

13 The overall impact on the western burrowing owl from construction, operation, and
14 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
15 small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of direct
16 effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
17 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
18 impacts to negligible levels.
19

20 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts on
21 the western burrowing owl, because potentially suitable desert shrub habitats are widespread
22 throughout the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
23 Impacts on the western burrowing owl could be reduced to negligible levels by conducting pre-
24 disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of
25 direct effects. If avoidance or minimization is not feasible, a compensatory mitigation plan could
26 be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation
27 could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to
28 compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that uses
29 one or both of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development.
30 The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by
31 conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat in the area of direct effects.
32
33

34 **Big Free-Tailed Bat**
35

36 The big free-tailed bat is a year-round resident within the Dry Lake SEZ region, and
37 potentially suitable habitat may occur in the affected area of the SEZ. According to the
38 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 15,600 acres (63 km²) of potentially suitable
39 habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
40 This direct effects area represents 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
41 141,575 acres (573 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
42 area represents about 3.5% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
43 Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by
44 desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially
45 suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ, but about

1 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect
2 effects.

3
4 The overall impact on the big free-tailed bat from construction, operation, and
5 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
6 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
7 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
8 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
9 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
10 foraging habitat is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the
11 area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

12 13 14 **Brazilian Free-Tailed Bat**

15
16 The Brazilian free-tailed bat is a year-round resident within the Dry Lake SEZ region
17 and potentially suitable habitat may occur in the affected area of the SEZ. According to the
18 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 15,200 acres (62 km²) of potentially suitable
19 habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
20 This direct effects area represents 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
21 133,500 acres (540 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
22 area represents about 3.6% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
23 Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by
24 desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially
25 suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ, but about
26 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect
27 effects.

28
29 The overall impact on the Brazilian free-tailed bat from construction, operation, and
30 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
31 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
32 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
33 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
34 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
35 foraging habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout
36 the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

37 38 39 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

40
41 The Nelson's bighorn sheep is known to occur within the affected area of the Dry Lake
42 SEZ (Sheep Mountains), but suitable range habitat is not expected to occur on the SEZ.
43 However, approximately 8,400 acres (34 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
44 indirect effects; this area represents about 1.4% of the available suitable habitat in the region
45 (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Despite the apparent lack of suitable habitat on the SEZ, the Nelson's

1 bighorn sheep may utilize portions of the Dry Lake SEZ as a migratory corridor between range
2 habitats.

3
4 The overall impact on the Nelson's bighorn sheep from construction, operation, and
5 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
6 small, because no potentially suitable habitat for this species has been identified in the area of
7 direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design
8 features it expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.
9 Impacts on the Nelson's bighorn sheep could be further reduced by conducting pre-disturbance
10 surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to important movement corridors within the area
11 of direct effects.

12 13 14 **Pallid Bat**

15
16 The pallid bat is a year-round resident within the Dry Lake SEZ region, and potentially
17 suitable habitat may occur in the affected area of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat
18 suitability model, approximately 15,100 acres (62 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ
19 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects
20 area represents 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 134,100 acres
21 (543 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
22 about 3.6% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Most of the
23 potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by desert
24 shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable roost
25 habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ, but about 11,600 acres (47 km²) of
26 potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects.

27
28 The overall impact on the pallid bat from construction, operation, and decommissioning
29 of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered small, because the
30 amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of direct effects
31 represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region. The
32 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
33 impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging
34 habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the area of
35 direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

36 37 38 **Silver-Haired Bat**

39
40 The silver-haired bat is a year-round resident within the Dry Lake SEZ region, and
41 potentially suitable habitat may occur in the affected area of the SEZ. According to the
42 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 14,800 acres (62 km²) of potentially suitable
43 habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
44 This direct effects area represents 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
45 130,100 acres (526 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
46 area represents about 3.6% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

1 Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by
2 desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially
3 suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs, outcrops, and woodland habitat) does not occur on the SEZ,
4 but about 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of
5 indirect effects.

6
7 The overall impact on the silver-haired bat from construction, operation, and
8 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
9 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
10 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
11 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
12 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
13 foraging habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the
14 area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

15 16 17 **Spotted Bat**

18
19 The spotted bat is a year-round resident within the Dry Lake SEZ region, and potentially
20 suitable habitat may occur in the affected area of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat
21 suitability model, approximately 15,000 acres (61 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ
22 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects
23 area represents 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 139,300 acres
24 (564 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area
25 represents about 3.2% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Most of
26 the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by desert
27 shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable roost
28 habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ, but about 11,600 acres (47 km²) of
29 potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects.

30
31 The overall impact on the spotted bat from construction, operation, and decommissioning
32 of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered small, because the
33 amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of direct effects
34 represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region. The
35 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
36 impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging
37 habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the area of
38 direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

39 40 41 **Townsend's Big-Eared Bat**

42
43 The Townsend's big-eared bat is a year-round resident within the Dry Lake SEZ region,
44 and potentially suitable habitat may occur in the affected area. According to the SWReGAP
45 habitat suitability model, approximately 14,900 acres (60 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on
46 the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This

1 direct effects area represents 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
2 131,100 acres (530 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
3 area represents about 3.4% of the available suitable foraging habitat in the region
4 (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging
5 habitat represented by desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover
6 data, potentially suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ, but
7 about 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect
8 effects.
9

10 The overall impact on the Townsend's big-eared bat from construction, operation, and
11 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
12 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
13 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
14 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
15 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
16 foraging habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the
17 area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
18
19

20 **Western Small-Footed Myotis**

21
22 The western small-footed myotis is a year-round resident within the Dry Lake SEZ
23 region, and potentially suitable habitat may occur in the affected area. According to the
24 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 14,900 acres (60 km²) of potentially
25 suitable habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations
26 (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the
27 SEZ region. About 137,600 acres (557 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
28 indirect effects; this area represents about 3.2% of the available suitable foraging habitat in the
29 region (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging
30 habitat represented by desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover
31 data, potentially suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ, but
32 about 11,600 acres (47 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect
33 effects.
34

35 The overall impact on the western small-footed myotis from construction, operation, and
36 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
37 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
38 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
39 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
40 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
41 foraging habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout
42 the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
43
44
45

1 **Groundwater-Dependent Species**
2

3 There are four BLM-designated sensitive species that may be affected by solar energy
4 development on the Dry Lake SEZ: the Pahranaagat naucorid, Spring Mountains springsnail,
5 southwestern toad, and phainopepla. These species do not occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ
6 boundary, but they do occur in areas dependent on groundwater discharge from the Garnet
7 Valley groundwater basin, from which groundwater may also be used to support solar energy
8 development on the Dry Lake SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Potential impacts on these species
9 (which could range from small to large) and mitigations that could reduce those impacts
10 would be similar to those described for groundwater-dependent ESA-listed species in
11 Section 11.3.12.2.1. For all these species, potential impacts and mitigation options should be
12 discussed with the USFWS prior to project development. Additional impacts and mitigation
13 for the phainopepla are discussed above.
14

15
16 **11.3.12.2.5 Impacts on State-Listed Species**
17

18 There are 18 species listed by the State of Nevada that may be affected by solar energy
19 development on the Dry Lake SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Of these species, impacts on the
20 following four state-listed species have not been previously described: Las Vegas bearpoppy,
21 sticky buckwheat, threecorner milkvetch, and western mastiff bat. Impacts on each of these
22 four species are discussed below and summarized in Table 11.3.12.1-1.
23

24
25 **Las Vegas Bearpoppy**
26

27 The Las Vegas bearpoppy is known to occur within the affected area of the Dry Lake
28 SEZ, approximately 5 mi (8 km) south of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover
29 model, approximately 425 acres (2 km²) of potentially suitable desert pavement habitat on the
30 SEZ may be directly affected by construction and operations of solar energy development
31 (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents about 0.7% of available suitable habitat
32 in the region. About 1,250 acres (5 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
33 potential indirect effects; this area represents about 1.9% of the available potentially suitable
34 habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).
35

36 The overall impact on the Las Vegas bearpoppy from construction, operation, and
37 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
38 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
39 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
40 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
41

42 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert pavement habitat on the SEZ and the
43 implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the Sheep Mountain milkvetch
44 (Section 11.3.12.2.4) could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need
45 for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting
46 pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
47

1 **Sticky Buckwheat**

2
3 The sticky buckwheat is known to occur approximately 21 mi (34 km) northeast of the
4 Dry Lake SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, approximately 125 acres
5 (0.5 km²) of potentially suitable disturbed roadside habitat on the SEZ may be directly affected
6 by construction and operations of solar energy development (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct
7 effects area represents about 0.1% of available suitable habitat in the region. About 440 acres
8 (2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area
9 represents about 0.4% of the available potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region
10 (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

11
12 The overall impact on the sticky buckwheat from construction, operation, and
13 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
14 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
15 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient
16 to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels. In addition, the implementation of mitigation
17 measures described previously for the Sheep Mountain milkvetch (Section 11.3.12.2.4) could
18 reduce direct impacts on this species. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design
19 features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its
20 habitat on the SEZ.

21
22
23 **Threecorner Milkvetch**

24
25 The threecorner milkvetch is known to occur within the affected area of the Dry Lake
26 SEZ, approximately 1 mi (1.6 km) east of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover
27 model, approximately 850 acres (3.5 km²) of potentially suitable desert wash pavement habitats
28 on the SEZ may be directly affected by construction and operations of solar energy development
29 (Table 11.3.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents about 0.8% of available suitable habitat in
30 the region. About 4,700 acres (19 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
31 potential indirect effects; this area represents about 4.4% of the available potentially suitable
32 habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.3.12.1-1).

33
34 The overall impact on the threecorner milkvetch from construction, operation, and
35 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
36 small, because less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
37 direct effects. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
38 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

39
40 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and pavement habitats on the SEZ
41 and the implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the Sheep Mountain
42 milkvetch (Section 11.3.12.2.4) could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels.
43 The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by
44 conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

1 **Western Mastiff Bat**
2

3 The western mastiff bat is a summer resident in the Dry Lake SEZ region and is known to
4 occur approximately 20 mi (32 km) southwest of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat
5 suitability model, potentially suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ
6 (Table 11.3.12.1-1). However, about 200 acres (1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in
7 the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 0.2% of the available suitable habitat in the
8 region (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging
9 habitat represented by desert shrubland.

10
11 The overall impact on the western mastiff bat from construction, operation, and
12 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake SEZ is considered
13 small, because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of direct effects,
14 and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design features is
15 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
16
17

18 **11.3.12.2.6 Impacts on Rare Species**
19

20 There are 60 rare species (i.e., state rank of S1 or S2 in Nevada or a species of concern by
21 the USFWS or State of Nevada) that may be affected by solar energy development on the Dry
22 Lake SEZ (Table 11.3.12.1-1). Impacts on 15 rare species have not been discussed previously:
23 (1) plants: Ackerman milkvetch, Antelope Canyon goldenbush, bearded screwmoss, beaver dam
24 breadroot, Charleston goldenbush, dune sunflower, Littlefield milkvetch, Meadow Valley
25 sandwort, mottled milkvetch, New York Mountains catseye, rough fringemoss, sweet moustache
26 moss, and Virgin River thistle; and (2) invertebrates: red-tailed blazing star bee and Warm
27 Springs naucorid. Impacts on and potential mitigation for these species are presented in
28 Table 11.3.12.1-1.
29
30

31 **11.3.12.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
32

33 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A
34 would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects of utility-scale solar energy
35 development on special status species. While some SEZ-specific design features are best
36 established when specific project details are being considered, some design features can be
37 identified at this time, including the following:
38

- 39 • Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the SEZ to determine the
40 presence and abundance of special status species, including those identified in
41 Table 11.3.12.1-1; disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be
42 avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing
43 impacts to occupied habitats is not possible, translocation of individuals from
44 areas of direct effect, or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied
45 habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy for
46 special status species that used one or more of these options to offset the

1 impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the
2 appropriate federal and state agencies.

- 3
- 4 • Consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW should be conducted to address
5 the potential for impacts on the following four species currently listed as
6 threatened or endangered under the ESA: Moapa dace, Pahrump poolfish,
7 desert tortoise, and southwestern willow flycatcher. Consultation would
8 identify an appropriate survey protocol, avoidance and minimization
9 measures, and, if appropriate, reasonable and prudent alternatives, reasonable
10 and prudent measures, and terms and conditions for incidental take statements.
11
- 12 • Coordination with the USFWS and NDOW should be conducted for the
13 following seven species that are candidates or under review for listing under
14 the ESA that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ: Las
15 Vegas buckwheat, grated tryonia, Moapa pebblesnail, Moapa Valley
16 pebblesnail, Moapa Warm Spring riffle beetle, Moapa speckled dace, and
17 Moapa White River springfish. Coordination would identify an appropriate
18 survey protocol and mitigation requirements, which may include avoidance,
19 minimization, translocation, or compensation.
20
- 21 • Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat on the SEZ could
22 reduce or eliminate impacts on the following 10 special status species: beaver
23 dam breadroot, dune sunflower, halfring milkvetch, Las Vegas buckwheat,
24 Littlefield milkvetch, Parish's phacelia, rosy two-tone beardtongue, sticky
25 buckwheat, threecorner milkvetch, and yellow two-tone beardtongue.
26
- 27 • Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert pavement habitat on the SEZ
28 could reduce or eliminate impacts on the following six special status species:
29 dune sunflower, Las Vegas bearpoppy, mottled milkvetch, silverleaf sunray,
30 threecorner milkvetch, and red-tail blazing star bee.
31
- 32 • Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to playa habitat on the SEZ could reduce
33 or eliminate impacts on the following two special status species: Littlefield
34 milkvetch and Parish's phacelia.
35
- 36 • Avoidance or minimization of groundwater withdrawals from the Garnet
37 Valley basin could reduce or eliminate impacts on the following
38 13 groundwater-dependent special status species: grated tryonia, Moapa
39 pebblesnail, Moapa Valley pebblesnail, Moapa Warm Springs riffle beetle,
40 Spring Mountains springsnail, Warm Springs naucorid, Moapa dace, Moapa
41 speckled dace, Moapa White River springfish, Pahrump poolfish,
42 southwestern toad, phainopepla, and southwestern willow flycatcher.
43
- 44 • Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the
45 affected area should be avoided or minimized, by identifying any additional

1 sensitive areas and implementing necessary protection measures based upon
2 consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW.

3
4 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to required
5 programmatic design features, impacts on the special status and rare species could be reduced.

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1 **11.3.13 Air Quality and Climate**

2
3
4 **11.3.13.1 Affected Environment**

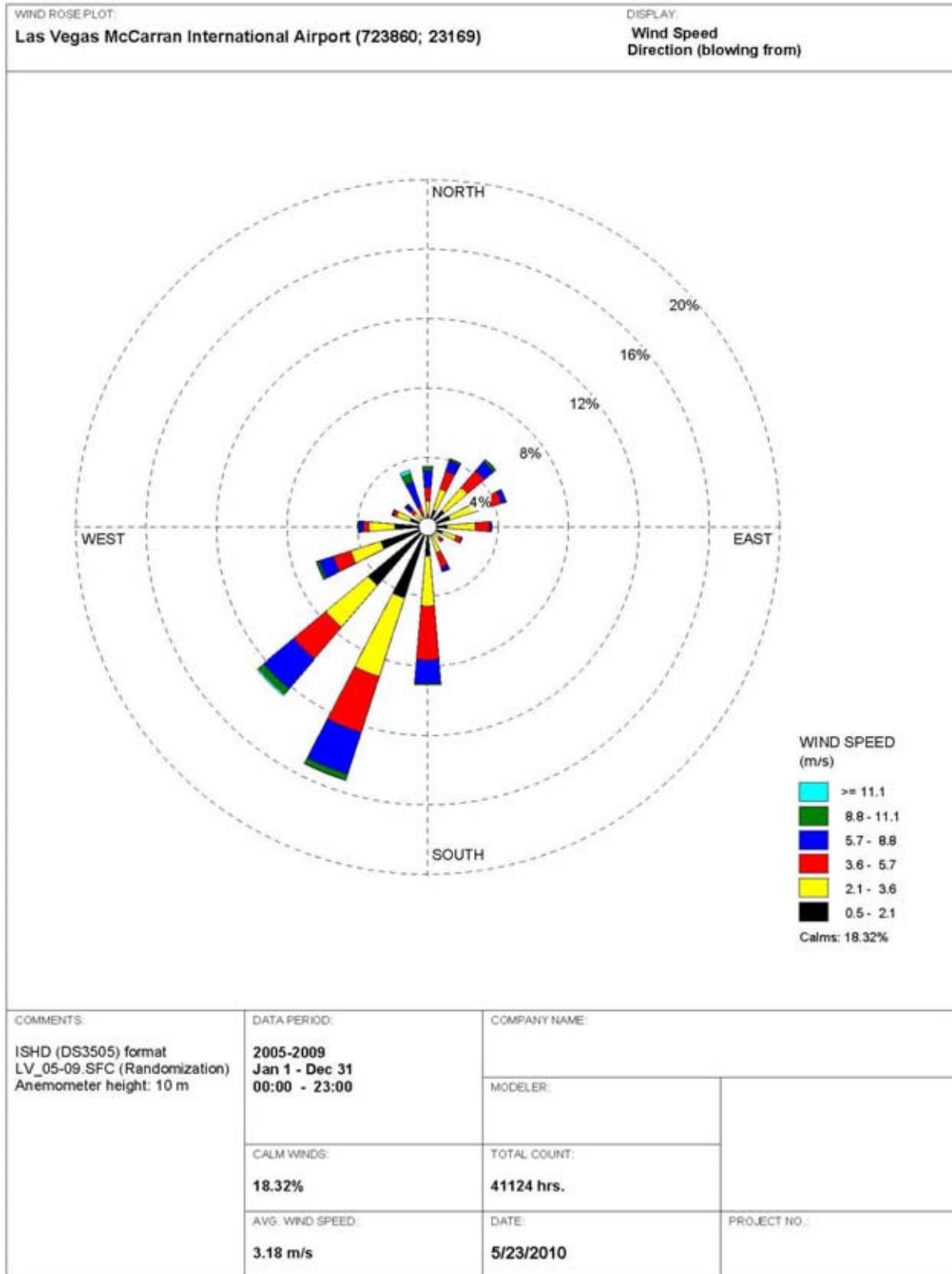
5
6
7 **11.3.13.1.1 Climate**

8
9 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located in the north-central portion of Clark County in
10 southernmost Nevada. Nevada lies on the eastern lee side of the Sierra Nevada Range, which
11 markedly influences the climate of the state under the prevailing westerlies (NCDC 2010a). In
12 addition, the mountains east and north of Nevada act as barriers to the cold arctic air masses, and
13 thus long periods of extremely cold weather are uncommon. The SEZ lies at an average elevation
14 of about 2,110 ft (643 m) in the northeastern portion of the Mojave Desert, which has an
15 extremely arid climate marked by mild winters and hot summers, large daily temperature swings
16 due to dry air, scant precipitation, high evaporation rates, low relative humidity, and abundant
17 sunshine. Meteorological data collected at the Las Vegas McCarran International Airport, about
18 25 mi (40 km) southwest of the Dry Lake SEZ boundary, and at the Valley of Fire State Park,
19 about 18 mi (29 km) east, are summarized below.

20
21 A wind rose from the Las Vegas McCarran International Airport, based on data collected
22 33 ft (10 m) above the ground over the 5-year period 2005 to 2009, is presented in
23 Figure 11.3.13.1-1 (NCDC 2010b). During this period, the annual average wind speed at the
24 airport was about 7.1 mph (3.2 m/s); the prevailing wind direction was from the south-southwest
25 (about 15.3% of the time) and secondarily from the southwest (about 12.7% of the time). South-
26 southwesterly winds occurred more frequently throughout the year. Wind speeds categorized as
27 calm (less than 1.1 mph [0.5 m/s]) occurred frequently (about 18.3% of the time) because of the
28 stable conditions caused by strong radiative cooling from late night to sunrise. Average wind
29 speeds by season were the highest in spring at 8.6 mph (3.8 m/s); lower in summer and fall at
30 7.6 mph (3.4 m/s) and 6.2 mph (2.8 m/s), respectively; and lowest in winter at 6.0 mph (2.7 m/s).

31
32 In southern Nevada, the summers are long and hot, while the winters are short and mild
33 (NCDC 2010a). For the period 1972 to 2010, the annual average temperature at the Valley of
34 Fire State Park was 69.2°F (20.7°C) (WRCC 2010c). December was the coldest month, with an
35 average minimum temperature of 38.2°F (3.4°C), and July was the warmest, with an average
36 maximum of 105.6°F (40.9°C). In the summer, daytime maximum temperatures over 100°F
37 (37.8°C) are common, and minimums are in the 70s. The minimum temperatures recorded were
38 below freezing ($\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$ [0°C]) during the colder months (from November to March, with a peak
39 of about 4 days in January and December), but subzero temperatures were never recorded.
40 During the same period, the highest temperature, 117°F (47.2°C), was reached in July 1973 and
41 the lowest, 12°F (-11.1°C), in December 1990. In a typical year, about 140 days had a maximum
42 temperature of at least 90°F (32.2°C), while about 11 days had minimum temperatures at or
43 below freezing.

44
45 Because of the rain shadow effect caused by the Sierra Nevada Range to the west, very
46 little precipitation occurs in Nevada (NCDC 2010a). For the 1972 to 2010 period, annual
47 precipitation at the Valley of Fire State Park averaged about 6.45 in. (16.4 cm) (WRCC 2010c).



1

2 **FIGURE 11.3.13.1-1 Wind Rose at 33 ft (10 m) at the Las Vegas McCarran International**
 3 **Airport, Nevada, 2005 to 2009 (Source: NCDC 2010b)**

1 On average, 30 days a year have measurable precipitation (0.01 in. [0.025 cm] or higher).
2 Seasonally, precipitation is the highest during winter (about 40% of the annual total) and evenly
3 distributed among the other three seasons. Snow occurs mostly from November to February but
4 is a rarity in the area. The annual average snowfall at the Valley of Fire State Park was about
5 0.3 in. (0.8 cm), with the highest monthly snowfall of 3.0 in. (7.6 cm) in February 1987 and
6 December 1998.

7
8 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is far from major water bodies (more than 260 mi [418 km]
9 to the Pacific Ocean). Severe weather events, such as severe thunderstorms and tornadoes are
10 rare in Clark County, which encompasses the Dry Lake SEZ (NCDC 2010c).

11
12 In Nevada, flooding could occur from melting of heavy snowpack. On occasion, heavy
13 summer thunderstorms also cause flooding of local streams, usually in sparsely populated
14 mountainous areas, but they are seldom destructive (NCDC 2010a). Since 1993, 99 floods
15 (88 flash floods, 9 urban/small stream floods, and 2 floods), most of which occurred from July
16 through September (NCDC 2010c), were reported in Clark County. These floods caused 4 deaths
17 and 12 injuries, and did cause significant property damage. In January 2005, heavy rain and rapid
18 snow melt caused extensive flooding in southern Lincoln and northeast Clark Counties that
19 brought about significant property damage.

20
21 In Clark County, 53 hail events in total have been reported since 1961, some of which
22 caused property damage. Hail measuring 1.75 in. (4.4 cm) in diameter was reported more than
23 10 times. Fifty-two high wind events have been reported in Clark County since 1995, and those
24 up to a maximum wind speed of 81 mph (36 m/s) have occurred more frequently in March and
25 April, causing no death, 1 injury, and some property and crop damage (NCDC 2010c). In Clark
26 County, 139 thunderstorm wind events have been reported since 1959, and those up to a
27 maximum wind speed of 116 mph (52 m/s) have occurred primarily from July through
28 September, causing 3 deaths, 12 injuries, and significant property damage (NCDC 2010c).

29
30 In Clark County, one dust storm event was reported in 2002 (NCDC 2010c). However,
31 the ground surface of the SEZ is covered primarily with gravelly clay loam to gravelly sandy
32 loam (and very stony loam), both of which have relatively moderate dust storm potential. High
33 winds can trigger large amounts of blowing dust in areas of Clark County that have dry and loose
34 soils with sparse vegetation. Dust storms can deteriorate air quality and visibility and may have
35 adverse effects on health, particularly for people with asthma or other respiratory problems.
36 Clark County experienced between 2 and 4 high-wind events per year during the 2002 to 2004
37 period when dust levels exceeded federal health standards (Clark County DAQEM 2005). In
38 Clark County, dust storm events with unhealthy PM₁₀ levels are likely to occur during late
39 winter and early spring.

40
41 Hurricanes and tropical storms formed off the coast of Central America and Mexico but
42 weaken over the cold waters off the California coast. Accordingly, hurricanes never hit Nevada:
43 Historically, two tropical depressions have passed within 100 mi (160 km) of the proposed Dry
44 Lake SEZ (CSC 2010). In the period from 1950 to July 2010, a total of 11 tornadoes (0.2 per
45 year) were reported in Clark County (NCDC 2010c). Most tornadoes occurring in Clark County
46

were relatively weak (i.e., one was F [uncategorized⁵], six were F0, and four were F1 on the Fujita tornado scale), and these tornadoes caused no deaths or injuries, although they did cause some property damage. Most of these tornadoes occurred far from the SEZ; the nearest one hit about 11 mi (18 km) southeast of the SEZ.

11.3.13.1.2 Existing Air Emissions

Clark County has many industrial emission sources over the county, and several coal- and natural gas-fired power plants release substantial amounts of SO₂ and/or NO_x emissions. Several emission sources, such as natural gas-fired power plants, are located in and around the southern portion of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Several major roads, such as I-15, I-215, I-515, U.S. 93, U.S. 95, and several state routes, exist in Clark County. Thus, onroad mobile source emissions are substantial, especially CO emissions in Clark County. Data on annual emissions of criteria pollutants and VOCs in Clark County are presented in Table 11.3.13.1-1 for 2002 (WRAP 2009). Emissions data are classified into six source categories: point, area, onroad mobile, nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire (wildfires, prescribed fires, agricultural fires, structural fires). In 2002, point sources were primary contributors to total emissions of SO₂ (about 85%) and NO_x (about 48%). Onroad sources were primary contributors to CO emissions (about 51%) and secondary contributors to NO_x (about 28%), while nonroad sources were secondary contributors to CO emissions (about 34%). Biogenic sources (i.e., vegetation—including trees, plants, and crops—and soils) that release naturally occurring emissions accounted for most of VOC emissions (about 83%). Area sources were primary contributors to PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions (about 88% and 80%, respectively). In Clark County, fire emissions sources were minor contributors to criteria pollutants and VOCs.

In 2005, Nevada produced about 56.3 MMt of *gross*⁶ carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_{2e})⁷ emissions, which is about 0.8% of total U.S. GHG emissions in that year (NDEP 2008). Gross

TABLE 11.3.13.1-1 Annual Emissions of Criteria Pollutants and VOCs in Clark County, Nevada, Encompassing the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ, 2002^a

Pollutant ^b	Emissions (tons/yr) ^c
SO ₂	50,105
NO _x	79,225
CO	355,591
VOCs	254,008
PM ₁₀	55,787
PM _{2.5}	14,131

^a Includes point, area, onroad and nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire emissions.

^b Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 μm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 μm; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; and VOCs = volatile organic compounds.

^c To convert tons to kilograms, multiply by 907.

Source: WRAP (2009).

⁵ Not categorized by the Fujita tornado scale because damage level was not reported.

⁶ Excluding GHG emissions removed as a result of forestry and other land uses and excluding GHG emissions associated with exported electricity.

⁷ A measure used to compare the emissions from various GHGs on the basis of their global warming potential, defined as the cumulative radiative forcing effects of a gas over a specified time horizon resulting from the emission of a unit mass of gas relative to a reference gas, CO₂. The CO_{2e} for a gas is derived by multiplying the mass of the gas by the associated global warming potential.

1 GHG emissions in Nevada increased by about 65% from 1990 to 2005 because of Nevada's
2 rapid population growth, compared to 16.3% growth in U.S. GHG emissions during the same
3 period. In 2005, electrical generation (48%) and transportation (30%) were the primary
4 contributors to gross GHG emission sources in Nevada. Fuel use in the residential, commercial,
5 and industrial sectors combined accounted for about 12% of total state emissions. Nevada's *net*
6 emissions were about 51.3 MMt CO₂e, considering carbon sinks from forestry activities and
7 agricultural soils throughout the state. The EPA (2009a) also estimated 2005 emissions in
8 Nevada. Its estimate of CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion was 49.6 MMt, which was
9 comparable to the state's estimate. Electric power generation and transportation accounted for
10 about 52.7% and 33.6% of the CO₂ emissions total, respectively, while the residential,
11 commercial, and industrial sectors accounted for the remainder (about 13.7%).
12
13

14 ***11.3.13.1.3 Air Quality***

15
16 The EPA set NAAQS for six criteria pollutants (EPA 2010a): SO₂, NO₂, CO, O₃, PM
17 (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and Pb. Nevada has its own State Ambient Air Quality Standards (SAAQS),
18 which are similar to the NAAQS but with some differences (NAC 445B.22097). In addition,
19 Nevada has set standards for 1-hour H₂S, which are not addressed by the NAAQS. The NAAQS
20 and Nevada SAAQS for criteria pollutants are presented in Table 11.3.13.1-2.
21

22 Clark County is located administratively within the Las Vegas Intrastate Air Quality
23 Control Region (Title 40, Part 81, Section 80 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* [40 CFR
24 81.80]). Clark County has experienced air quality problems, notably CO, ozone, and PM₁₀
25 pollution due to rapid population and industrial growth along with long-range transport of air
26 pollutants from the South Coast Air Basin, including Los Angeles. Currently, portions of
27 Clark County are designated as being in nonattainment for CO, 8-hour ozone, and PM₁₀
28 (40 CFR 81.329). The Dry Lake SEZ is located outside the CO and PM₁₀ nonattainment areas
29 but within the 8-hour ozone nonattainment area. Accordingly, the area surrounding the proposed
30 Dry Lake SEZ is in attainment for all six criteria pollutants except 8-hour ozone.
31

32 As briefly discussed in Section 11.3.13.1.1, Clark County frequently experiences natural
33 dust storm events, which cause PM₁₀ exceedances of the NAAQS. Western states frequently
34 plagued by natural dust storms requested that the EPA develop a commonsense policy, called the
35 Natural Events Policy (NEP), to address high PM₁₀ pollution caused by natural events. Under
36 the NEP, state and local governments are required to develop a Natural Events Action Plan
37 (NEAP), which provides alternatives for controlling significant sources of human-caused
38 windblown dust, with the understanding that dust storms sometimes override the best dust
39 control efforts. Clark County prepared an NEAP for review and comment by the EPA, and
40 should reevaluate the NEAP every 5 years at a minimum and make appropriate changes to the
41 plan (Clark County DAQEM 2005). The NEAP is applicable to the Las Vegas Valley, currently
42 designated as a PM₁₀ nonattainment area, and to the Apex Valley, which encompasses the Dry
43 Lake SEZ.
44

45 Ambient concentration data representative of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ for all criteria
46 pollutants except Pb are available for Clark County. To characterize ambient air quality around

TABLE 11.3.13.1-2 NAAQS, SAAQS, and Background Concentration Levels Representative of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ in Clark County, Nevada, 2004 to 2008

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	NAAQS	SAAQS	Background Concentration Level	
				Concentration ^{b,c}	Measurement Location, Year
SO ₂	1-hour	75 ppb ^d	NA ^e	NA	NA
	3-hour	0.5 ppm	0.5 ppm	0.009 ppm (1.8%)	Las Vegas, 2005
	24-hour	0.14 ppm	0.14 ppm	0.008 ppm (5.7%)	Las Vegas, 2005
	Annual	0.030 ppm	0.030 ppm	0.006 ppm (20%)	Las Vegas, 2005
NO ₂	1-hour	100 ppb ^f	NA	NA	NA
	Annual	0.053 ppm	0.053 ppm	0.006 ppm (11%)	North Las Vegas, 2007
CO	1-hour	35 ppm	35 ppm	5.7 ppm (16%)	Las Vegas, 2004
	8-hour	9 ppm	9 ppm	3.9 ppm (43%)	Las Vegas, 2005
O ₃	1-hour	0.12 ppm ^g	0.12 ppm	0.104 ppm (87%)	North Las Vegas, 2005
	8-hour	0.075 ppm	NA	0.081 ppm (108%)	North Las Vegas, 2007
PM ₁₀	24-hour	150 µg/m ³	150 µg/m ³	97 µg/m ³ (65%)	North Las Vegas, 2006
	Annual	NA	50 µg/m ³	22 µg/m ³ (44%)	North Las Vegas, 2008
PM _{2.5}	24-hour	35 µg/m ³	NA	10.2 µg/m ³ (29%)	North Las Vegas, 2005
	Annual	15.0 µg/m ³	NA	4.1 µg/m ³ (27%)	North Las Vegas, 2005
Pb	Calendar quarter	1.5 µg/m ³	1.5 µg/m ³	NA	NA
	Rolling 3-month	0.15 µg/m ³ ^h	NA	NA	NA

^a Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO₂ = nitrogen dioxide; O₃ = ozone; Pb = lead; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 µm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 µm; and SO₂ = sulfur dioxide.

^b Monitored concentrations are the second-highest for all averaging times less than or equal to 24-hour averages, except fourth-highest daily maximum for 8-hour O₃ and the 98th percentile for 24-hour PM_{2.5} and arithmetic mean for annual SO₂, NO₂, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}.

^c Values in parentheses are background concentration levels as a percentage of NAAQS or SAAQS, respectively. Calculation of 1-hour SO₂ and NO₂ to NAAQS was not made, because no measurement data based on new NAAQS are available.

^d Effective August 23, 2010.

^e NA = not applicable or not available.

^f Effective April 12, 2010.

^g The EPA revoked the 1-hour O₃ standard in all areas, although some areas have continuing obligations under that standard (“anti-backsliding”).

^h Effective January 12, 2009.

Sources: EPA (2010a,b); NAC 445B.22097.

1 the SEZ, ambient concentrations of NO₂, O₃, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5} from the Apex station, which is
2 located just outside the southern Dry Lake SEZ boundary, are presented. CO concentrations at
3 the East Tonopah station in Las Vegas, which is the farthest downwind station of Las Vegas,
4 were presented. The East Sahara Avenue station, which is on the outskirts of Las Vegas, has
5 only one SO₂ monitor in the area. No Pb measurements have been made in the state of Nevada
6 because of low Pb concentration levels after the phaseout of leaded gasoline. The highest
7 background concentrations of criteria pollutants at these stations for the period 2004 to 2008
8 are presented in Table 11.3.13.1-2 (EPA 2010b). Other than O₃, which approaches the 1-hour
9 standard but exceeds the 8-hour NAAQS, the highest concentration levels were lower than their
10 respective standards (up to 65%).

11
12 The PSD regulations (see 40 CFR 52.21), which are designed to limit the growth of air
13 pollution in clean areas, apply to a major new source or modification of an existing major source
14 within an attainment or unclassified area (see Section 4.11.2.3). As a matter of policy, the EPA
15 recommends that the permitting authority notify the Federal Land Managers when a proposed
16 PSD source would locate within 62 mi (100 km) of a sensitive Class I area. Several Class I areas
17 are located in Arizona and Utah; one is within 62 mi (100 km) of the proposed SEZ. The nearest
18 is Grand Canyon NP in Arizona (40 CFR 81.403), about 53 mi (85 km) east-southeast of the Dry
19 Lake SEZ. This Class I area is not located downwind of prevailing winds at the Dry Lake SEZ
20 (Figure 11.3.13.1-1). The next nearest Class I area includes Zion NP in Utah, which is located
21 about 108 mi (173 km) northeast of the SEZ.

22 23 24 **11.3.13.2 Impacts**

25
26 Potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with a solar project would be of
27 most concern during the construction phase. Impacts on ambient air quality from fugitive dust
28 emissions resulting from soil disturbances are anticipated, but they would be of short duration.
29 During the operations phase, only a few sources with generally low levels of emissions would
30 exist for any of the four types of solar technologies evaluated. A solar facility would either not
31 burn fossil fuels or burn only small amounts during operation. (For facilities using HTFs, fuel
32 could be used to maintain the temperature of the HTFs for more efficient daily start up.)
33 Conversely, use of solar facilities to generate electricity could displace air emissions that
34 would otherwise be released from fossil fuel power plants.

35
36 Air quality impacts shared by all solar technologies are discussed in detail in
37 Section 5.11.1, and technology-specific impacts are discussed in Section 5.11.2. Impacts specific
38 to the proposed Dry Lake SEZ are presented in the following sections. Any such impacts would
39 be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design features described in
40 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any additional mitigation applied. Section 11.3.13.3
41 below identifies SEZ-specific design features of particular relevance to the Dry Lake SEZ.

42 43 44 **11.3.13.2.1 Construction**

45
46 The Dry Lake SEZ site has a relatively flat terrain; thus, only a minimum number of site
47 preparation activities, perhaps with no large-scale earthmoving operations, would be required.

1 However, fugitive dust emissions from soil disturbances during the entire construction phase
2 would be a major concern because of the large areas that would be disturbed in a region that
3 experiences windblown dust problems. Fugitive dusts, which are released near ground level,
4 typically have more localized impacts than similar emissions from an elevated stack with
5 additional plume rise induced by buoyancy and momentum effects.
6
7

8 **Methods and Assumptions**

9

10 Air quality modeling for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions associated with construction
11 activities was performed using the EPA-recommended AERMOD model (EPA 2009b). Details
12 for emissions estimation, the description of AERMOD, input data processing procedures, and
13 modeling assumption are described in Section M.13 of Appendix M. Estimated air
14 concentrations were compared with the applicable NAAQS/SAAQS levels at the site boundaries
15 and nearby communities and with Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) increment
16 levels at nearby Class I areas.⁸ However, no receptors were modeled for PSD analysis at the
17 nearest Class I area, Grand Canyon NP in Arizona, because it is about 53 mi (85 km) from the
18 SEZ, which is over the maximum modeling distance of 31 mi (50 km) for the AERMOD. Rather,
19 several regularly spaced receptors in the direction of the Grand Canyon NP were selected as
20 surrogates for the PSD analysis. For the Dry Lake SEZ, the modeling was conducted based on
21 the following assumptions and input:
22

- 23 • Uniformly distributed emissions of 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) each and 6,000
24 acres (24.3 km²) total in the southern portion of the SEZ, close to the nearest
25 residences near North Las Vegas,
26
- 27 • Surface hourly meteorological data from the Las Vegas McCarran
28 International Airport and upper air sounding data from the Mercury/Desert
29 Rock Airport for the 2005 to 2009 period, and
30
- 31 • A regularly spaced receptor grid over a modeling domain of 62 × 62 mi
32 (100 km × 100 km) centered on the proposed SEZ, and additional discrete
33 receptors at the SEZ boundaries.
34
35

36 **Results**

37

38 The modeling results for concentration increments and total concentrations (modeled plus
39 background concentrations) for both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} that would result from construction-related
40 fugitive emissions are summarized in Table 11.3.13.2-1. Maximum 24-hour PM₁₀ concentration

⁸ To provide a quantitative assessment, the modeled air impacts of construction were compared to the NAAQS/SAAQS levels and the PSD Class I increment levels. Although the Clean Air Act exempts construction activities from PSD requirements, a comparison with the Class I increment levels was used to quantify potential impacts. Only monitored data can be used to determine the attainment status. Modeled data are used to assess potential problems and as a consideration in the permitting process.

TABLE 11.3.13.2-1 Maximum Air Quality Impacts from Emissions Associated with Construction Activities for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	Rank ^b	Concentration ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)				Percentage of NAAQS/SAAQS	
			Maximum Increment ^b	Background ^c	Total	NAAQS/SAAQS	Increment	Total
PM ₁₀	24 hours	H6H	579	97.0	676	150	386	450
	Annual	– ^d	88.4	22.0	110	50	177	221
PM _{2.5}	24 hours	H8H	38.0	10.2	48.2	35	109	138
	Annual	–	8.8	4.1	12.9	15.0	59	86

^a PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 2.5 \mu\text{m}$; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 10 \mu\text{m}$.

^b Concentrations for attainment demonstration are presented. H6H = highest of the sixth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. H8H = highest of the multiyear average of the eighth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. For the annual average, multiyear averages of annual means over the 5-year period are presented. Maximum concentrations are predicted to occur at the site boundaries.

^c See Table 11.3.13.1-2.

^d A dash indicates not applicable.

1
2
3 increments modeled to occur at the site boundaries would be an estimated $579 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which
4 far exceeds the relevant standard level of $150 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Total 24-hour PM₁₀ concentrations of
5 $676 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ would also exceed the standard level at the SEZ boundary. However, high PM₁₀
6 concentrations would be limited to the immediate areas surrounding the SEZ boundary and
7 would decrease quickly with distance. Predicted maximum 24-hour PM₁₀ concentration
8 increments would be about $28 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at Moapa (closest downwind community, about 19 mi
9 [31 km] northeast of the SEZ), about $20 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at Moapa Valley and Overton, and about 10 to
10 $15 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at upwind communities such as North Las Vegas, about 12 mi (19 km) southwest of
11 the SEZ. Annual average modeled concentration increments and total concentrations (increment
12 plus background) for PM₁₀ at the SEZ boundary would be about $88.4 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and $110 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$,
13 respectively, which are higher than the SAAQS level of $50 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Annual PM₁₀ increments
14 would be much lower, about $0.7 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at Moapa, about $0.3 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at Moapa Valley and
15 Overton, and less than $0.5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at North Las Vegas. Total 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentrations would
16 be $48.2 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at the SEZ boundary, which is higher than the NAAQS level of $35 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$;
17 modeled increments contribute about four times the amount of background concentration to this
18 total. The total annual average PM_{2.5} concentration would be $12.9 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which is lower than
19 the NAAQS level of $15.0 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. At Moapa, predicted maximum 24-hour and annual PM_{2.5}
20 concentration increments would be about 1.0 and $0.1 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, respectively.

21
22 Predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ concentration increments at the surrogate receptors
23 for the nearest Class I Area—Grand Canyon NP, Arizona—would be about 14.4 and $0.21 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$,
24 or 180% and 5.2% of the PSD increments for the Class I area, respectively. These surrogate

1 receptors are more than 23 mi (37 km) from the Grand Canyon NP, and thus, predicted
2 concentrations in Grand Canyon NP would be lower than the above values (about 105% of
3 the PSD increments for 24-hour PM₁₀, somewhat higher than the PSD increments), considering
4 the same decay ratio with distance.
5

6 In conclusion, predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ and 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentration
7 levels could exceed the standard levels at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding
8 areas during the construction of solar facilities. To reduce potential impacts on ambient air
9 quality and in compliance with programmatic design features, aggressive dust control measures
10 would be used. Potential air quality impacts on nearby communities would be much lower.
11 Annual PM_{2.5} concentration levels are predicted to be lower than its standard level. Modeling
12 indicates that emissions from construction activities are anticipated to somewhat exceed Class I
13 PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearest federal Class I area (Grand Canyon NP in Arizona).
14 Construction activities are not subject to the PSD program, and the comparison provides only a
15 screen for gauging the magnitude of the impact. Accordingly, it is anticipated that impacts of
16 construction activities on ambient air quality would be moderate and temporary.
17

18 Emissions from the engine exhaust from heavy construction equipment and vehicles have
19 the potential to cause impacts on AQRVs (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at the nearby
20 federal Class I area. However, SO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be very low, because
21 programmatic design features would require ultra-low-sulfur fuel with a sulfur content of
22 15 ppm. NO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be primary contributors to potential impacts
23 on AQRVs. Construction-related emissions are temporary in nature and thus would cause some
24 unavoidable but short-term impacts.
25

26 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
27 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 500-kV transmission line
28 might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-
29 specific analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However,
30 some construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ. Potential impacts on
31 ambient air quality would be a minor component of construction impacts in comparison to solar
32 facility construction, and would be temporary in nature.
33
34

35 ***11.3.13.2.2 Operations***

36 Emission sources associated with the operation of a solar facility would include auxiliary
37 boilers; vehicle (commuter, visitor, support, and delivery) traffic; maintenance (e.g., mirror
38 cleaning and repair and replacement of damaged mirrors); and drift from cooling towers for the
39 parabolic trough or power tower technology, if wet cooling was implemented (drift constitutes
40 low-level PM emissions).
41

42 The type of emission sources caused by and offset by operation of a solar facility are
43 discussed in Section M.13.4 of Appendix M.
44
45

1 Estimates of potential air emissions displaced by solar project development at the Dry
 2 Lake SEZ are presented in Table 11.3.13.2-2. Total power generation capacity ranging from
 3 1,391 to 2,504 MW is estimated for the Dry Lake SEZ for various solar technologies
 4 (see Section 11.3.2). The estimated amount of emissions avoided for the solar technologies
 5 evaluated depends only on the megawatts of conventional fossil fuel-generated power displaced,
 6 because a composite emission factor per megawatt-hour of power by conventional technologies
 7 is assumed (EPA 2009c). It is estimated that if the Dry Lake SEZ would eventually have
 8 development on 80% of its land, emissions avoided could range from 6.4 to 12% of total
 9 emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ from electric power systems in the state of Nevada
 10 (EPA 2009c). Avoided emissions could be up to 2.5% of total emissions from electric power
 11 systems in the six-state study area. When compared to all source categories, power production
 12 from the same solar facilities could displace up to 9.4% of SO₂, 3.5% of NO_x, and 6.2% of
 13 CO₂ emissions in the state of Nevada (EPA 2009a; WRAP 2009). These emissions could
 14
 15

TABLE 11.3.13.2-2 Annual Emissions from Combustion-Related Power Generation Avoided by Full Solar Development of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Area Size (acres)	Capacity (MW) ^a	Power Generation (GWh/yr) ^b	Emissions Displaced (tons/yr; 10 ³ tons/yr for CO ₂) ^c			
			SO ₂	NO _x	Hg	CO ₂
15,649	1,391–2,504	2,437–4,387	3,438–6,189	2,949–5,308	0.020–0.035	1,893–3,407
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in Nevada ^d			6.4–12%	6.4–12%	6.4–12%	6.4–12%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in Nevada ^e			5.2–9.4%	2.0–3.5%	– ^f	3.5–6.2%
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in the six-state study area ^d			1.4–2.5%	0.80–1.4%	0.67–1.2%	0.72–1.3%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in the six-state study area ^e			0.73–1.3%	0.11–0.20%	–	0.23–0.41%

^a It is assumed that the SEZ would eventually have development on 80% of the lands and that a range of 5 acres (0.020 km²) per MW (for parabolic trough technology) to 9 acres (0.036 km²) per MW (power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies) would be required.

^b A capacity factor of 20% was assumed.

^c Composite combustion-related emission factors for SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ of 2.82, 2.42, 1.6 × 10⁻⁵, and 1,553 lb/MWh, respectively, were used for the state of Nevada.

^d Emission data for all air pollutants are for 2005.

^e Emission data for SO₂ and NO_x are for 2002, while those for CO₂ are for 2005.

^f A dash indicates not estimated.

Sources: EPA (2009a,c); WRAP (2009).

1 be up to 1.3% of total emissions from all source categories in the six-state study area. Power
2 generation from fossil fuel-fired power plants accounts for about 93% of the total electric power
3 generated in Nevada (EPA 2009c). The contribution of natural gas combustion is about 47%,
4 followed by that of coal combustion at about 45%. Thus, solar facilities built in the Dry Lake
5 SEZ could displace relatively more fossil fuel emissions than those built in other states that rely
6 less on fossil fuel-generated power.
7

8 As discussed in Section 5.11.1.5, the operation of associated transmission lines would
9 generate some air pollutants from activities such as periodic site inspections and maintenance.
10 However, these activities would occur infrequently, and the amount of emissions would be small.
11 In addition, transmission lines could produce minute amounts of O₃ and its precursor NO_x
12 associated with corona discharge (i.e., the breakdown of air near high-voltage conductors),
13 which is most noticeable for high-voltage lines during rain or very humid conditions. Since the
14 proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located in an arid desert environment, these emissions would be
15 small, and potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with transmission lines would be
16 negligible, considering the infrequent occurrences and small amount of emissions from corona
17 discharges.
18
19

20 ***11.3.13.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation***

21

22 As discussed in Section 5.11.1.4, decommissioning/reclamation activities are similar to
23 construction activities but occur on a more limited scale and are of shorter duration. Potential
24 impacts on ambient air quality would be correspondingly smaller than those from construction
25 activities. Decommissioning activities would last for a short period, and their potential impacts
26 would be moderate and temporary. The same mitigation measures adopted during the
27 construction phase would also be implemented during the decommissioning phase
28 (Section 5.11.3).
29
30

31 **11.3.13.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

32

33 No SEZ-specific design features are required. Limiting dust generation during
34 construction and operations at the proposed Dry Lake SEZ (such as increased watering
35 frequency or road paving or treatment) is a required design feature under BLM's Solar Energy
36 Program. These extensive fugitive dust control measures would keep off-site PM levels as low as
37 possible during construction.
38
39

1 **11.3.14 Visual Resources**

2
3
4 **11.3.14.1 Affected Environment**

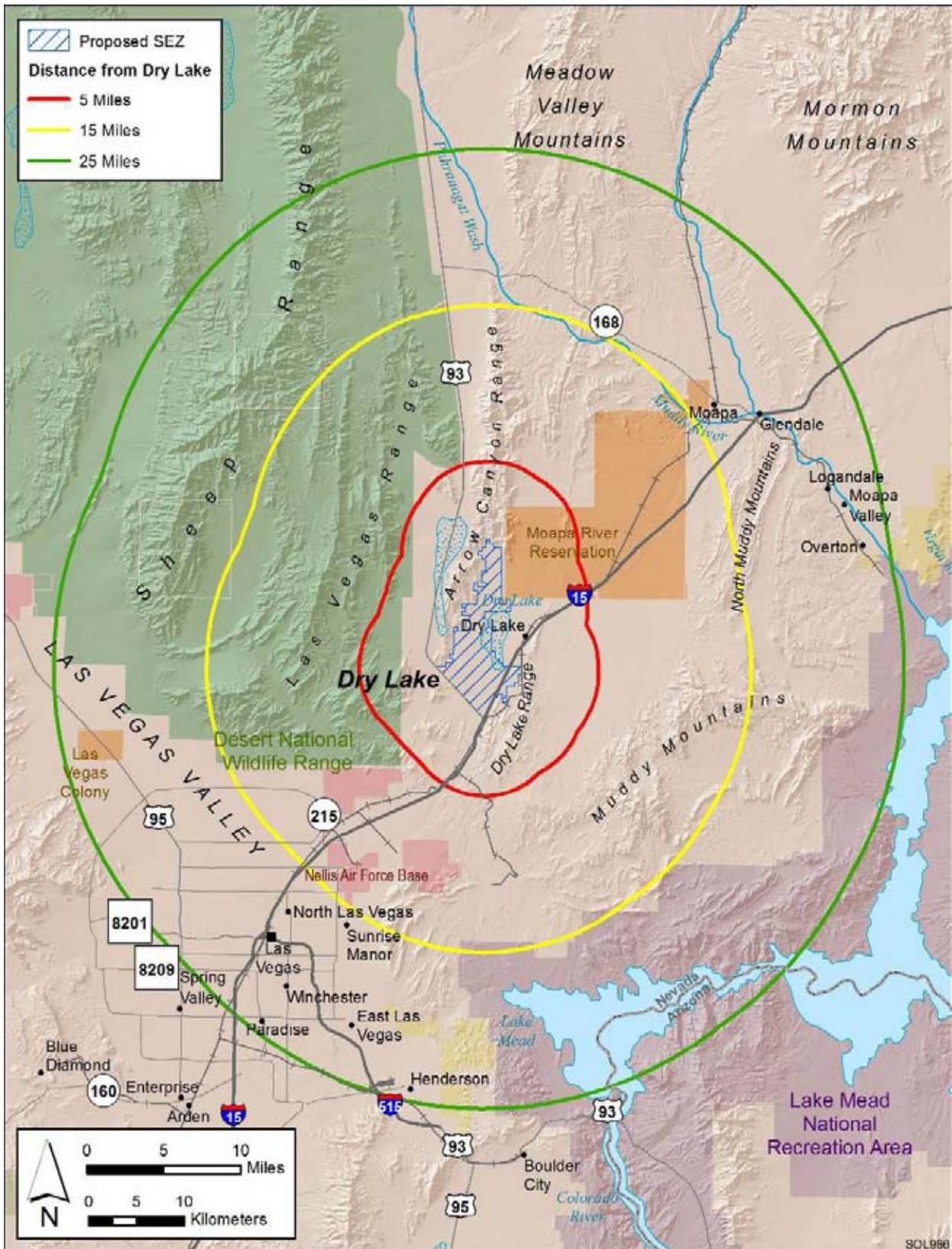
5
6 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located in Clark County in southern Nevada. The SEZ
7 occupies 15,649 acres (63.329 km²) within the Dry Lake Valley. It extends about 11 mi (18 km)
8 north-south and is about 5.6 mi (9.0 km) wide. The SEZ ranges in elevation from 1,980 ft
9 (603.5 m) in the central portion to 2,540 ft (775 m) in the southwestern portion.

10
11 The SEZ lies within the Mojave Basin and Range Level III ecoregion, which consists of
12 broad basins and scattered mountains. Within the region, heavy use of off-road vehicles and
13 motorcycles in some areas has caused soil erosion, and there is relatively little grazing activity
14 because of the lack of water and forage for livestock. Most land is federally owned. Dry Lake
15 SEZ encompasses portions of three Level IV ecoregions. The eastern boundary is within the
16 mostly barren Mojave Playas Level IV ecoregion. Where moisture is sufficient, cold-intolerant
17 trees and woody legumes occur on the Mojave Playas, particularly toward the south. Portions of
18 the northwestern section of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ are in the Arid Footslopes Level IV
19 ecoregion, which is composed of alluvial fans, basalt flows, hills, and low mountains that rise
20 above the floors of the Mojave Desert. A significant portion of the SEZ is within the Creosote
21 Bush-Dominated Basins Level IV ecoregion, which includes valleys that lie between scattered
22 mountain ranges. These valleys contain stream terraces, floodplains, alluvial fans, isolated hills,
23 mesas, buttes, and eroded washes (Bryce et al. 2003).

24
25 The SEZ occupies the relatively narrow, generally flat north-south oriented Dry Lake
26 Valley floor. The valley is located east of the Arrow Canyon Range and west of the Dry Lake
27 Range. These mountains vary in elevation from about 3,000 ft (900 m) to over 4,000 ft
28 (1,200 m). The mountain slopes and peaks surrounding the SEZ generally appear to be visually
29 pristine, although transmission corridors cross the mountains at some points. The SEZ and
30 surrounding mountain ranges are shown in Figure 11.3.14.1-1.

31
32 The strong horizon line and lines and forms of the surrounding mountain ranges are the
33 dominant visual features in the vicinity of the proposed SEZ. These nearby mountain ranges add
34 significantly to the scenic value of the SEZ. The banded mesas of the Dry Lake Range dominate
35 views east from the SEZ, adding strong horizontal line elements to the landscape, but contrasting
36 strongly with the jagged, angular forms of the Arrow Canyon Range to the west. The
37 surrounding mountains are generally brown in color, but with greens from scattered shrubs
38 visible on some mountains, especially in the Arrow Canyon Range. In contrast, gray to tan
39 gravels dominate the desert floor, which is sparsely dotted with the greens and tans of vegetation.
40 Very light colored, unvegetated playas on the valley floor provide strong color and texture
41 contrast in the central portion of the SEZ.

42
43 Vegetation is generally sparse in much of the SEZ, with widely spaced shrubs growing
44 on more or less barren gravel flats. Vegetation within the SEZ is predominantly scrubland, with
45 creosotebush and other low shrubs dominating the desert floor within the SEZ. During an
46 August 2009 site visit, the vegetation presented a range of greens (mostly the olive green of



1

2 **FIGURE 11.3.14.1-1 Proposed Dry Lake SEZ and Surrounding Lands**

1 creosotebushes) with some grays and tans (from lower shrubs), with medium to coarse textures.
2 Visual interest is generally low. No permanent surface water is present within the SEZ.

3
4 Major cultural disturbances occur both within and near the SEZ; these disturbances
5 include multiple transmission lines and related facilities, several power plants and other
6 industrial facilities, mining operations, I-40, other roads, a railroad, and debris scattered
7 throughout the SEZ. These cultural disturbances add major contrasts in form, line, color, and
8 texture from many viewpoints within and near the SEZ and greatly reduce the relative visual
9 values within and near the SEZ.

10
11 The general lack of topographic relief, water, and physical variety results in low scenic
12 value within the SEZ itself; however, because of the flatness of the landscape, the lack of trees,
13 and the breadth of the open desert, the SEZ presents sweeping views of the surrounding
14 mountains that add significantly to the scenic values within the SEZ viewshed. In general,
15 however, the major cultural disturbances visible throughout Dry Valley have seriously degraded
16 scenic values in the SEZ vicinity. Panoramic views of the SEZ are shown in Figures 11.3.14.1-2,
17 11.3.14.1-3, and 11.3.14.1-4.

18
19 The BLM conducted a VRI for the SEZ and surrounding lands in 2007 (BLM 2009g).
20 The VRI evaluates BLM-administered lands based on scenic quality; sensitivity level, in terms of
21 public concern for preservation of scenic values in the evaluated lands; and distance from travel
22 routes or KOPs. Based on these three factors, BLM-administered lands are placed into one of
23 four VRI Classes, which represent the relative value of the visual resources. Class I and II are the
24 most valued; Class III represents a moderate value; and Class IV represents the least value.
25 Class I is reserved for specially designated areas, such as national wildernesses and other
26 congressionally and administratively designated areas where decisions have been made to
27 preserve a natural landscape. Class II is the highest rating for lands without special designation.
28 More information about VRI methodology is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource*
29 *Inventory*, BLM Manual Handbook 8410-1 (BLM 1986a).

30
31 The VRI values for the SEZ and immediate surroundings are VRI Class IV, indicating
32 low visual values. The inventory indicates low scenic quality for the SEZ and its immediate
33 surroundings. Positive scenic quality attributes included landform.

34
35 The *Las Vegas Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact*
36 *Statement* (BLM 1998) indicates that most of the SEZ is managed as VRM Class IV, except
37 the southeast portion of the SEZ near I-15, which is managed as VRM Class III. VRM Class III
38 objectives include partial retention of landscape character and permit moderate modification
39 of the existing character of the landscape. VRM Class IV permits major modification of the
40 existing character of the landscape. The VRM map for the SEZ and surrounding lands is
41 shown in Figure 11.3.14.1.-5. More information about the BLM VRM program is presented
42 in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Management*, BLM Manual Handbook 8400
43 (BLM 1984).

1



2

FIGURE 11.3.14.1-2 Panoramic View of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ from Western Edge of Dry Lake on Eastern Border of the SEZ, Facing Northwest toward Arrow Canyon Range

3

4

5

6



7

FIGURE 11.3.14.1-3 Approximately 180° Panoramic View of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ from Southeastern Portion of SEZ Facing Northwest, Arrow Canyon Range at Left, Dry Lake Range at Right

8

9

10

11



12

FIGURE 11.3.14.1-4 Approximately 120° Panoramic View of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ from Southwestern Portion of SEZ Facing Northeast, Arrow Canyon Range at Left, Dry Lake at Center, Dry Lake Range at Right

13

1 **11.3.14.2 Impacts**
2

3 The potential for impacts from utility-scale solar energy development on visual resources
4 within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ and surrounding lands, as well as the impacts of related
5 developments (e.g., access roads and transmission lines) outside of the SEZ, is presented in this
6 section.
7

8 Site-specific impact assessment is needed to systematically and thoroughly assess visual
9 impact levels for a particular project. Without precise information about the location of a project
10 and a relatively complete and accurate description of its major components and their layout, it is
11 not possible to assess precisely the visual impacts associated with the facility. However, if the
12 general nature and location of a facility are known, a more generalized assessment of potential
13 visual impacts can be made by describing the range of expected visual changes and discussing
14 contrasts typically associated with these changes. In addition, a general analysis can identify
15 sensitive resources that may be at risk if a future project is sited in a particular area. Detailed
16 information about the methodology employed for the visual impact assessment used in this PEIS,
17 including assumptions and limitations, is presented in Appendix M.
18

19 *Potential Glint and Glare Impacts.* Similarly, the nature and magnitude of potential glint-
20 and glare-related visual impacts for a given solar facility is highly dependent on viewer position,
21 sun angle, the nature of the reflective surface and its orientation relative to the sun and the
22 viewer, atmospheric conditions and other variables. The determination of potential impacts from
23 glint and glare from solar facilities within a given proposed SEZ would require precise
24 knowledge of these variables, and is not possible given the scope of the PEIS. Therefore, the
25 following analysis does not describe or suggest potential contrast levels arising from glint and
26 glare for facilities that might be developed within the SEZ; however, it should be assumed that
27 glint and glare are possible visual impacts from *any* utility-scale solar facility, regardless of size,
28 landscape setting, or technology type. The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could
29 potentially cause large though temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities.
30 The visual contrast levels projected for sensitive visual resource areas discussed in the following
31 analysis do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these effects would be
32 incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be conducted for
33 specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more information about potential glint
34 and glare impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy facilities, see Section 5.12 of this
35 PEIS.
36
37

38 ***11.3.14.2.1 Impacts on the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ***
39

40 Some or all of the SEZ could be developed for one or more utility-scale solar energy
41 projects, utilizing one or more of the solar energy technologies described in Appendix E.
42 Because of the industrial nature and large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities, large visual
43 impacts on the SEZ would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and decommissioning
44 of solar energy projects. In addition, large impacts could occur at solar facilities utilizing highly
45 reflective surfaces or major light-emitting components (solar dish, parabolic trough, and power
46 tower technologies), with lesser impacts associated with reflective surfaces expected from PV

1 facilities. These impacts would be expected to involve major modification of the existing
2 character of the landscape and would likely dominate the views nearby. Additional, and
3 potentially large impacts would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and
4 decommissioning of related facilities, such as access roads and electric transmission lines. While
5 the primary visual impacts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ would
6 occur during daylight hours, lighting required for utility-scale solar energy facilities would be a
7 potential source of visual impacts at night, both within the SEZ and on surrounding lands.
8

9 Common and technology-specific visual impacts from utility-scale solar energy
10 development, as well as impacts associated with electric transmission lines, are discussed in
11 Section 5.12 of this PEIS. Impacts would last throughout construction, operation, and
12 decommissioning, and some impacts could continue after project decommissioning. Visual
13 impacts resulting from solar energy development in the SEZ would be in addition to impacts
14 from solar energy development and other development that may occur on other public or private
15 lands within the SEZ viewshed, and are subject to cumulative effects. For discussion of
16 cumulative impacts, see Section 11.3.22.4.13 of this PEIS.
17

18 The changes described above would be expected to be consistent with BLM VRM
19 objectives for VRM Class IV, as seen from nearby KOPs. More information about impact
20 determination using the BLM VRM program is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource*
21 *Contrast Rating*, BLM Manual Handbook 8431-1 (BLM 1986b).
22

23 Implementation of the programmatic design features intended to reduce visual impacts
24 (described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would be expected to reduce visual impacts associated
25 with utility-scale solar energy development within the SEZ; however, the degree of effectiveness
26 of these design features could be assessed only at the site- and project-specific level. Given the
27 large scale, reflective surfaces, and strong regular geometry of utility-scale solar energy facilities
28 and the lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities
29 away from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive viewing areas would be the primary
30 means of mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other visual impact mitigation measures
31 would generally be limited, but would be important to reduce visual contrasts to the greatest
32 extent possible.
33
34

35 ***11.3.14.2.2 Impacts on Lands Surrounding the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ*** 36

37 Because of the large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat,
38 open nature of the proposed SEZ, lands outside the SEZ would be subjected to visual impacts
39 related to construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities.
40 The affected areas and extent of impacts would depend on a number of visibility factors and
41 viewer distance (for a detailed discussion of visibility and related factors, see Section 5.12).
42 A key component in determining impact levels is the intervisibility between the project and
43 potentially affected lands; if topography, vegetation, or structures screen the project from viewer
44 locations, there would be no impact.
45

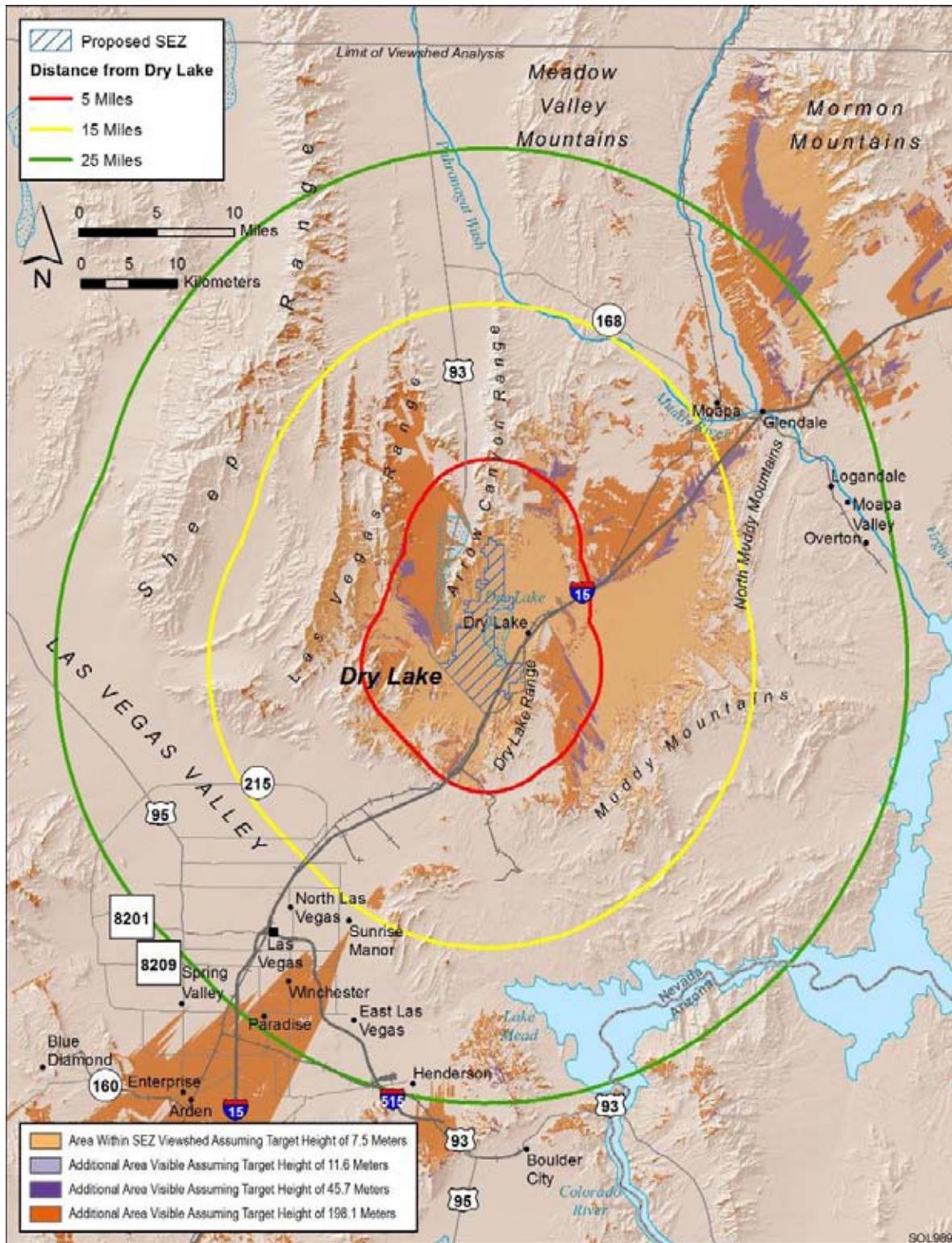
1 Preliminary viewshed analyses were conducted to identify which lands surrounding the
2 proposed SEZ would have views of solar facilities in at least some portion of the SEZ
3 (see Appendix M for information on the assumptions and limitations of the methods used).
4 Four viewshed analyses were conducted, assuming four different heights representative of
5 project components associated with potential solar energy technologies: PV and parabolic trough
6 arrays (24.6 ft [7.5 m]), solar dishes and power blocks for CSP technologies (38 ft [11.6 m]),
7 transmission towers and short solar power towers (150 ft [45.7 m]), and tall solar power towers
8 (650 ft [198.1 m]). Viewshed maps for the SEZ for all four solar technology heights are
9 presented in Appendix N.

10
11 Figure 11.3.14.2-1 shows the combined results of the viewshed analyses for all four solar
12 technologies. The colored segments indicate areas with clear lines of sight to one or more areas
13 within the SEZ and from which solar facilities within these areas of the SEZ would be expected
14 to be visible, assuming the absence of screening vegetation or structures and adequate lighting
15 and other atmospheric conditions. The light brown areas are locations from which PV and
16 parabolic trough arrays located in the SEZ could be visible. Solar dishes and power blocks for
17 CSP technologies would be visible from the areas shaded in light brown and the additional areas
18 shaded in light purple. Transmission towers and short solar power towers would be visible from
19 the areas shaded light brown, light purple, and the additional areas shaded in dark purple. Power
20 tower facilities located in the SEZ could be visible from areas shaded light brown, light purple,
21 dark purple, and at least the upper portions of power tower receivers from the additional areas
22 shaded in medium brown.

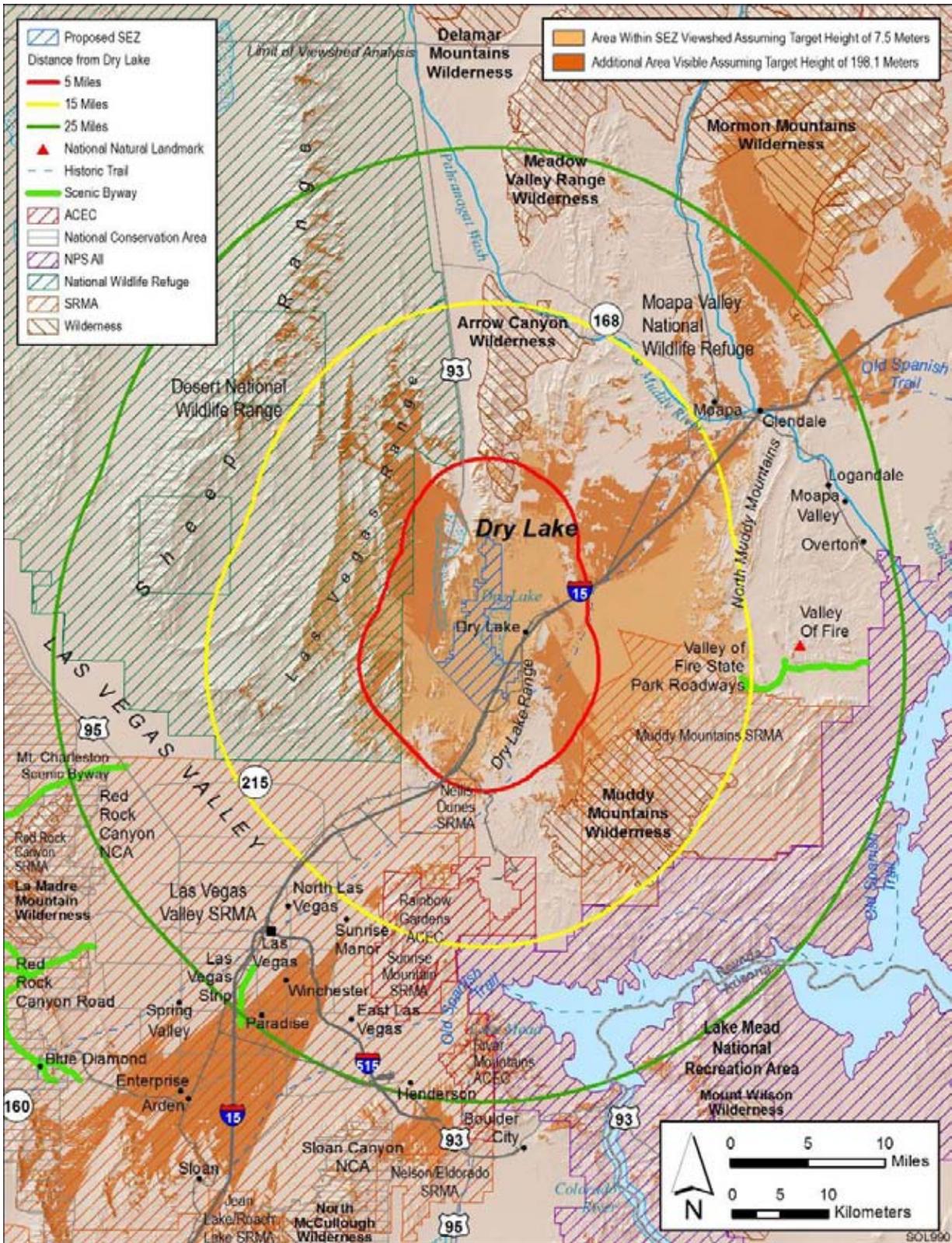
23
24 For the following visual impact discussion, the tall solar power tower (650 ft [198.1 m])
25 and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds are shown in the figures and
26 discussed in the text. These heights represent the maximum and minimum landscape visibility
27 for solar energy technologies analyzed in this PEIS. Viewsheds for solar dish and CSP
28 technology power blocks (38 ft [11.6 m]), and for transmission towers and short solar power
29 towers (150 ft [45.7 m]) are described in Appendix N. The visibility of these facilities would fall
30 between that for tall power towers and PV and parabolic trough arrays.

31 32 33 **Impacts on Selected Federal-, State-, and BLM-Designated Sensitive Visual** 34 **Resource Areas**

35
36 Figure 11.3.14.2-2 shows the results of a GIS analysis that overlays selected federal-,
37 state-, and BLM-designated sensitive visual resource areas onto the combined tall solar power
38 tower (650 ft [198.1 m]) and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds to
39 illustrate which of these sensitive visual resource areas would have views of solar facilities
40 within the SEZ and therefore potentially would be subject to visual impacts from those facilities.
41 Distance zones that correspond with BLM's VRM system-specified foreground-midground
42 distance (5 mi [8 km]), background distance (15 mi [24 km]), and a 25-mi (40-km) distance zone
43 are shown as well in order to indicate the effect of distance from the SEZ on impact levels,
44 which are highly dependent on distance.



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.3.14.2-1 Viewshed Analyses for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ and Surrounding**
 3 **Lands, Assuming Solar Technology Heights of 24.6 ft (7.5 m), 38 ft (11.6 m), 150 ft (45.7 m),**
 4 **and 650 ft (198.1 m) (shaded areas indicate lands from which solar development within the**
 5 **SEZ could be visible)**



2 **FIGURE 11.3.14.2-2 Overlay of Selected Sensitive Visual Resource Areas onto Combined 650-ft**
 3 **(198.1-m) and 24.6-ft (7.5-m) Viewsheds for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ**

1 The scenic resources included in the analyses were as follows:
2

- 3 • National Parks, National Monuments, National Recreation Areas, National
4 Preserves, National Wildlife Refuges, National Reserves, National
5 Conservation Areas, National Historic Sites;
6
- 7 • Congressionally authorized Wilderness Areas;
8
- 9 • Wilderness Study Areas;
10
- 11 • National Wild and Scenic Rivers;
12
- 13 • Congressionally authorized Wild and Scenic Study Rivers;
14
- 15 • National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails;
16
- 17 • National Historic Landmarks and National Natural Landmarks;
18
- 19 • All-American Roads, National Scenic Byways, State Scenic Highways; and
20 BLM- and USFS-designated scenic highways/byways;
21
- 22 • BLM-designated Special Recreation Management Areas; and
23
- 24 • ACECs designated because of outstanding scenic qualities.
25

26 Potential impacts on specific sensitive resource areas visible from and within 25 mi
27 (40 km) of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ are discussed below. The results of this analysis are also
28 summarized in Table 11.3.14.2-1. Further discussion of impacts on these areas is presented in
29 Sections 11.3.3 (Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics) and
30 Section 11.3.17 (Cultural Resources) of this PEIS.
31

32 The following visual impact analysis describes *visual contrast levels* rather than *visual*
33 *impact levels*. *Visual contrasts* are changes in the landscape as seen by viewers, including
34 changes in the forms, lines, colors, and textures of objects seen. A measure of *visual impact*
35 includes potential human reactions to the visual contrasts arising from a development activity,
36 based on viewer characteristics, including attitudes and values, expectations, and other
37 characteristics that are viewer- and situation-specific. Accurate assessment of visual impacts
38 requires knowledge of the potential types and numbers of viewers for a given development and
39 their characteristics and expectations; specific locations where the project might be viewed from;
40 and other variables that were not available or not feasible to incorporate in the PEIS analysis.
41 These variables would be incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that
42 would be conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more discussion
43 of visual contrasts and impacts, see Section 5.12 of the PEIS.
44

GOOGLE EARTH™ VISUALIZATIONS

The visual impact analysis discussion in this section utilizes three-dimensional Google Earth™ perspective visualizations of hypothetical solar facilities placed within the SEZ. The visualizations include simplified wireframe models of a hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed at various locations within the SEZ as visual aids for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of utility-scale solar facilities. The visualizations are intended to show the apparent size, distance, and configuration of the SEZ, as well as the apparent size of a typical utility-scale solar power tower project and its relationship to the surrounding landscape, as viewed from potentially sensitive visual resource areas within the viewshed of the SEZ.

The visualizations are not intended to be realistic simulations of the actual appearance of the landscape or of proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. The placement of models within the SEZ did not reflect any actual planned or proposed projects within the SEZ, and did not take into account engineering or other constraints that would affect the siting or choice of facilities for this particular SEZ. The number of facility models placed in the SEZ does not reflect the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, but it should be noted that the discussion of expected visual contrast levels does account for the 80% development scenario. A solar power tower was chosen for the models because the unique height characteristics of power tower facilities make their visual impact potential extend beyond other solar technology types.

National Recreation Area

- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area.* Lake Mead NRA contains 1,105,951 acres (4,475.625 km²) and is located about 14 mi (23 km) south of the SEZ at the point of closest approach (see Figure 11.3.14.2-2). Lake Mead NRA offers year-round recreational opportunities for boaters, swimmers, and fishermen, as well as for hikers, wildlife photographers, and roadside sightseers.

Within the 25-mi (40-km) SEZ viewshed in Lake Mead NRA, visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ would be limited to the southwestern portion of the NRA, in scattered areas of visibility at high elevations in the River Mountains and Black Mountains. The area within the NRA with views of the SEZ includes about 1,826 acres (7.390 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or 0.2% of the total NRA acreage, and 69 acres (0.28 km²) in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 0.01% of the total NRA acreage. Within the NRA, the areas with potential visibility of solar facilities in the SEZ are located from 19 mi (31 km) south of the SEZ to beyond 25 mi (40 km) from the southeastern boundary of the SEZ.

For the vast majority of these areas, visibility would be limited to the upper portions of tall power towers within the SEZ, and at the very long distance to the SEZ, minimal visual contrasts would be expected from solar facilities within the SEZ. For scattered areas in the peaks of the River Mountains totaling about 210 acres (0.850 km²), the upper portions of transmission towers and lower-height power towers might be visible, but expected contrast levels would still be minimal.

TABLE 11.3.14.2-1 Selected Potentially Affected Sensitive Visual Resources within a 25-mi (40-km) Viewshed of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ, Assuming a Target Height of 650 ft (198.1 m)

Feature Type	Feature Name (Total Acreage/Linear Distance) ^a	Feature Area or Linear Distance		
		Visible within 5 mi	Visible between	
			5 and 15 mi	15 and 25 mi
National Recreation Area	Lake Mead National Recreation Area (1,105,951 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	1,826 acres (0.2%) ^b
National Wildlife Range	Desert National (1,626,903 acres)	12,098 acres (0.7%)	33,632 acres (2%)	5,546 acres (0.3%)
National Historic Trail	Old Spanish	7.3 mi	10.3 mi	5.2 mi
Wilderness Areas	Arrow Canyon (27,521 acres)	764 acres (3%)	721 acres (3%)	0 acres
	Meadow Valley Range (123,481 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	133 acres (0.1%)
	Mormon Mountains (157,645 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	1,051 acres (0.7%)
	Muddy Mountains (44,522 acres)	0 acres	5,764 acres (13%)	34 acres (0.08%)
ACECs	Rainbow Gardens (38,777 acres)	0 acres	680 acres (2%)	164 acres (0.4%)
	River Mountains (10,950 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	1,962 acres (18%)
Scenic Byways	Bitter Springs Backcountry (28 mi)	0 acres	6.3 mi	0 acres
	Las Vegas Strip (4.5 mi)	0 acres	0 acres	0.7 mi
SRMAs	Las Vegas Valley (447,244 acres)	0 acres	1,489 acres (0.3%)	16,677 acres (4%)
	Muddy Mountains (128,493 acres)	391 acres (0.3%)	25,192 acres (20%)	158 acres (0.1%)
	Nellis Dunes (8,921 acres)	389 acres (4%)	59 acres (0.7%)	0 acres

TABLE 11.3.14.2-1 (Cont.)

Feature Type	Feature Name (Total Acreage/Linear Distance) ^a	Feature Area or Linear Distance		
		Visible within 5 mi	Visible between	
			5 and 15 mi	15 and 25 mi
SRMAs (Cont.)	Sunrise Mountain (33,322 acres)	0 acres	726 acres (2%)	165 acres (0.5%)

^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047. To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

^b Value in parentheses is percentage of total feature acreage or road length viewable.

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If visible, operating power towers in the SEZ would be seen as distant points of light on the northern horizon. At night, sufficiently tall power towers in the SEZ would have red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that could potentially be visible from the NRA. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, visual contrast levels from solar energy development within the SEZ would be expected to be minimal for viewpoints within the Lake Mead NRA.

National Wildlife Range

- *Desert.* The 1,626,903-acre (6,583.843-km²) Desert National Wildlife Range is located 2.3 mi (3.7 km) west of the SEZ at the point of closest approach, west of the Arrow Canyon Range (see Figure 11.3.14.2-2). The NWR extends beyond the 25-mi (40-km) viewshed of the SEZ. The Wildlife Range contains six major mountain ranges, the highest rising from 2,500-ft (762-m) valleys to nearly 10,000 ft (3,048 m). Camping, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, hunting, and bird watching are all popular activities enjoyed by refuge visitors.

About 51,276 acres (207.51 km²), or 3 % of the NWR, are within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ, and 23,233 acres (94.021 km²), 1% of the NWR, are within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. The areas within the NWR with potential visibility of solar facilities in the SEZ include the eastern slopes of mountains and ridges of the Las Vegas Range, primarily within 10 mi (16 km) of the SEZ, but extending for some areas to beyond 15 mi (24 km) into the NWR, along the peaks of the Sheep Range.

For many low-elevation viewpoints in the eastern part of the NWR, the Arrow Canyon Range would completely screen views of solar facilities within the SEZ. For some elevated viewpoints in the eastern portion of the NWR,

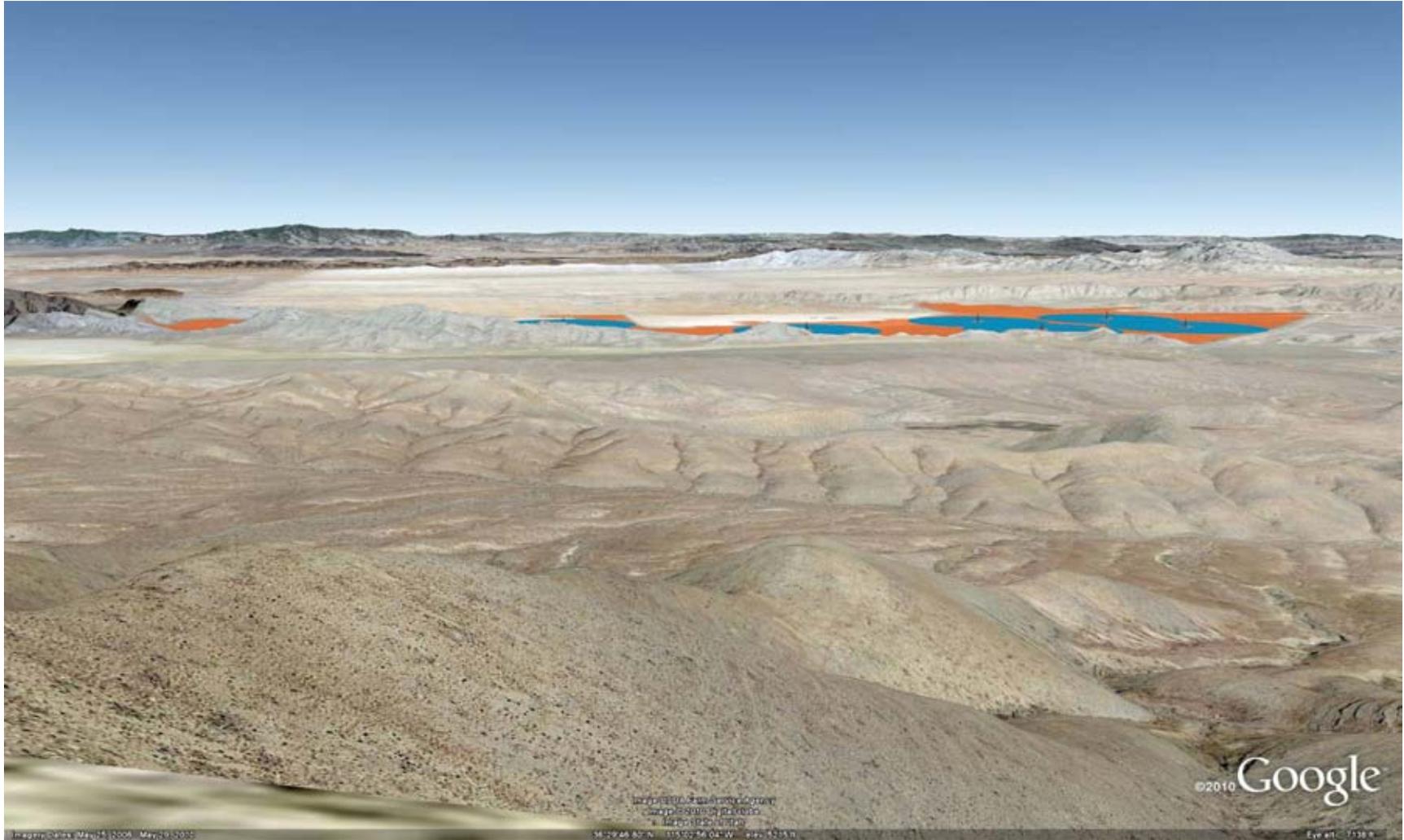
1 however, the Arrow Canyon Range would provide only partial screening of
2 the SEZ.

3
4 The highest elevations within the NWR within the 25-mi (40-km) SEZ
5 viewshed are the peaks and east-facing slopes of the highest mountains in the
6 Sheep Range. At elevations exceeding 7,000 ft (2,100 m), viewpoints are high
7 enough that the tops of collector/reflector arrays for facilities within the SEZ
8 could be visible, resulting in strong visual contrast levels.

9
10 Figure 11.3.14.2-3 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from the
11 peak of Quartzite Mountain in the NWR, about 9.2 mi (14.8 km) west of the
12 SEZ. The visualization includes simplified wireframe models of a
13 hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed within the
14 SEZ as a visual aid for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of
15 utility-scale solar facilities. The receiver towers depicted in the visualization
16 are properly scaled models of a 459-ft (140-m) power tower with an 867-acre
17 (3.5-km²) field of 12-ft (3.7-m) heliostats, and the tower/heliostat system
18 represents about 100 MW of electric generating capacity. Six power tower
19 models were placed in the SEZ for this and other visualizations shown in this
20 section of this PEIS. In the visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in orange,
21 the heliostat fields in blue.

22
23 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 4,900 ft (1,500 m) higher in
24 elevation than the SEZ; this is one of the highest elevations within the SEZ
25 25-mi (40-km) viewshed. Although the Arrow Canyon Range would still
26 screen solar facilities in substantial portions of the SEZ from view,
27 particularly in the northern portions of the SEZ, much of the SEZ would be
28 visible over the southern end of the Arrow Canyon Range. The view direction
29 is roughly perpendicular to the long north-south axis of the SEZ, and despite
30 the partial screening, the SEZ would stretch across nearly the entire horizontal
31 field of view. From this elevated viewpoint, the tops of collector/reflector
32 arrays for solar facilities within the SEZ would be visible, which would make
33 their large areal extent and strong regular geometry more apparent, tending to
34 increase visual contrast with the more natural-appearing surroundings.
35 Ancillary facilities, such as buildings, cooling towers, and transmission
36 towers, as well as any plumes, would likely be visible, and their forms,
37 vertical lines, and movement (for plumes) projecting above the strongly
38 horizontal shapes of the collector/receiver arrays would create additional
39 visual contrasts.

40
41 Operating power tower receivers in the nearer portions of SEZ would likely
42 appear as bright non-point light sources against the backdrop of the Dry
43 Valley floor. At night, sufficiently tall the power towers could have red or
44 white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely be visible from this
45 location. The lighting could attract visual attention, although other lights
46



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FIGURE 11.3.14.2-3 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Quartzite Mountain in the Desert National Wildlife Range

1 would be visible in the vicinity of the SEZ. Other lighting associated with
2 solar facilities in the SEZ could be visible as well.

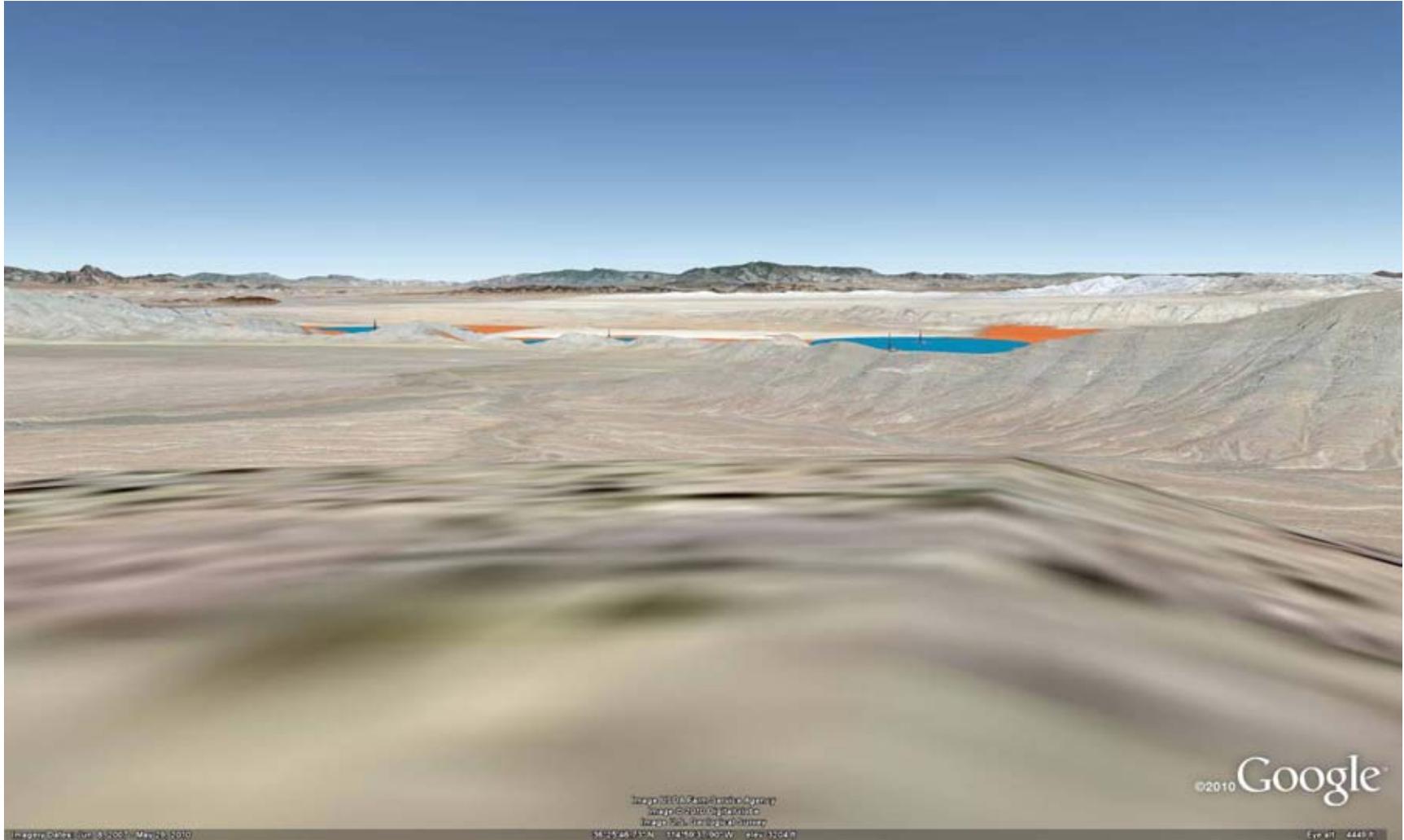
3
4 Visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ would depend
5 on the numbers, types, sizes and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and
6 other visibility factors. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the
7 PEIS, strong visual contrasts could be expected at this viewpoint.

8
9 Much lower levels of contrast would be expected at lower elevation
10 viewpoints within the WA in the SEZ viewshed, because of more extensive
11 screening of the SEZ by intervening mountains south of the WA.
12 Figure 11.3.14.2-4 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from the
13 peak of an unnamed low mountain in the Las Vegas Range, about 4.3 mi
14 (6.9 km) west of the westernmost point in the SEZ, although the westernmost
15 portions of the SEZ are screened from view. At 4.3 mi (6.9 km), the viewpoint
16 is with the BLM VRM Programs' foreground/middleground distance of 3 to
17 5 mi (5 to 8 km).

18
19 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 2,300 ft (700 m) higher in
20 elevation than the SEZ. From this much closer but lower viewpoint, the
21 mountains of the Arrow Canyon Range would screen most of the SEZ from
22 view. The view direction is roughly perpendicular to the long north-south axis
23 of the SEZ, and despite the partial screening, the SEZ would stretch across
24 much of the horizontal field of view. The viewpoint is sufficiently elevated
25 that the tops of collector/reflector arrays for solar facilities within the SEZ
26 would be visible, which would make their large areal extent and strong regular
27 geometry more apparent, tending to increase visual contrast with the more
28 natural-appearing surroundings.

29
30 Ancillary facilities, such as buildings, cooling towers, and transmission
31 towers, as well as any plumes, would likely be visible, and their forms,
32 vertical lines, and movement (for plumes) projecting above the strongly
33 horizontal shapes of the collector/receiver arrays would create additional
34 visual contrasts. Color and texture contrasts would also be likely, but their
35 extent would depend on the materials and surface treatments utilized in the
36 facilities.

37
38 Where visible, operating power tower receivers in the nearer portions of
39 the SEZ would likely appear as very bright non-point light sources atop
40 discernable tower structures against the backdrop of the Dry Valley floor. At
41 night, sufficiently tall power towers could have red or white flashing hazard
42 navigation lighting that would likely be visible from this location. The lighting
43 could attract visual attention, although other lights would be visible in the
44 vicinity of the SEZ. Other lighting associated with solar facilities in the SEZ
45 could be visible as well.



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FIGURE 11.3.14.2-4 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from a Peak in the Las Vegas Range in the Desert National Wildlife Range

1 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
2 their designs, and other visibility factors, under the 80% development scenario
3 analyzed in the PEIS, moderate to strong visual contrasts could be expected at
4 this viewpoint.

5
6 In general, visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ
7 would depend on viewer location within the NWR, the numbers, types, sizes
8 and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and other project- and site-specific
9 factors. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, strong
10 levels of visual contrast would be expected for some high-elevation
11 viewpoints in the NWR, with weak or moderate levels of visual contrast
12 expected for most lower-elevation viewpoints in the NWR located within the
13 SEZ 25-mi (40-km) viewshed.

14 15 16 ***National Historic Trail***

- 17
18 • *Old Spanish Trail*. The Old Spanish National Historic Trail is a
19 congressionally designated multistate historic trail that passes within 1.3 mi
20 (2.1 km) of the SEZ at the point of closest approach on the southeast side of
21 the SEZ. About 30 mi (48 km) of the trail are within the viewshed of the SEZ.
22 About 8.8 mi (14.2 km) of the trail located within the viewshed are within a
23 *high-potential segment*.⁹ Portions of the trail within the SEZ viewshed range
24 from as close as 1.4 mi (2.3 km) (including the high-potential segment) from
25 the SEZ to beyond 25 mi (40 km) from the SEZ.

26
27 Within 20 mi (32 km) of the SEZ, the trail is oriented generally southwest–
28 northeast, parallel to the Union Pacific Railroad, and through the Moapa River
29 Indian Reservation. The SEZ is within view of the trail for much of the area.
30 Within the viewshed, the trail runs through shrubland and steppes.

31
32 About 30 mi (48 km) of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail are within the
33 SEZ viewshed to the east and northeast of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.14.2-2). For
34 all but about 5 mi (8 km) of the trail, visibility of solar facilities within the
35 SEZ would be limited to the upper portions of power towers, and expected
36 visual contrast levels in these portions of the trail would likely be minimal or
37 weak. Expected visual contrasts would include visibility of the receivers of
38 operating power towers during the day, and, if power towers exceeded 200 ft
39 (61 m) in height, visibility of hazard warning lights on the power towers at
40 night. Hazard warning lighting could be flashing red lights or red or white
41 strobe lights, both which could be visible for long distances.

42

⁹ High-potential segments or sites provide an opportunity to interpret the historic significance of the trail. Criteria for selection of a high-potential segment or site include “historic significance, presence of visible historic remnants, scenic quality, and relative freedom from intrusion.”

1 There could be intermittent visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ in a
2 number of places, but the trail segment with full visibility of solar facilities
3 within the SEZ would be a 5-mi (8-km) stretch roughly paralleling the SEZ's
4 eastern boundary, 3 to 5 mi (5 to 8 km) east of the SEZ. For much of this
5 segment, views of the SEZ would be partially screened by the Dry Lake
6 Range, but some portions of the SEZ would be visible through gaps in the
7 range and beyond the range's northern extent. Although in most locations
8 expected contrasts would not exceed weak levels, in a few locations, moderate
9 or even strong visual contrasts could be observed.

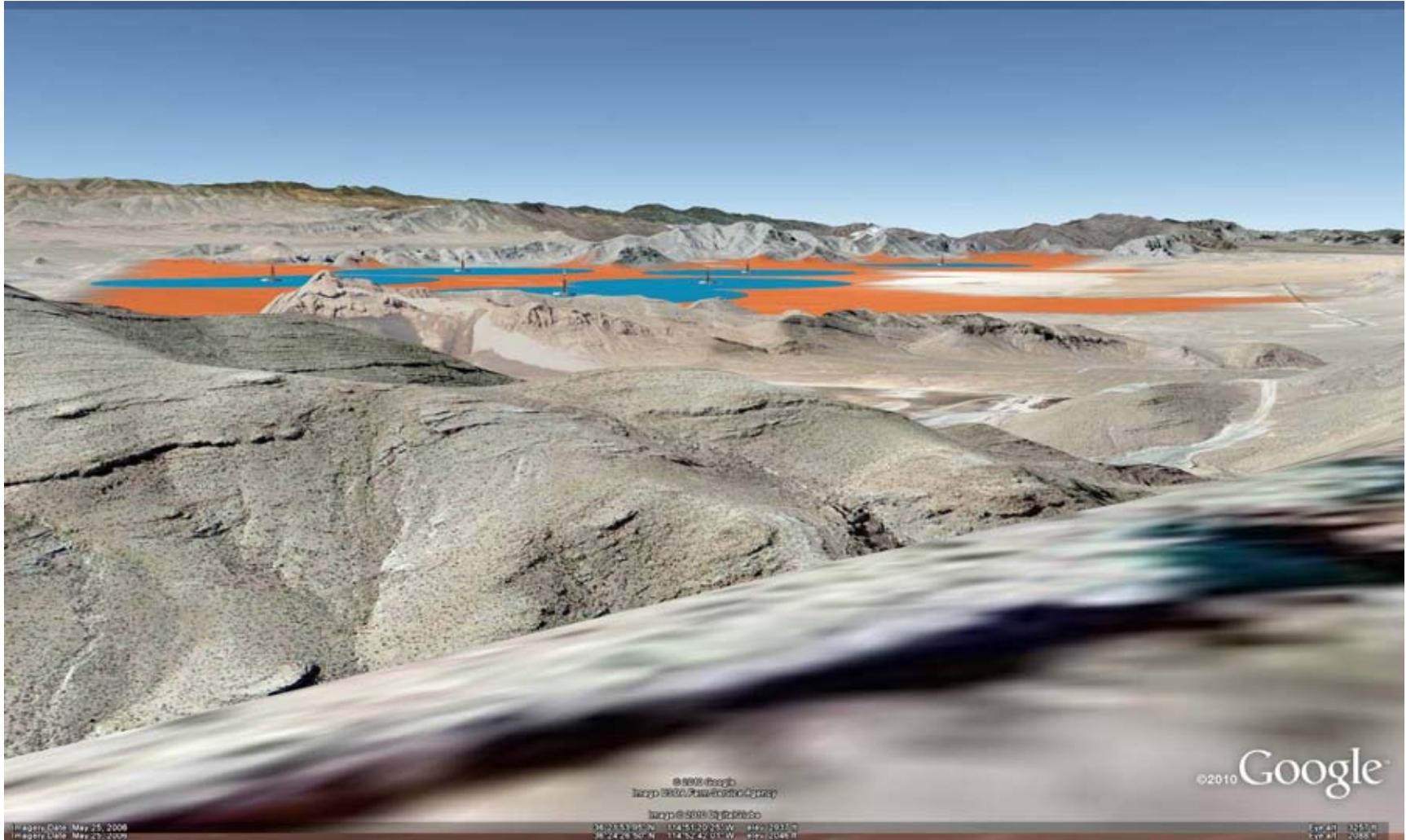
10
11 From the southwest, the trail enters the 25-mi (40-km) SEZ viewshed in the
12 Dry Lake Range about 2.6 mi (4.2 km) southeast of the SEZ's southeast
13 corner, as the centerline of the trail ascends a high ridge in the Dry Lake
14 Range. Contrasts would quickly reach strong levels as trail user traveled
15 northward along the ridge top. The trail in this area is in a high-potential
16 segment.

17
18 Figure 11.3.14.2-5 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
19 orange) as seen from the Old Spanish National Historic Trail near the point of
20 maximum potential visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ on the ridge
21 just described, about 2.5 mi (4.0 km) from the closest point in the SEZ. The
22 viewpoint is within the BLM VRM Program's foreground-middleground
23 distance of 3-5 mi (5-8 km). The viewpoint is about 1,000 ft (300 m) higher in
24 elevation than the SEZ.

25
26 The visualization suggests that from this elevated point on the trail, much of
27 the SEZ would be visible over the tops of intervening ridges in the Dry Lake
28 Range, although some of the easternmost portion of the SEZ would be
29 screened. The view would be oblique to the long north-south axis of the SEZ,
30 so that nearly the full north-south extent of the SEZ would be visible, and the
31 SEZ would occupy nearly all of the horizontal field of view.

32
33 Because of the elevation difference between the viewpoint and the SEZ and
34 the relatively short distance to the SEZ, the vertical angle of view would be
35 high enough that the tops of collector/reflector arrays in the SEZ would be
36 visible, which would make the large areal extent of the facilities and their
37 strong regular geometry more apparent, tending to increase their visual
38 contrast with the strongly horizontal and more natural appearing landscape
39 setting. However, facilities at the northern end of the SEZ would have a more
40 flattened appearance and reduced apparent size, which would make them
41 blend into the landscape setting more readily.

42
43 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, cooling
44 towers, and plumes (if present) would likely be visible projecting above the
45 collector/reflector arrays. The structural details of at least nearby facilities
46 could be evident. The ancillary facilities could create form and line contrasts



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FIGURE 11.3.14.2-5 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from the Old Spanish National Historic Trail 2.5 mi (4.0 km) from the SEZ

1 with the strongly horizontal, regular, and repeating forms and lines of the
2 collector/reflector arrays. Color and texture contrasts would also be likely, but
3 their extent would depend on the materials and surface treatments utilized in
4 the facilities.

5
6 The receivers of operating power towers in the closest parts of the SEZ would
7 likely appear as brilliant white non-point light sources atop tower structures
8 with clearly discernable structural details, while those farther from the
9 viewpoint would have diminished brightness and less detail visible. Also,
10 under certain viewing conditions, sunlight on dust particles in the air might
11 result in the appearance of light streaming down from the tower(s). At night,
12 sufficiently tall power towers could have flashing red or white hazard lighting
13 that could be visible for long distances, and would likely be visually
14 conspicuous from this viewpoint, although other lighting would be visible in
15 the SEZ area. Other light sources associated with the solar facilities within the
16 SEZ could be visible as well.

17
18 As noted above, numerous large-scale cultural disturbances already are visible
19 in and near the SEZ, and the addition of solar facilities into the already
20 visually complex and partially man-made appearing landscape would result in
21 lower contrast levels than if the solar facilities were being placed in a visually
22 pristine landscape. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the
23 PEIS, the SEZ could contain numerous solar facilities utilizing differing solar
24 technologies as well as a variety of roads and ancillary facilities. The addition
25 of multiple solar facilities could add substantially to the existing visually
26 complex landscape, to the extent that it would exceed the visual absorption
27 capability of the valley in which the SEZ is located, leading to a perception of
28 visual clutter that could be perceived negatively by viewers.

29
30 Because the SEZ would occupy most of the horizontal field of view, and
31 because of the potentially very close proximity of solar facilities to this
32 location, strong visual contrasts from solar energy development within the
33 SEZ would be expected at this viewpoint. However, the actual contrast levels
34 experienced would depend on project location within the SEZ, the types of
35 solar facilities and their designs, and other visibility factors.

36
37 About 0.4 mi (0.6 km) of the trail along the high ridge top would potentially
38 be subject to strong contrasts from solar facilities within the SEZ. At the end
39 of this segment, the trail passes to the east sides of the next several succeeding
40 ridges and hills so that the SEZ is screened entirely from view of the trail
41 centerline for the next 1.2 mi (1.9 km). At about 1.2 mi (1.9 km), there would
42 be a short segment of the trail near a hill summit that could have views of a
43 small portion of the SEZ, with contrasts levels not expected to exceed weak
44 levels. Another hill with limited visibility of the SEZ would be reached at
45 about 1.5 mi (2.4 km) beyond the end of the first high ridge, but the view from
46 this hill would be through a gap in the Dry Lake Range through which a large

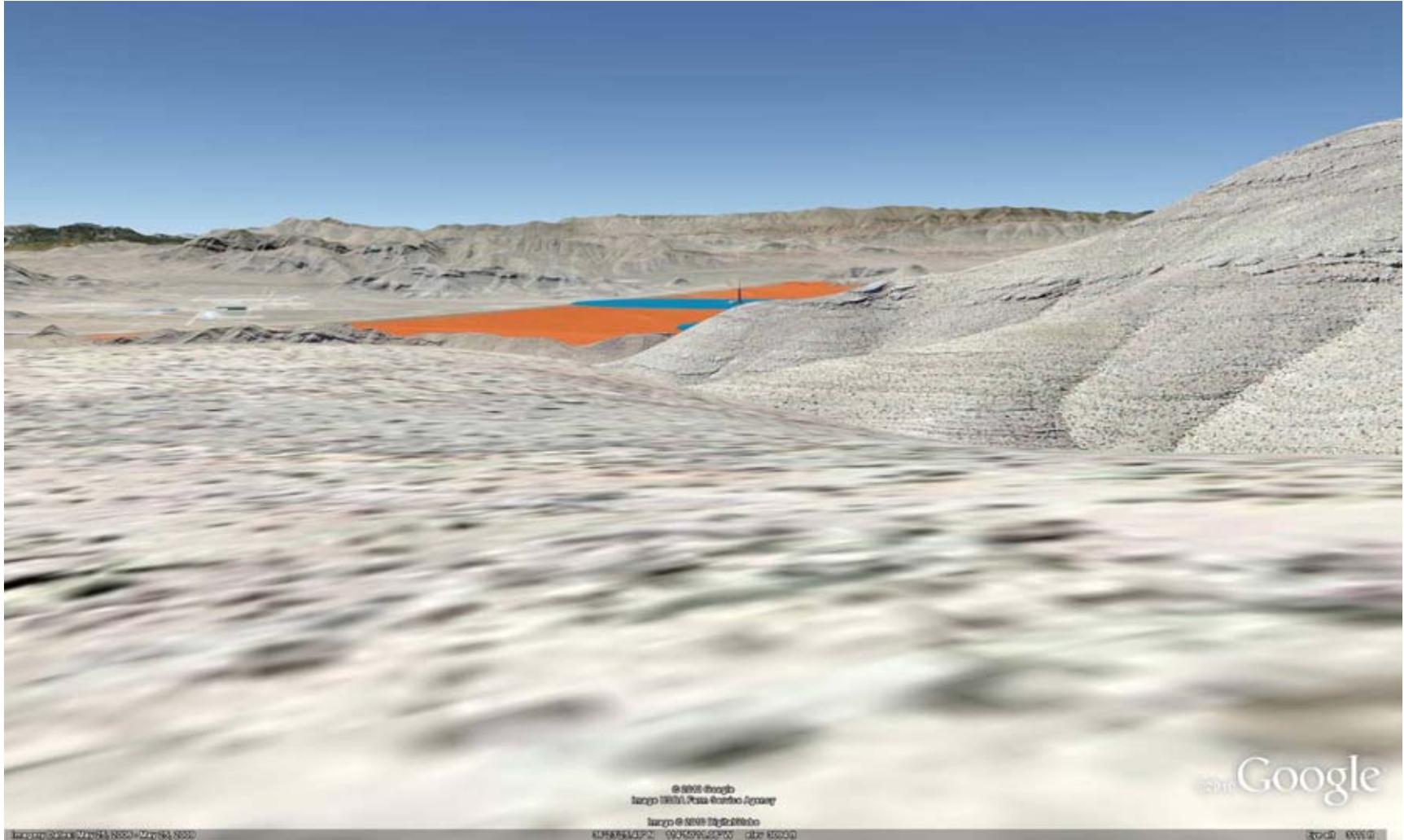
1 transmission line with lattice towers would extend west down to the SEZ.
2 After crossing the transmission ROW, the trail ascends to another high ridge
3 with visibility of the SEZ. Figure 11.3.14.2-6 is a Google Earth visualization
4 of the SEZ (highlighted in orange) as seen from the Old Spanish National
5 Historic Trail from this second ridge, about 1.7 mi (2.7 km) from the
6 closest point in the SEZ. The viewpoint is within the BLM VRM Program
7 foreground-middleground distance of 3 to 5 mi (5 to 8 km). The viewpoint
8 is about 850 ft (260 m) higher in elevation than the SEZ.
9

10 The visualization suggests that from this elevated point on the trail, much of
11 the SEZ would be screened by intervening ridges in the Dry Lake Range,
12 although a small area in the southernmost portion of the SEZ would be visible.
13 Because of the extensive screening, the SEZ would occupy a moderate
14 portion of the horizontal field of view. The aspect and appearance of solar
15 facilities would be very similar to that described for the view shown in
16 Figure 11.3.14.2-5, but the expected contrast levels would be moderate,
17 because of the limited view of the SEZ.
18

19 After passing this second high ridge, the trail turns lightly eastward and
20 eventually descends from the Dry Lake Range, with views of the SEZ largely
21 screened by the Dry Lake Range during the descent, except for very limited
22 potential views restricted to taller solar facility components through a gap in
23 the Dry Lake Range. Expected contrast levels associated with views of solar
24 facilities within the SEZ would be minimal.
25

26 About 3.8 mi (6.1 km) past the first high ridge, the trail turns almost directly
27 east for a short distance before turning back northeast, but from this point
28 forward (for northbound travelers) views of the SEZ would be very limited
29 because of screening by the Dry Lake Range and/or very low angle views
30 where the Dry Lake Range did not completely screen the SEZ from view.
31 Furthermore, the direction of travel would be away from the SEZ, so that
32 views of the SEZ would be behind northbound travelers. Therefore, views
33 would be less frequent and likely of shorter duration. Finally, the distance
34 from the SEZ would gradually increase as travelers moved north on the trail,
35 and any visual contrasts would slowly decrease. For most locations north of
36 the westward turn in the trail, if solar facilities within the SEZ were visible at
37 all, expected contrast levels would be minimal, and nowhere would they be
38 expected to exceed weak levels.
39

40 Southbound travelers on the Old Spanish Trail would experience the same
41 visual contrasts as northbound travelers, but in reverse order. The overall
42 experience would be somewhat different because southbound travelers would
43 approach the SEZ more gradually than northbound travelers, with intermittent
44 visibility for a much longer duration.



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FIGURE 11.3.14.2-6 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from the Old Spanish National Historic Trail 1.7 mi (2.7 km) from the SEZ

1 Although there could be very limited and brief views of solar facilities in the
2 SEZ as far out as 25 mi (40 km) northeast of the SEZ or even farther,
3 southbound trail users would likely only notice those views at around 22 mi
4 (35 km) as the trail crossed a ridge where it crosses I-15 northeast of the State
5 Route 169 interchange. At this viewpoint, the upper portions of power towers
6 could be visible, and the receivers of operating power towers could appear as
7 distant star-like points of light on the southwest horizon. They could also be
8 visible at night if tall enough to require hazard warning lighting. Expected
9 contrast levels would be minimal, and visibility would be intermittent.

10 Intermittent visibility of solar facilities would continue, with expected contrast
11 levels generally minimal, but not exceeding weak levels until southbound
12 travelers reached the high ridges discussed above, with the views shown in
13 Figures 11.3.14.2-6 and 11.3.14.2-5. After reaching the viewpoint shown in
14 Figure 11.3.14.2-5, the trail would descend from the Dry Lake Range and pass
15 the southern end of the SEZ and pass out of the SEZ 25-mi (40-km) viewshed.
16
17

18 ***Wilderness Areas***

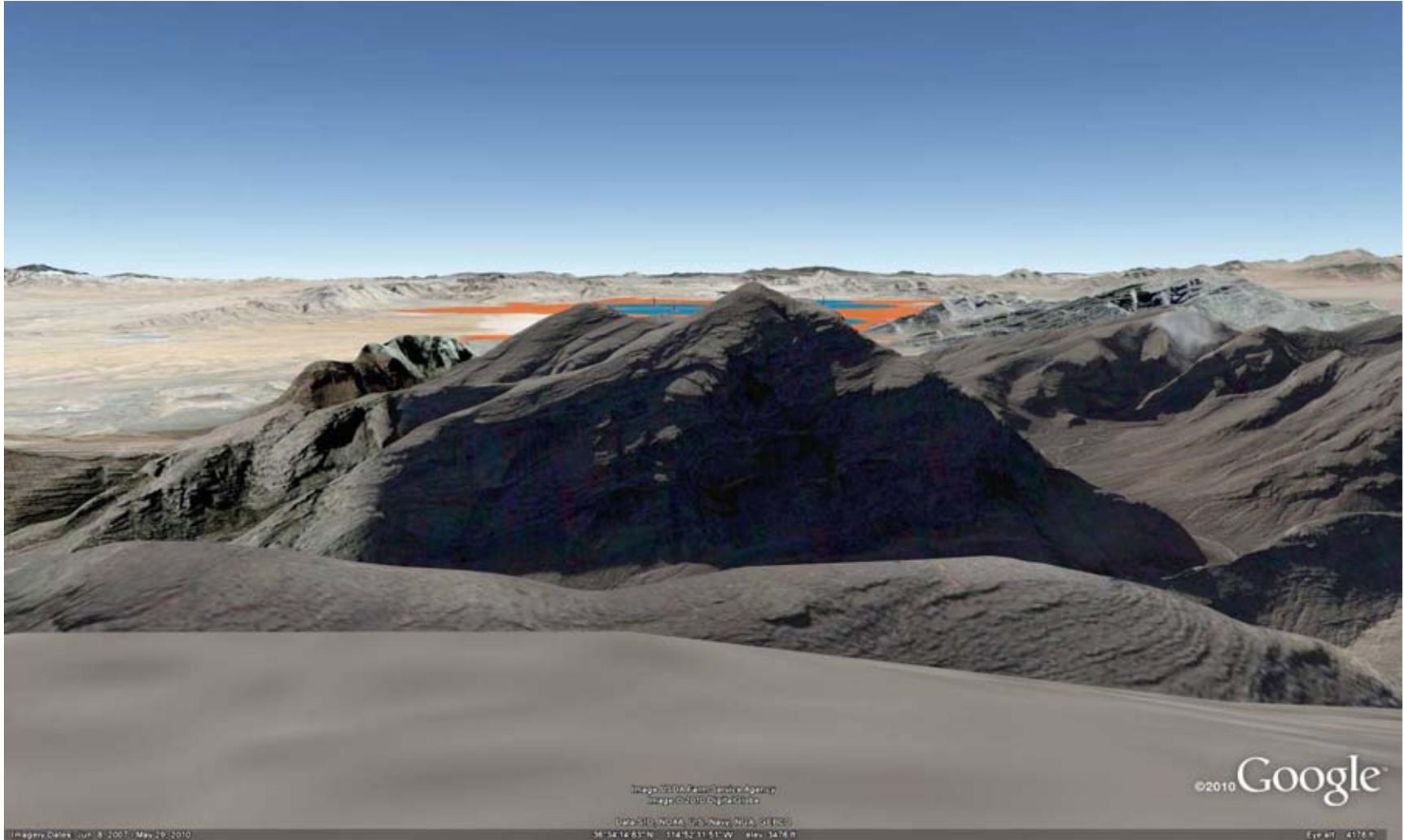
- 19 • *Arrow Canyon.* Arrow Canyon is a 27,521-acre (111.37-km²) congressionally
20 designated WA 2.5 mi (4.0 km) north of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.14.2-2). The
21 WA is known for its exceptional scenic values.

22
23
24
25 Within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar energy facilities within the SEZ
26 could be visible from the southern portions of the WA (about 1,485 acres
27 [6.010 km²] in the 650-ft [198.1-m] viewshed, or 5% of the total WA acreage,
28 and 1,129 acres [4.569 km²] in the 25-ft [7.5-m] viewshed, or 4% of the total
29 WA acreage). Within the WA, the areas with potential views of solar facilities
30 in the SEZ extend to 9.1 mi (14.7 km) from the northern boundary of the SEZ.
31

32 Mountains of the Arrow Canyon Range just south of the WA screen views of
33 the SEZ from all but the highest elevations of the southern peaks in the WA.
34 From a few of these peaks, nearly open views of the SEZ exist, looking down
35 the long north-south axis of the SEZ, with moderate to strong contrast levels
36 expected for these viewpoints.
37

38 Figure 11.3.14.2-7 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from a
39 high, unnamed peak in the far southern portion of the WA, about 2.9 mi
40 (4.7 km) north of the SEZ, and within the BLM VRM program foreground-
41 middleground distance of 3 to 5 mi (5 to 8 km), although the nearest parts of
42 the SEZ are screened from view in the visualization. In the visualization, the
43 SEZ area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
44

45 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 1,900 ft (580 m) higher in
46 elevation than the SEZ. Solar facilities within the SEZ would be partially



1

2 **FIGURE 11.3.14.2-7 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with**
3 **Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from a Peak in the Far Southern Portion of Arrow Canyon WA**
4

1 screened by mountains south of the WA in the Arrow Canyon Range. The
2 view direction is along the long north-south axis of the SEZ, but the viewpoint
3 is close enough to the SEZ that it would occupy a moderate amount of the
4 horizontal field of view. The viewpoint is sufficiently elevated that the tops of
5 collector/reflector arrays for solar facilities within the SEZ would be visible,
6 which would make their large areal extent and strong regular geometry more
7 apparent, tending to increase visual contrast with the more natural-appearing
8 surroundings.

9
10 Ancillary facilities, such as buildings, cooling towers, and transmission
11 towers, as well as any plumes, would likely be visible, and their forms,
12 vertical lines, and movement (for plumes) projecting above the strong
13 horizontal line of the collector/receiver arrays would add visual contrast.

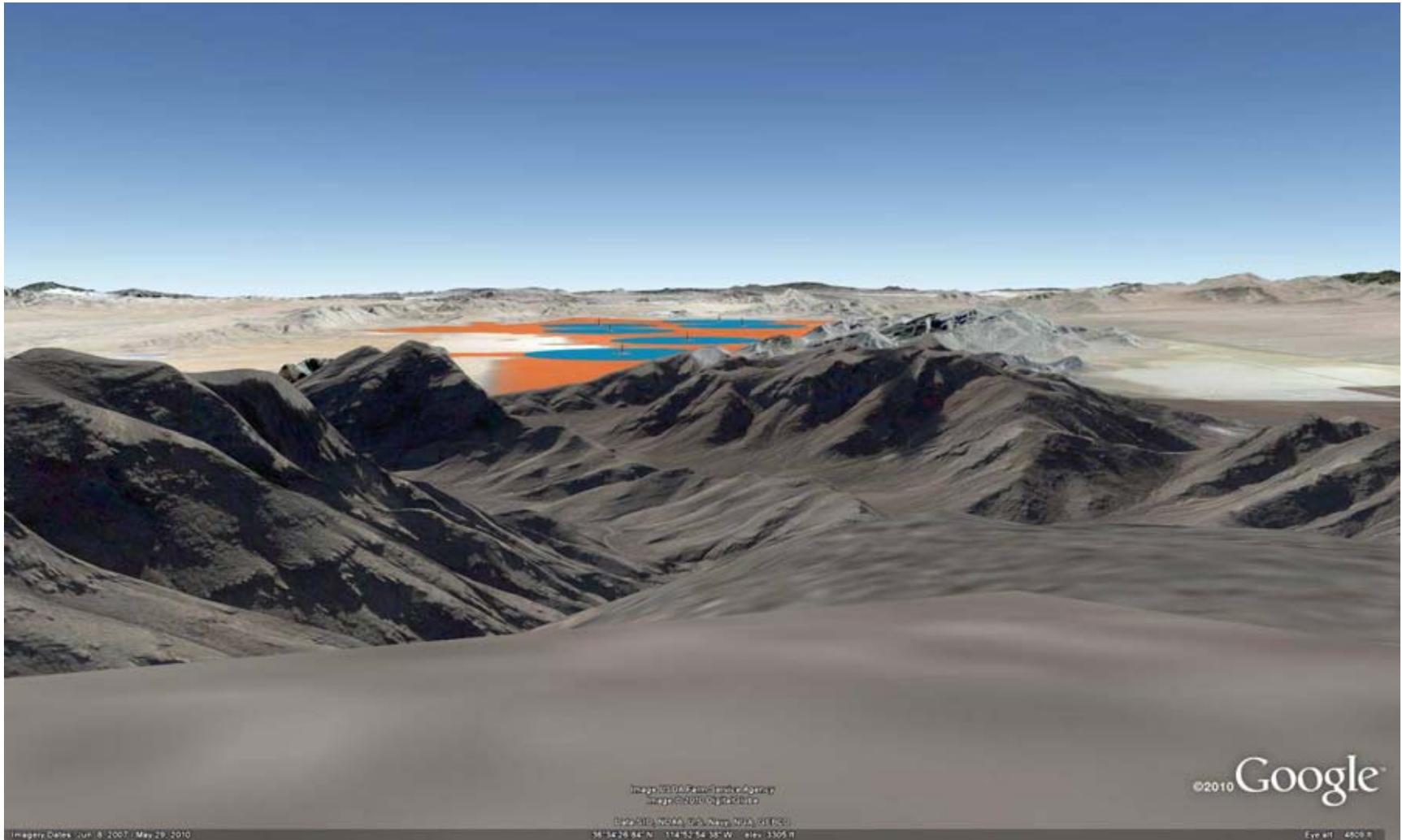
14
15 Operating power tower receivers in the nearer portions of SEZ would likely
16 appear as bright non-point light sources against the backdrop of the Dry
17 Valley floor. At night, sufficiently tall power towers could have red or white
18 flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely be visible from this
19 location. The lighting could attract visual attention, although other lights
20 would be visible in the vicinity of the SEZ, and beyond, in the direction of
21 Las Vegas. Other lighting associated with solar facilities in the SEZ could be
22 visible as well.

23
24 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
25 their designs, and other visibility factors, under the 80% development scenario
26 analyzed in the PEIS, moderate contrasts could be expected at this viewpoint.

27
28 Figure 11.3.14.2-8 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from a
29 higher, unnamed peak farther north in the WA than the viewpoint just
30 described. This viewpoint is about 4.4 mi (7.0 km) north of the SEZ and is
31 still within the BLM VRM program foreground-middleground distance of 3 to
32 5 mi (5 to 8 km). In the visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in orange, the
33 heliostat fields in blue.

34
35 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 2,500 ft (580 m) higher in
36 elevation than the SEZ. Because this viewpoint is higher than the mountains
37 to the south, much more of the SEZ is in view than from the previous
38 viewpoint. The view direction is along the long north-south axis of the SEZ,
39 but the viewpoint is close enough to the SEZ that it would occupy a moderate
40 amount of the horizontal field of view. From this higher-elevation viewpoint,
41 more of the tops of collector/reflector arrays for solar facilities within the SEZ
42 would be visible, which would make their large areal extent and strong regular
43 geometry more apparent, tending to increase visual contrast with the more
44 natural-appearing surroundings.

45



1

2

3

FIGURE 11.3.14.2-8 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from a Peak in the Southern Portion of Arrow Canyon WA

1 Ancillary facilities, such as buildings, cooling towers, and transmission
2 towers, as well as any plumes, would likely be visible, and their forms,
3 vertical lines, and movement (for plumes) projecting above the strong
4 horizontal line of the collector/receiver arrays would add visual contrast.
5

6 Operating power tower receivers in the nearer portions of SEZ would likely
7 appear as bright non-point light sources against the backdrop of the Dry
8 Valley floor, but power towers at the far southern end of the SEZ would be far
9 enough away that they would likely create substantially lower levels of visual
10 contrast. At night, sufficiently tall power towers could have red or white
11 flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely be visible from this
12 location. The lighting could attract visual attention, although other lights
13 would be visible within and in the vicinity of the SEZ and beyond, in the
14 direction of Las Vegas.
15

16 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
17 their designs, and other visibility factors, under the 80% development scenario
18 analyzed in the PEIS, strong visual contrasts could be expected at this
19 viewpoint.
20

21 Much lower levels of visual contrast would be expected at lower-elevation
22 viewpoints within the WA in the SEZ viewshed, because of more extensive
23 screening of the SEZ by intervening mountains south of the WA. The
24 steepness of the mountains in the WA results in a rapid drop-off in elevation
25 away from the peaks, so that viewpoints away from the mountain tops are
26 nearly completely screened, resulting in much lower contrasts from solar
27 facilities in the SEZ.
28

29 In general, under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS,
30 moderate or even strong levels of visual contrast would be expected for high-
31 elevation viewpoints in the WA, with weak levels of visual contrast expected
32 for most lower-elevation viewpoints in the WA located within the SEZ 25-mi
33 (40-km) viewshed.
34

- 35 • *Meadow Valley Range.* Meadow Valley Range is a 123,481-acre
36 (499.710-km²) congressionally designated WA located 19 mi (31 km) away
37 at the point of closest approach north of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.14.2-2). The
38 long ridgeline of the Meadow Valley Range includes many peaks, narrow
39 canyons, and passes.
40

41 Within 25 mi (40 km), solar energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible
42 from areas in the far southern portion of the WA. Visible areas of the WA
43 within the 25-mi (40-km) radius of analysis total about 133 acres (0.538 km²)
44 in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or 0.1% of the total WA acreage. None of
45 the WA is visible in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. The visible area of the WA
46 extends to beyond 25 mi (40 km) from the northern boundary of the SEZ.

1 Within the SEZ 25-mi (40-km) viewshed in the WA, areas with potential
2 visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ are scattered across a few peaks
3 between Wildcat Wash and Dead Man Wash in the far southern end of the
4 WA. Within this area, visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ would be
5 limited to the upper portions of power towers. If visible, operating power
6 towers in the SEZ would be seen as distant points of light on the southern
7 horizon. At night, sufficiently tall power towers in the SEZ could have red or
8 white flashing hazard navigation lighting that could potentially be visible from
9 the WA. Other lighting associated with solar facilities could potentially be
10 visible as well.

11
12 Because of the long distance to the SEZ and screening of much of the SEZ by
13 intervening topography, under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the
14 PEIS, visual contrast levels from solar energy development within the SEZ
15 would be expected to be minimal for viewpoints within the Meadow Valley
16 Range WA.

- 17
18 • *Mormon Mountains*. Mormon Mountains is a 157,645-acre (638 km²)
19 congressionally designated WA located 24 mi (39 km) away at the point of
20 closest approach northeast of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.14.2-2). The WA's rocky
21 cliffs, narrow drainages, and rolling bajadas provide numerous opportunities
22 for solitude. Recreational opportunities include camping, hiking, backpacking,
23 hunting, and horseback riding.

24
25 Visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi (40-km) radius of analysis total
26 about 1,501 acres (6.1 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or 0.7% of the
27 total WA acreage, and 981 acres (4.0 km²) in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or
28 0.6% of the total WA acreage. Areas of the WA with potential visibility of
29 solar facilities within the SEZ extend to beyond 25 mi (40 km) from the
30 northeastern corner of the SEZ.

31
32 Solar facilities within the SEZ would be in view of many of the west- and
33 southwest-facing slopes of the Mormon Mountains, but most of these areas
34 are beyond 25 mi (40 km) from the SEZ. Within the 25-mi (40-km) SEZ
35 viewshed, areas in the WA with views of the SEZ occur on the lower portions
36 of a bajada in the far southern end of the WA.

37
38 Intervening terrain provides substantial partial screening of the SEZ for nearly
39 all WA viewpoints within the 25-mi (40-km) SEZ viewshed. Views toward
40 the SEZ would be at a very low vertical angle, and the SEZ would occupy a
41 very small portion of the horizontal field of view. Both factors would
42 substantially reduce visual contrast levels. Where visible, collector/reflector
43 arrays for solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen edge on, which would
44 reduce their apparent size and cause them to appear to repeat the line of the
45 valley floor in which the SEZ is located. This would tend to reduce visual
46 contrast. Operating power tower receivers within the SEZ would likely appear

1 as distant points of light against the floor of the valley in which the SEZ is
2 located, or against the base of the Arrow Canyon Range. At night, sufficiently
3 tall power towers in the SEZ could have red or white flashing hazard
4 navigation lighting that could potentially be visible from the WA.
5

6 Because of the partial screening and the very long distance to the SEZ (24+ mi
7 [39+ km]), expected visual contrast levels associated with solar energy
8 development within the SEZ would be minimal for WA viewpoints within the
9 25-mi (40 km) SEZ viewshed.
10

- 11 • *Muddy Mountains.* Muddy Mountains is a 44,522-acre (180.2-km²)
12 congressionally designated WA located 6.6 mi (10.6 km) away at the point of
13 closest approach southeast of the SEZ (Figure 11.3.14.2-2). Portions of the
14 Muddy Mountains WA provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The
15 wilderness provides outstanding recreation opportunities for hiking on and off
16 trail, scenic viewing, hunting, and exploration (BLM and NPS 2007).
17

18 Visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi (40-km) radius of analysis total
19 about 5,798 acres (23.5 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or 13% of the
20 total WA acreage, and 3,940 acres (16.0 km²) in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed,
21 or 9% of the total WA acreage. The visible area of the WA extends about
22 12 mi (19 km) from the southeastern boundary of the SEZ.
23

24 Solar facilities could be visible from scattered areas throughout the peaks of
25 the Muddy Mountains in much of the western half of the WA. The Dry Valley
26 Range provides at least partial screening of the SEZ for lower elevation views
27 within the WA, but for some of the higher peaks, a substantial portion of the
28 SEZ would be in view over the mountains of the Dry Lake Range. For some
29 of the very highest viewpoints within the WA, the SEZ would stretch across
30 most of the horizontal field of view, and moderate visual contrasts would be
31 expected as a result.
32

33 Figure 11.3.14.2-9 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from an
34 unnamed peak in the northern portion of the SRMA, about 10 mi (16 km)
35 southeast of the SEZ. In the visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in orange,
36 the heliostat fields in blue.
37

38 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 2,800 ft (850 m) higher in
39 elevation than the SEZ. Solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen in a
40 narrow band just above the Dry Lake Range and just under the Arrow Canyon
41 Range. The view direction is offset 45 degrees to the long north-south axis
42 of the SEZ, which would result in the SEZ occupying most of the horizontal
43 field of view. The viewpoint is sufficiently elevated that the tops of
44 collector/reflector arrays for solar facilities within the SEZ would be visible,

1 which would make their large areal extent and strong regular geometry more
2 apparent, tending to increase visual contrast with the more natural-appearing
3 surroundings.

4
5 Ancillary facilities, such as buildings, cooling towers, and transmission
6 towers, as well as any plumes, would likely be visible, and their forms,
7 vertical lines, and movement (for plumes) projecting above the strong
8 horizontal line of the collector/receiver arrays would add visual contrast.

9
10 Operating power tower receivers within the SEZ would likely appear as
11 points of light against the backdrop of the Arrow Canyon Range. At night,
12 sufficiently tall power towers could have red or white flashing hazard
13 navigation lighting that would likely be visible from this location. The lighting
14 could attract visual attention, although other lights would be visible within and
15 in the vicinity of the SEZ.

16
17 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities
18 and their designs, and other visibility factors, primarily because of the large
19 amount of horizontal field of view that solar facilities in the SEZ would
20 occupy under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, moderate
21 visual contrasts would be expected at this viewpoint.

22
23 For other high-elevation viewpoints in the WA, views of solar facilities within
24 the SEZ and resulting expected contrast levels would be similar. At lower
25 elevations throughout the WA, however, contrast levels would be lower, even
26 for viewpoints closer to the SEZ because of more extensive screening of
27 views to the SEZ by the intervening Dry Lake Range. In general, under the
28 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, moderate levels of visual
29 contrast would be expected for high-elevation viewpoints in the WA, with
30 weak levels of visual contrast expected for most lower-elevation viewpoints in
31 the WA located within the SEZ 25-mi (40-km) viewshed.

32 33 ***ACECs***

- 34
35
- 36 • *Rainbow Gardens*. The 38,777-acre (156.9-km²) Rainbow Gardens ACEC
37 is 9.3 mi (15.0 km) south of the SEZ at the closest point of approach
38 (Figure 11.3.14.2-2). The resource values under protection within the
39 Rainbow Gardens ACEC include geological, scientific, scenic, cultural, and
40 sensitive plants (BLM 1998).

41
42 About 844 acres (3.42 km²), or 2% of the ACEC, is within the 650-ft
43 (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ, and 217 acres (0.9 km²) is in the 24.6-ft
44 (7.5-m) viewshed, or 0.6% of the total ACEC acreage. The visible area of the
45 ACEC extends from about 10 to 16 mi (16 to 26 km) from the southern
46 boundary of the SEZ.

1 Solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible from scattered areas in the
2 northwestern portion of the WA, generally at the summits and on north-facing
3 slopes of Sunrise and Frenchman Mountains, and from neighboring peaks and
4 ridges. From these high-elevation viewpoints, views of the SEZ would be over
5 the tops of mountains in the Dry Lake Range and hills more directly south of
6 the SEZ. Although the viewpoints are 1,000 to 2,000 ft (300 to 600 m) above
7 the elevation of the SEZ, the vertical angle of view is low, and the SEZ area is
8 partially screened by intervening topography. In addition, the views are along
9 the SEZs' relatively narrow north-south axis, so that the SEZ would occupy
10 only a small portion of the horizontal field of view, with weak visual contrasts
11 expected from solar facilities within the SEZ as a result.

12
13 Where visible within the SEZ, the collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities
14 would be seen nearly edge-on, which would decrease their apparent size and
15 tend to conceal the strong regular geometry of the arrays, tending to reduce
16 visual contrasts. The solar arrays would appear as lines just over the Dry Lake
17 Range and would be partially screened by mountains in the range. Where
18 visible, the facilities' edge-on appearance would tend to replicate the line of
19 the valley in which the SEZ is located, reducing visual contrast.

20
21 Where visible, operating power tower receivers within the SEZ would likely
22 appear as points of light on the northern horizon. The tower structures
23 underneath the receivers would likely be discernable. Power towers in the
24 closest parts of the SEZ might attract the attention of casual viewers located in
25 the closest parts of the ACEC. At night, sufficiently tall power towers in the
26 SEZ could have red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that could
27 potentially be visible from the WA. Because of the extensive screening and
28 the long distance to the SEZ (20+ mi [32+ km]), expected visual contrast
29 levels associated with solar energy development within the SEZ would be
30 minimal for ACEC viewpoints within the 25-mi (40 km) SEZ viewshed.

31
32 • *River Mountains.* The 10,950-acre (44.313-km²) River Mountains ACEC is
33 located about 20 mi (32 km) south of the SEZ at the closest point of approach.
34 The resource values under protection within the River Mountains ACEC
35 include bighorn sheep habitat and the scenic viewshed for Henderson and
36 Boulder City (BLM 1998).

37
38 About 1,962 acres (7.9 km²), or 18% of the ACEC, is within the 650-ft
39 (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ. None of the ACEC is within the 24.6-ft
40 (7.5-m) viewshed. The visible area of the ACEC extends from the point of
41 closest approach to beyond 25 mi (40 km) from the southern boundary of
42 the SEZ.

43
44 Solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible from scattered locations
45 throughout the peaks and ridge tops within the WA. Views of the SEZ from
46 the ACEC are largely screened by mountains in the Dry Lake Range, and

1 visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ would be limited to the upper
2 portions of power towers. In addition, the views are along the SEZ's relatively
3 narrow north-south axis, so that the SEZ would occupy only a very small
4 portion of the horizontal field of view.
5

6 Where visible, operating power tower receivers within the SEZ would likely
7 appear as distant points of light on the northern horizon. Because of the
8 extensive screening and the long distance to the SEZ (20+ mi [32+ km]),
9 expected visual contrast levels associated with solar energy development
10 within the SEZ would be minimal for ACEC viewpoints within the 25-mi
11 (40 km) SEZ viewshed.
12

13 *Scenic Byways*

- 14 • *Bitter Springs Backcountry Byway.* The Bitter Springs Backcountry Byway
15 is a 28-mi (45-km) BLM-designated scenic byway that passes within about
16 6.6 mi (10.6 km) of the SEZ; about 9.3 mi (15.0 km) of the byway are within
17 the SEZ 650-ft (198.1-m) and 24.6-ft (7.5 m) viewsheds. The byway follows
18 Bitter Springs Road, a single lane dirt road.
19
20

21
22 The SEZ would be visible from the byway east of the Crystal exit on I-15 up
23 to where the byway enters the Muddy Mountains. Maximum visibility of solar
24 facilities within the SEZ would occur close to I-15; as the road passes
25 southeast, the Dry Lake Range screens all but the northernmost portions of the
26 SEZ from view. Because of screening by intervening topography, even near
27 Crystal, contrast levels from solar facilities would be relatively low and would
28 not be expected to rise above weak levels.
29

30 Eastbound travelers would be in the SEZ viewshed at the beginning of the
31 trail where it splits off from the Valley of Fire Highway. The SEZ would be
32 directly west of the byway at this point; however, the direction of travel would
33 be south-southeast, so that vehicle occupants would have to turn their heads to
34 the right and slightly behind them to see solar facilities within the SEZ. If
35 travelers looked toward the SEZ, the Dry Lake Range would screen most of
36 the SEZ from view. Furthermore, the roadway is about 100 ft (30 m) lower in
37 elevation than the SEZ, so visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ would
38 be very limited. If power towers and other tall ancillary facility components,
39 such as transmission towers or cooling towers, were located in the SEZ such
40 that they were visible through one or more of several gaps in the Dry Lake
41 Range, they could create visual contrasts for eastbound byway travelers, and
42 at a distance of 8 mi (13 km), contrasts could be noticeable to casual viewers.
43 However, the gaps are small so that views would be fleeting, and given the
44 direction of travel away from the SEZ, expected impacts resulting from
45 brief views of these visual contrasts from solar facilities in the SEZ would
46 be minimal.
47

1 Westbound travelers on the byway would have a different visual experience
2 than eastbound travelers because the view to the SEZ would be generally
3 close to the direction of travel, so the number of views and the average view
4 length would be greater.
5

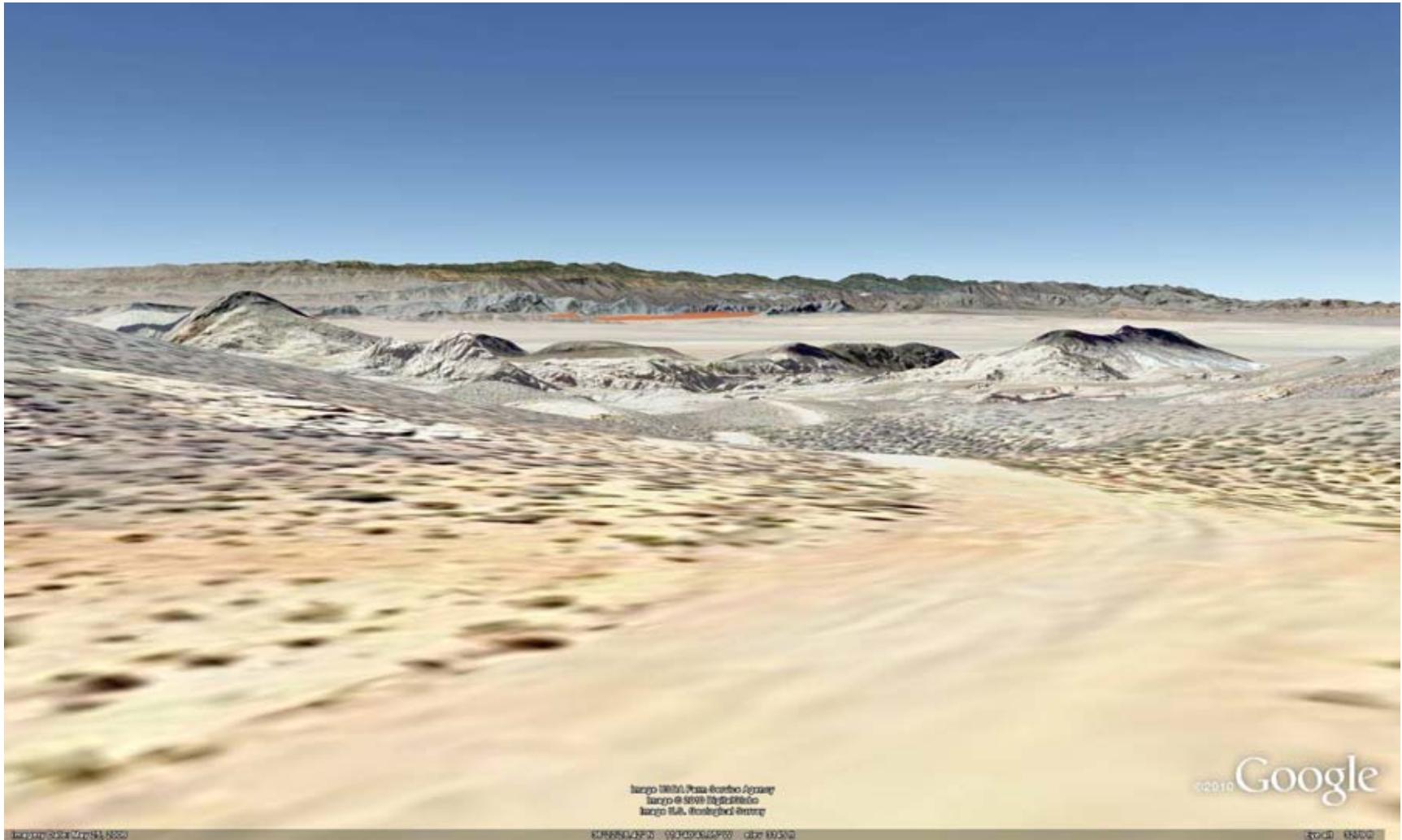
6 From the east, the Bitter Springs Backcountry Byway enters the 25-mi
7 (40-km) SEZ viewshed as it descends from the Muddy Mountains about 11 mi
8 (18 km) east of the SEZ. In these hills, screening vegetation is largely absent,
9 and there could be intermittent visibility of solar facilities in the SEZ because
10 of screening by hills in the foreground between the byway and the SEZ. Solar
11 facilities could be viewed only briefly as the road twists and turns among the
12 hills, and would occupy a very small portion of the field of view. However, at
13 about 10 mi (16 km [straight line distance]) from the SEZ, a larger portion of
14 the SEZ would come into view and for a brief segment would be more or less
15 directly in front of eastbound Bitter Springs Backcountry Byway travelers. A
16 Google Earth visualization depicting the view from this location on the byway
17 is shown in Figure 11.3.14.2-10. In the visualization, the SEZ area is depicted
18 in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
19

20 The viewpoint in this visualization is about 10 mi (16 km) from the closest
21 point in the SEZ, but the closest point in the SEZ visible in the visualization is
22 about 14 mi (23 km) from the viewpoint. The viewpoint is about 1,000 ft
23 (300 m) higher in elevation than the SEZ.
24

25 The visualization shows that the northern portion of the SEZ would be visible
26 from the byway through a substantial gap in the Dry Lake Range. Despite the
27 elevated viewpoint, at about 14 mi (23 km) the vertical angle of view would
28 be very low. Because of screening by the Dry Lake Range, the visible portions
29 of the SEZ would occupy a small portion of the horizontal field of view. The
30 collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen
31 nearly edge-on, which would make their large areal extent less apparent and
32 conceal their strong regular geometry, as well as making them appear to
33 repeat the strong horizontal line of the Dry Lake Valley floor.
34

35 If power towers were located in the SEZ, depending on their height and
36 location within the SEZ, when operating the receivers could be visible over
37 the tops of the mountains in the Dry Lake Range. The receivers would likely
38 appear as points of light atop barely discernable tower structures against the
39 backdrop of the Arrow Canyon Range. At night, sufficiently tall power towers
40 could have red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely
41 be visible from this location.
42

43 Because of the partial screening of the SEZ, the low viewing angle, and the
44 relatively long distance to the SEZ, under the 80% development scenario
45 analyzed in the PEIS, weak levels of visual contrast from solar facilities in the
46 SEZ would be expected for this viewpoint.



1

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FIGURE 11.3.14.2-10 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from the Bitter Springs Backcountry Byway in the Muddy Mountains

1 Beyond this section of the byway, the elevation drops rapidly, and views of
2 the SEZ would be screened by canyon walls and hills until the byway leaves
3 the Muddy Mountains about 8.6 mi (13.8 km) from the nearest point in the
4 SEZ. Having lost several hundred feet of elevation, as the byway runs north-
5 northwest toward I-15, the Dry Lake Range would continue to screen most of
6 the SEZ from view. The lowered elevation would result in very low-angle
7 views to solar facilities in the SEZ, and visual contrast levels would not be
8 expected to rise above weak levels.
9

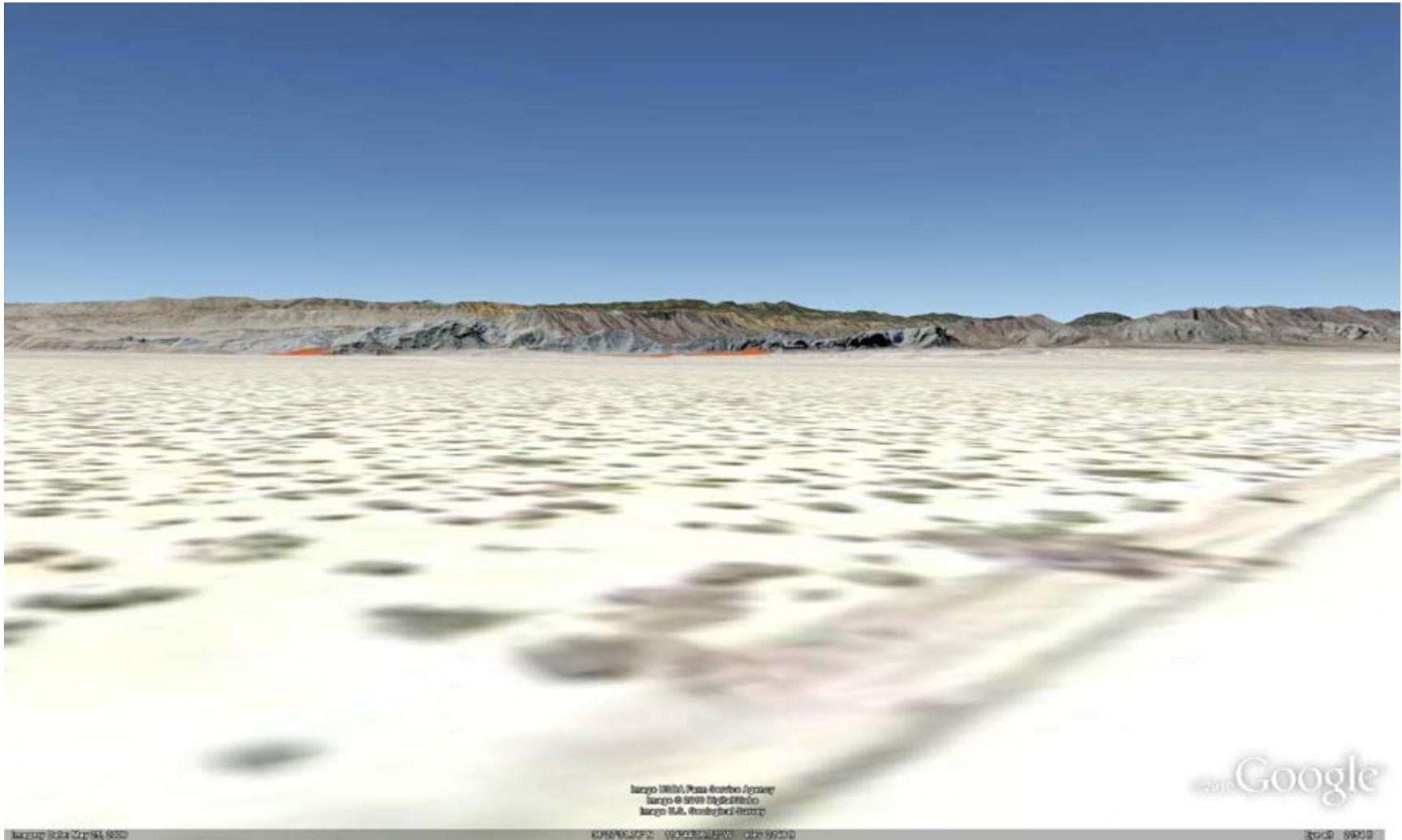
10 Contrast levels for westbound travelers would peak (still at weak levels) near
11 the northern terminus of the Bitter Springs Backcountry Byway at Valley of
12 Fire Highway. A Google Earth visualization depicting the view from this
13 location on the byway is shown in Figure 11.3.14.2-11. In the visualization,
14 the SEZ area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
15

16 The viewpoint in this visualization is about 7 mi (11 km) from the closest
17 point in the SEZ. The viewpoint is about 100 ft (30 m) lower in elevation than
18 the SEZ.
19

20 The visualization shows that portions of the SEZ would be visible from the
21 byway through two gaps in the Dry Lake Range. Because the viewpoint
22 elevation is lower than the SEZ, the vertical angle of view would be extremely
23 low. The visible portions of the SEZ would occupy a moderate portion of the
24 horizontal field of view. The collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities within
25 the SEZ would be seen edge-on, which would make their large areal extent
26 much less apparent and conceal their strong regular geometry, as well as
27 making them appear to repeat the strong horizontal line of the Dry Lake
28 Valley floor. Ancillary facilities such as buildings, cooling towers,
29 transmission structures, and plumes (if present) would likely be visible
30 projecting above the collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities within the
31 SEZ. This would result in form, line, and potentially color contrast with the
32 strongly horizontal collector/reflector arrays and the more natural appearing
33 surrounding landscape.
34

35 If power towers were located in the SEZ, depending on their height and
36 location within the SEZ, the power tower receivers would likely appear as
37 bright points of light atop discernable tower structures against the backdrop of
38 the Arrow Canyon Range. At night, sufficiently tall power towers could have
39 red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely be visible
40 from this location, and other lighting associated with solar facilities in the
41 SEZ could be visible as well.
42

43 Because of the partial screening of the SEZ, the low viewing angle, and the
44 relatively long distance to the SEZ, under the 80% development scenario
45 analyzed in the PEIS, weak levels of visual contrast from solar facilities in the
46 SEZ would be expected for this viewpoint.



1

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FIGURE 11.3.14.2-11 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from the Bitter Springs Backcountry Byway near Valley of Fire Highway

1 In general, given the partial screening of much of the SEZ by the Dry Lake Range
2 and the low vertical angle of view from the byway to the SEZ, under the 80%
3 development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, weak levels of visual contrast would be
4 expected for travelers on the Bitter Springs Backcountry Byway.
5

- 6 • *Las Vegas Strip.* The Las Vegas Strip is a 4.5-mi (7.2-km) All American Road
7 (congressionally designated) and state-designated scenic boulevard that is
8 located 19 mi (31 km) southwest of the SEZ. About 0.8 mi (1.3 km) of the
9 scenic byway is within the SEZ 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed.

10
11 The Las Vegas Strip Scenic Byway is located in a highly developed urban
12 center and is surrounded by buildings and other obstructions. Although
13 indicated as falling within the 25-mi (40 km) viewshed of the SEZ, solar
14 development within the SEZ would not be visible from the Las Vegas Strip,
15 and no visual impacts would be expected.
16

17 ***Special Recreation Management Areas***

- 18
19
20 • *Las Vegas Valley*—The Las Vegas Valley SRMA is a BLM-designated
21 SRMA located 6.1 mi (9.8 km) southwest of the SEZ at the point of closest
22 approach (Figure 11.3.14.2-2). It covers 447,244 acres (1,809.9 km²). The
23 area of the SRMA within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes
24 18,166 acres (73.5 km²), or 4% of the total SRMA acreage. The area of the
25 SRMA within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes 9 acres
26 (0.04 km²), or 0.002% of the total SRMA acreage. The areas within the
27 SRMA with potential views of solar facilities within the SEZ extend from
28 about 11 mi (18 km) from the southern boundary of the SEZ to beyond 25 mi
29 (40 km) into the SRMA; however, as noted, for all but 9 acres (0.04 km²),
30 visibility would be limited to the upper portions of sufficiently tall power
31 towers within the SEZ.
32

33 The viewshed analysis indicates that in the SRMA, potential visibility of solar
34 facilities would be limited to two areas: about 1,600 acres (6.5 km²) in the
35 northeast portion of the SRMA and a much larger area within the heavily
36 urbanized center of Las Vegas. Because of screening by buildings and other
37 obstructions, and given the very long distance to the SEZ, in actuality it is
38 expected that there would be no visibility of the solar facilities within the SEZ
39 from the central area of Las Vegas. Solar facilities within the SEZ could,
40 however, be visible from the smaller area in the northwest portion of the SEZ.
41 The area is about 11 mi (18 km) south of the SEZ. Views toward the SEZ
42 from this area would include a number of cultural disturbances—Nellis Air
43 Force Base would be seen just north of the viewpoint, and closer to the SEZ
44 I-15, a major transmission line, a railroad line, a mining facility, and various
45 other facilities and roads would also be visible.
46

1 From about 9 acres (0.04 km²) at the northern end of the ridge at the peak of
2 Sunrise Mountain, low-height solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible,
3 but most of the SEZ would be screened from view by hills south of the SEZ.
4 Solar facilities within a very small portion of the SEZ could be visible, but the
5 angle of view would be very low, and the visible portions of the SEZ would
6 occupy a very small portion of the horizontal field of view.
7

8 Where visible within the SEZ, the collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities
9 would be seen nearly edge-on, which would decrease their apparent size
10 and tend to conceal the strong regular geometry of the arrays, thus reducing
11 visual contrasts. The solar arrays would appear as lines just over the hills
12 immediately south of the SEZ. Where visible, the facilities' edge-on
13 appearance would tend to replicate the line of the valley in which the SEZ
14 is located, thereby reducing visual contrast.
15

16 Where visible, operating power tower receivers within the SEZ would likely
17 appear as points of light at the base of the Arrow Canyon Range north of
18 the SEZ. The tower structures underneath the receivers would likely be
19 discernable. Power towers in the closest parts of the SEZ might attract the
20 attention of casual viewers located in the closest parts of the ACEC. At night,
21 sufficiently tall power towers in the SEZ could have red or white flashing
22 hazard navigation lighting that could potentially be visible from the SRMA.
23 Other lighting associated with solar facilities could potentially be visible
24 as well.
25

26 At lower elevations within the SEZ, contrasts from solar facilities within the
27 SEZ would be less, because of nearly complete screening of views of the SEZ
28 by the hills south of the SEZ. Because of the extensive screening of views of
29 the SEZ from viewpoints within the SRMA, expected visual contrast levels
30 associated with solar energy development within the SEZ would be weak for
31 SRMA viewpoints within the 25-mi (40-km) SEZ viewshed.
32

- 33 • *Muddy Mountains.* The Muddy Mountains SRMA is a BLM-designated
34 SRMA located 4.5 mi (7.2 km) southeast of the SEZ at the point of closest
35 approach (see Figure 11.3.14.2-2). It covers 128,493 acres (520 km²).
36

37 The area of the SRMA within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ
38 includes 25,741 acres (104.2 km²), or 20% of the total SRMA acreage. The
39 area of the SRMA within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes
40 21,027 acres (85.1 km²), or 16% of the total SRMA acreage. The visible area
41 extends from the point of closest approach to 12 mi (19 km) into the SRMA
42 from the southeast boundary of the SEZ.
43

44 Solar facilities could be visible from scattered areas throughout the peaks of
45 the Muddy Mountains in much of the western half of the SRMA, as well as
46 the bajada at the base of the western slopes of the Muddy Mountains. The Dry

1 Valley Range provides at least partial screening of the SEZ for lower-
2 elevation views within the SRMA, but for some of the higher peaks closer to
3 the SEZ, a substantial portion of the SEZ would be in view over the
4 mountains of the Dry Lake Range. For some of the very highest viewpoints
5 within the SRMA, the SEZ would stretch across most of the horizontal field of
6 view, and strong visual contrast would be expected as a result.
7

8 Figure 11.3.14.2-12 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from
9 an unnamed peak in the northern portion of the SRMA, about 11 mi (18 km)
10 from the easternmost point of the SEZ. In the visualization, the SEZ area is
11 depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
12

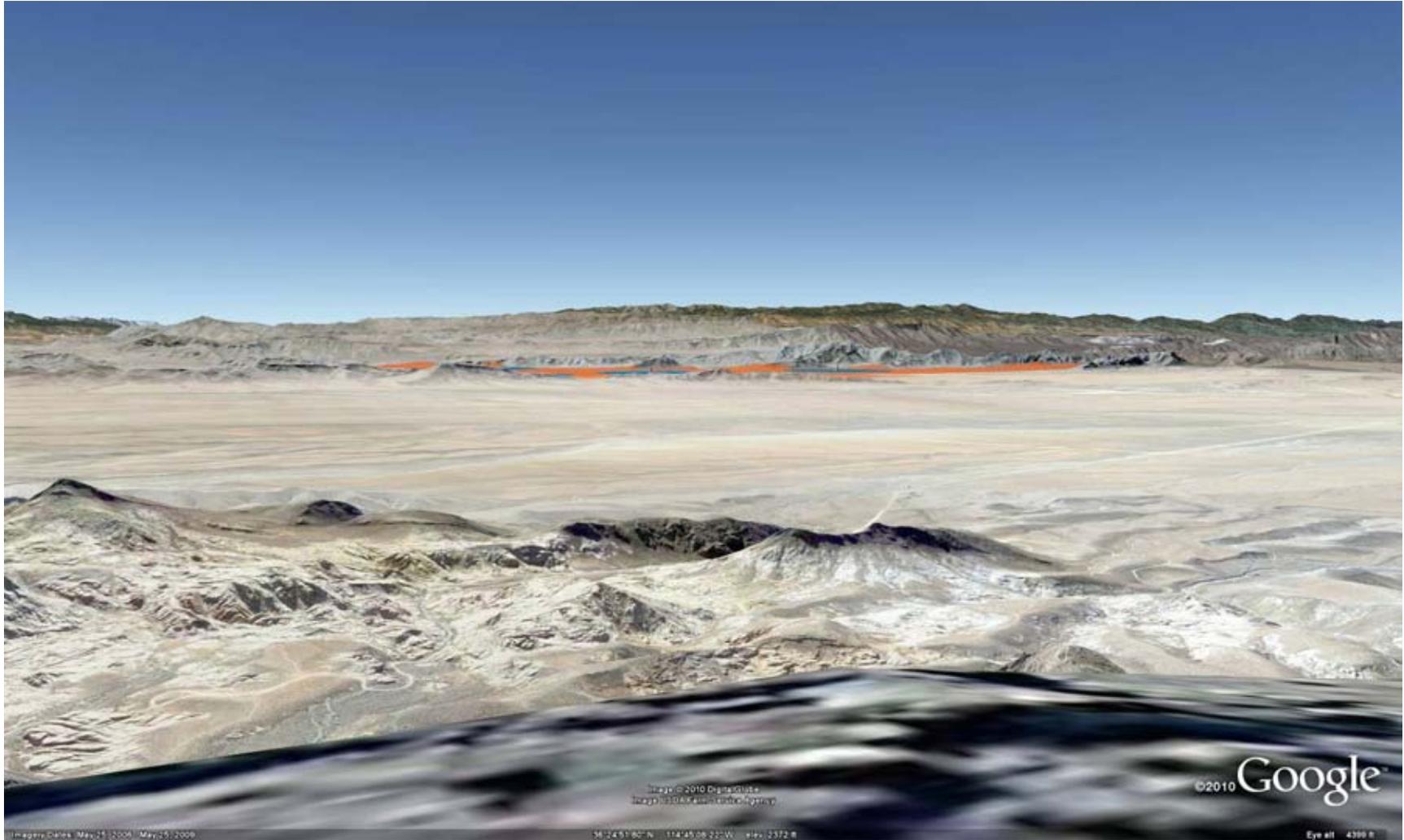
13 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 2,100 ft (640 m) higher in
14 elevation than the SEZ. Solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen in a
15 narrow band just above the Dry Lake Range and just under the Arrow Canyon
16 Range. The view direction is nearly perpendicular to the long north-south axis
17 of the SEZ, which would result in the SEZ's occupying most of the horizontal
18 field of view. Despite the elevated viewpoint, collector/reflector arrays for
19 solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen nearly edge-on, which would
20 reduce their apparent size and cause them to appear to repeat the line of the
21 valley floor in which the SEZ is located, thus tending to reduce visual
22 contrast.
23

24 Ancillary facilities, such as buildings, cooling towers, and transmission
25 towers, as well as any plumes, would likely be visible, and their forms,
26 vertical lines, and movement (for plumes) projecting above the strong
27 horizontal line of the collector/receiver arrays would add visual contrast.
28

29 Operating power tower receivers within the SEZ would likely appear as points
30 of light against the backdrop of the Arrow Canyon Range. At night,
31 sufficiently tall power towers could have red or white flashing hazard
32 navigation lighting that would likely be visible from this location. Despite the
33 distance, the lighting could attract visual attention, although other lights would
34 be visible within and in the vicinity of the SEZ.
35

36 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
37 their designs, and other visibility factors, primarily because of the large
38 amount of horizontal field of view that solar facilities in the SEZ would
39 occupy under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, moderate
40 visual contrasts could be expected at this viewpoint.
41

42 Farther south from this viewpoint within the SRMA, views of solar facilities
43 within the SEZ and resulting expected contrast levels would be similar. At
44 lower elevations throughout the SRMA, however, contrast levels would be
45 lower, even for viewpoints closer to the SEZ because of more extensive



1

2 **FIGURE 11.3.14.2-12 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with**
3 **Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from a Peak in Muddy Mountains SRMA**
4

1 screening of views to the SEZ by the intervening Dry Lake Range. In general,
2 under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, moderate levels
3 of visual contrast would be expected for high-elevation viewpoints in the
4 SRMA, with weak levels of visual contrast expected for most lower-elevation
5 viewpoints in the SRMA located within the SEZ 25-mi (40-km) viewshed.
6

- 7 • *Nellis Dunes*. The Nellis Dunes SRMA is a BLM-designated SRMA
8 located 4.3 mi (6.9 km) south of the SEZ at the point of closest approach
9 (Figure 11.3.14.2-2). It contains 8,921 acres (36.1 km²). The area of the
10 SRMA within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes 448 acres
11 (1.8 km²), or 5% of the total SRMA acreage. The area of the SRMA within
12 the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes 310 acres (1.3 km²), or 4%
13 of the total SRMA acreage. The areas within the SRMA with potential views
14 of low-height solar facilities in the SEZ extend from the point of closest
15 approach at the northern boundary of the SRMA to 5.2 mi (8.4 km) into the
16 SRMA. These areas are thus in the far northern portion of the SRMA. There is
17 an area farther south in the SRMA where visibility of solar facilities would be
18 limited to the upper portions of tall power towers because of screening from
19 ridges in the northern portions of the SRMA. This small area is located about
20 7.1 mi (11.4 km) from the closest point in the SEZ.
21

22 The northern portions of the Nellis Dunes SRMA include southwest–northeast
23 trending ridges with peaks 500 to 600 ft (150 to 180 m) higher than the SEZ.
24 From the tops of the highest ridges in the SRMA, visibility of the SEZ within
25 the SRMA would be good, with solar development likely to be plainly visible
26 despite partial screening of the SEZ by the Dry Lake Range and hills directly
27 north of the SRMA. Views toward the SEZ would include a number of
28 cultural disturbances, including I-15, a major transmission line, a railroad line,
29 a mining facility, and various other facilities and roads. Currently existing
30 transmission facilities in the SEZ could also be visible.
31

32 Figure 11.3.14.2-13 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from
33 the highest ridge in the SRMA, about 5.0 mi (8.0 km) from the SEZ. The
34 viewpoint is just within the BLM VRM program foreground-middleground
35 distance of 3 to 5 mi (5 to 8 km).
36

37 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 600 ft (180 m) lower in elevation
38 than the nearest point in the SEZ. The SEZ would be viewed along its long
39 and narrow south-to-north axis, which would decrease the apparent width of
40 the SEZ as seen from this viewpoint. The SEZ would occupy a moderate
41 amount of the horizontal field of view. Solar facilities within the SEZ would
42 be seen in a band along the horizon at the base of the Arrow Canyon Range.
43

44 Because of the elevated viewpoint and relatively short distance to the SEZ, the
45 vertical angle of view would be high enough that the tops of solar collector/
46 reflector arrays in the SEZ would be visible, which would make their large



1

FIGURE 11.3.14.2-13 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from a High Ridge in the Nellis Dunes SRMA

2

3

4

1 areal extent and strong regular geometry more apparent, tending to increase
2 visual contrast with the surrounding natural-appearing landscape.

3
4 Ancillary facilities, such as buildings, cooling towers, and transmission
5 towers, as well as any plumes, would likely be visible, and their forms, lines,
6 and movement (for plumes) projecting above the strong horizontal line of the
7 collector/receiver arrays could attract visual attention.

8
9 Operating power tower receivers within closer portions of the SEZ would
10 likely appear as very bright, nonpoint light sources atop the tower structures,
11 against a backdrop of the mountains, and could strongly attract visual
12 attention. Power tower receivers in the more distant northern portion of the
13 SEZ (up to 16 mi [26 km] from the viewpoint) would create substantially
14 lower levels of contrast. At night, sufficiently tall towers could have red
15 flashing lights, or white or red flashing strobe lights that could be visually
16 conspicuous, although other lights would be visible within the SEZ and in
17 surrounding areas.

18
19 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities
20 and their designs, and other visibility factors, under the 80% development
21 scenario analyzed in this PEIS, moderate visual contrasts from solar energy
22 development within the SEZ could be expected at this viewpoint. The
23 presence within the viewshed of the existing major cultural disturbances
24 described above would tend to reduce contrast from solar facilities in the
25 SEZ, relative to contrast levels that would be observed in a more visually
26 pristine setting.

27
28 At lower elevation viewpoints north of the ridges in the SRMA, the angle of
29 view to the SEZ is much lower, increasing screening due to intervening
30 terrain, but also reducing the apparent size of solar collector/reflector arrays in
31 the SEZ and concealing their strong regular geometry, thereby reducing visual
32 contrasts to weak levels. For the area farther south in the SRMA where
33 visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ would be limited to the upper
34 portions of tall power towers, expected visual contrast levels would also be
35 weak, because of the partial screening and the increased distance to
36 the SRMA.

37
38 In summary, the Nellis Dunes SRMA is sufficiently close to the SEZ that for
39 some viewpoints within the SRMA, solar energy development within the SEZ
40 would be expected to result in moderate visual contrast levels. Lower contrast
41 levels would be expected for lower elevation viewpoints throughout the
42 SRMA, and for higher elevation viewpoints farther south in the SRMA,
43 farther from the SEZ.
44

- 1 • *Sunrise Mountain.* Sunrise Mountain SRMA is a 33,322-acre (134.9-km²)
2 BLM-designated SRMA located 9.3 mi (15.0 km) south of the SEZ at the
3 point of closest approach (Figure 11.3.14.2-2).
4

5 The area of the SRMA within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ
6 includes 891 acres (3.61 km²), or 3% of the total SRMA acreage. The area of
7 the SRMA within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes 218 acres
8 (0.9 km²), or 0.7% of the total SRMA acreage. The visible area extends from
9 11 mi (18 km) from the southern boundary of the SEZ to 17 mi (27 km) into
10 the SRMA.
11

12 The Sunrise Mountain SRMA is wholly contained within the Rainbow
13 Gardens ACEC. Visual contrast levels associated with solar facilities in the
14 SEZ as observed from the Sunrise Mountain SRAM would be identical to
15 those observed from the Rainbow Gardens ACEC (see analysis above).
16

17 Additional scenic resources exist at the national, state, and local levels, and impacts may
18 occur on both federal and nonfederal lands, including sensitive traditional cultural properties
19 important to Tribes. Note that in addition to the resource types and specific resources analyzed in
20 this PEIS, future site-specific NEPA analyses would include state and local parks, recreation
21 areas, other sensitive visual resources, and communities close enough to the proposed project to
22 be affected by visual impacts. Selected other lands and resources are included in the discussion
23 below.
24

25 In addition to impacts associated with the solar energy facilities themselves, sensitive
26 visual resources could be affected by other facilities that would be built and operated in
27 conjunction with the solar facilities. With respect to visual impacts, the most important
28 associated facilities would be access roads and transmission lines, the precise location of which
29 cannot be determined until a specific solar energy project is proposed. A 500-kV transmission
30 line goes through the proposed SEZ, so no new construction would be required outside of the
31 SEZ to connect to that line. Roads and transmission lines would be constructed within the SEZ
32 as part of the development of the area. For this analysis, the impacts of construction and
33 operation of transmission lines outside of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing
34 500-kV transmission line might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and
35 that additional project-specific analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line
36 upgrades. Depending on project- and site-specific conditions, visual impacts associated with
37 access roads, and particularly transmission lines, could be large. Detailed information about
38 visual impacts associated with transmission lines is presented in Section 5.12.1. A detailed site-
39 specific NEPA analysis would be required to determine visibility and associated impacts
40 precisely for any future solar projects, based on more precise knowledge of facility location
41 and characteristics.
42
43

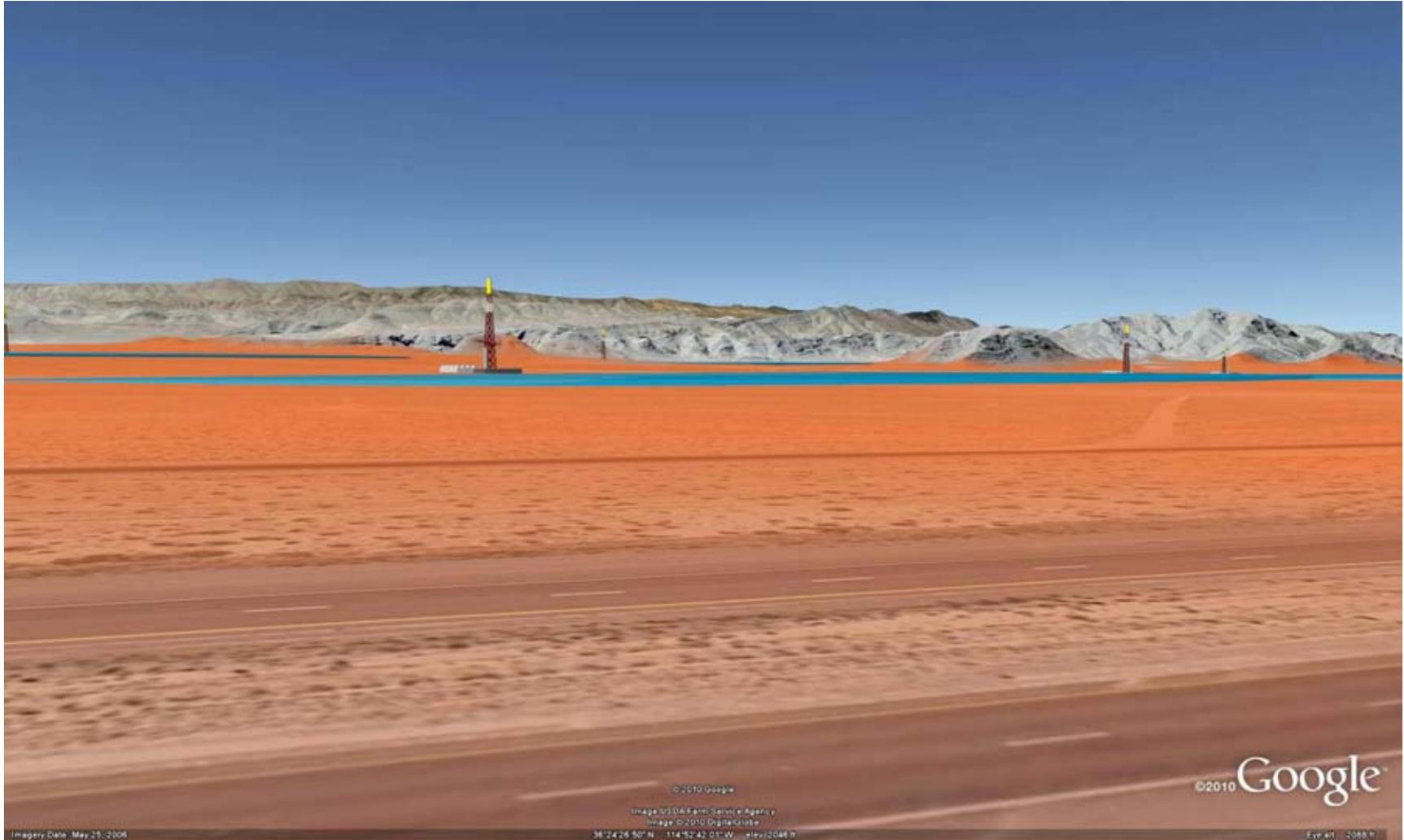
1 **Impacts on Selected Other Lands and Resources**
2
3

4 **Interstate 15.** Almost 38 mi (61 km) of I-15 are within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ
5 viewshed, and almost 3.7 mi (6.0 km) of I-15 pass along and through the southeasternmost
6 portion of the SEZ. The AADT value for I-15 in the vicinity of the SEZ was about 24,000
7 vehicles in 2009 (NV DOT 2010). I-15 is the main travel route between Las Vegas and Salt
8 Lake City.
9

10 For northbound travelers on I-15, solar facilities within the SEZ would first come into
11 view about 1.0 mi (1.6 km) north of the I-15–State Route 604 interchange and about 5 mi (8 km)
12 south of the SEZ itself. Hills immediately south of the SEZ would screen much of the SEZ from
13 view from I-15 until about 3 mi (5 km) from the SEZ, as travelers approached a mining operation
14 in hills just south of the SEZ and west of I-15. At this point, views of the southern portion of the
15 SEZ would open up, and expected visual contrasts would quickly rise to strong levels. I-15
16 enters the SEZ at the SEZ’s southeast corner, and for about the next 1.5 mi (2.4 km) passes along
17 the SEZ’s southeastern boundary, with potential views of solar facilities in the SEZ to the front
18 and left side of northbound vehicles only. After 1.5 mi (2.4 km), the SEZ extends to the east of
19 I-15, and solar facilities could be visible on all sides of north-bound vehicles, although the bulk
20 of the SEZ would still be west of I-15. Throughout this section of the highway, strong visual
21 contrasts from solar facilities within the SEZ would be expected.
22

23 Figure 11.3.14.2-14 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from I-15, about
24 1.9 mi (3.1 km) north of the U.S. 93 interchange, facing west toward a cluster of four power
25 tower models northwest of the viewpoint. The center of the cluster is about 2.0 mi (3.2 km)
26 from the viewpoint, and the closest tower is about 1.1 mi (1.8 km) from the viewpoint. The
27 visualization suggests that from this location, solar facilities within the SEZ would be in full
28 view. The SEZ would occupy more than the entire field of view, so travelers would have to turn
29 their heads to scan across the full SEZ. Facilities located within the southern portion of the SEZ
30 would strongly attract the eye and likely dominate views. Structural details of some facility
31 components for nearby facilities would likely be visible. Buildings, transmission towers and
32 other tall facility components, as well as plumes (if present) would be seen projecting above the
33 collector/reflector arrays, and they could contrast noticeably with the strongly horizontal and
34 regular geometry of the collector/reflector arrays. From this viewpoint, solar collector arrays
35 would be seen nearly edge-on and would repeat the horizontal line of the plain in which the SEZ
36 is situated, which would tend to reduce visual line contrast. For nearby facilities, the collector
37 arrays could be of large enough apparent size that their individual forms could be seen, and they
38 would no longer appear as horizontal lines.
39

40 If power towers were located within the SEZ close to this viewpoint, the receivers would
41 likely appear as brilliant white non-point light sources atop towers with structural details clearly
42 discernable. The towers and receivers would be viewed against either a sky backdrop or the
43 darker hues of the Arrow Canyon Range and would strongly attract visual attention. Also, under
44 certain viewing conditions, sunlight on dust particles in the air might result in the appearance of
45 light streaming down from the tower(s).
46



1

2

3

FIGURE 11.3.14.2-14 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from I-15 within the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

1 At night, sufficiently tall visible power towers in the SEZ would have red flashing lights,
2 or white or red flashing strobe lights that could be very conspicuous from this viewpoint.
3 However, there would be other lights visible within and in the area of the SEZ, which could
4 decrease the perception of visual impact created by the lights.
5

6 As noted above, there are numerous large-scale cultural disturbances already visible in
7 and near the SEZ, and the addition of solar facilities into the already visually complex and
8 partially man-made appearing landscape would result in lower contrast levels than if the solar
9 facilities were being placed into a visually pristine landscape. However, under the 80%
10 development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, the SEZ could contain numerous solar facilities
11 utilizing differing solar technologies as well as a variety of roads and ancillary facilities. The
12 addition of multiple solar facilities could add substantially to the existing visually complex
13 landscape, to the extent that it would exceed the visual absorption capability of the valley in
14 which the SEZ is located, leading to a perception of visual “clutter” that could be perceived
15 negatively by viewers.
16

17 Because the SEZ would occupy more than the horizontal field of view and because of the
18 potentially very close proximity of solar facilities to this location, although contrast levels would
19 depend on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and their designs, and
20 other visibility factors, strong visual contrasts from solar energy development within the SEZ
21 would be expected at this viewpoint.
22

23 At highway speeds, travelers would pass through the 3.8 mi (6.1 km) segment of I-15
24 along and in the SEZ in about 3.5 minutes. Shortly after reaching the viewpoint just described,
25 visual contrast for northbound I-15 travelers would begin to diminish, as the direction of travel
26 would be toward the northeast, away from the SEZ. Views to the left of northbound vehicles,
27 however, would still be subject to strong visual contrasts, as solar facilities within the SEZ could
28 still stretch across the entire horizontal field of view and would still be relatively close to the
29 viewers (less than 4 mi [6 km]). About 3.6 mi (5.8 km) north of the point where I-15 passes out
30 of the SEZ, I-15 turns farther to the northeast, and contrast levels would drop more quickly after
31 that point. Ridges immediately west of I-15 would cut off views of the SEZ intermittently as
32 travelers proceeded north on I-15.
33

34 Southbound travelers on I-15 would see the same types and levels of visual contrasts
35 from solar development within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ as northbound travelers, but in
36 reverse order. The upper portions of tall power towers could potentially be seen briefly starting
37 northeast of the SEZ, but glimpses would be fleeting and contrast levels generally minimal. After
38 passing the Valley of Fire Highway, visual contrast levels would rise and then very quickly reach
39 strong levels as travelers approached and passed through the SEZ after entering the Dry Lake
40 Range. Contrasts would drop quickly after southbound travelers passed through the SEZ.
41

42 In summary, solar facilities within the SEZ could be in view from I-15 for about
43 35 minutes driving time at highway speeds, but most travelers’ views would be much briefer.
44 Facilities within the SEZ could be in view from about 38 mi (61 km) of the roadway, but contrast
45 levels would generally be minimal or weak for I-15 except where the highway passes through the
46 Dry Lake Range and especially the SEZ itself, where contrast levels would likely be strong.
47

1 ***U.S. Highway 93.*** Almost 13 mi (21 km) of U.S. 93 are within the SEZ viewshed, and
2 about 4.5 mi (7.2 km) of U.S. 93 pass along the SEZ's southwestern boundary. The road then
3 passes the southern end of the Arrow Canyon Range and turns north, paralleling the SEZ's
4 western boundary, but largely screened from view of the SEZ by the Arrow Canyon Range.
5 Strong visual contrast levels would be expected for those portions of the road that pass along the
6 SEZ boundary and for about 2.1 mi (3.4 km) beyond, after which point contrast levels would
7 drop greatly due to screening of the SEZ. On the western side of the Arrow Canyon Range, only
8 the upper portions of sufficiently tall power towers might be visible through gaps in the Arrow
9 Canyon Range, and only weak visual contrasts would be expected as a result. The AADT value
10 for U.S. 93 in the vicinity of the SEZ was about 2,300 vehicles in 2009 (NV DOT 2010).

11
12 For northbound travelers, U.S. 93 begins at the junction with I-15, adjacent to the
13 southwest corner of the SEZ. Because U.S. 93 borders the SEZ, expected visual contrast levels
14 would start at strong levels and not drop to lower levels until northbound travelers passed the
15 SEZ after about 4.5 mi (7.2 km), or about 4 minutes driving time at highway speeds. After
16 passing the SEZ, visibility of solar facilities would be screened by the Arrow Canyon Range as
17 U.S. 93 passed the southern end of the range.

18
19 Figure 11.3.14.2-15 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from U.S. 93,
20 about 0.9 mi (1.5 km) west of the I-15 interchange, facing north toward a cluster of four power
21 tower models. (Note because of the display properties of Google Earth, the SEZ is not shown
22 directly adjacent to U.S. 93, but in fact U.S. 93 borders the SEZ.) The center of the cluster is
23 about 2.5 mi (4.0 km) from the viewpoint, and the closest tower is about 1.8 mi (2.9 km) from
24 the viewpoint. The visualization suggests that from this location, solar facilities within the SEZ
25 would be in full view. The SEZ would occupy more than the entire field of view north of
26 U.S. 93, so travelers would have to turn their heads to scan across the full SEZ. Facilities located
27 within the southern portion of the SEZ would strongly attract the eye and likely dominate views
28 from U.S. 93. Structural details of some facility components for nearby facilities would likely be
29 visible. Steam plumes, transmission towers and other tall facility components would be seen
30 against a sky backdrop, or could project above the mountains north of the SEZ. From this
31 viewpoint, solar collector arrays would be seen nearly edge-on, and would repeat the horizontal
32 line of the plain in which the SEZ is situated, which would tend to reduce visual line contrast.
33 However, as the viewer approached closer to the collector arrays, they could increase in apparent
34 size until their forms were visible, and they no longer appeared as horizontal lines.

35
36 If power towers were located within the SEZ close to this viewpoint, the receivers would
37 likely appear as brilliant white non-point light sources atop towers with structural details clearly
38 visible. The towers and receivers would strongly attract visual attention. Also, under certain
39 viewing conditions, sunlight on dust particles in the air might result in the appearance of light
40 streaming down from the tower(s).

41
42 At night, sufficiently tall visible power towers in the SEZ would have red flashing lights
43 or white or red flashing strobe lights that could be very conspicuous from this viewpoint, but
44 there would be other lights visible within and in the area of the SEZ, which could decrease the
45 perception of visual impact created by the lights.

46



1

2

3

FIGURE 11.3.14.2-15 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from U.S. 93 West of I-15 Interchange

1 As noted above, numerous large-scale cultural disturbances already are visible in and
2 near the southern portion of the SEZ, and the addition of solar facilities into the already visually
3 complex and partially man-made appearing landscape would result in lower contrast levels than
4 if the solar facilities were being placed into a visually pristine landscape. However, under the
5 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, the SEZ could contain numerous solar facilities
6 utilizing differing solar technologies as well as a variety of roads and ancillary facilities. The
7 array of facilities could add substantially to the existing visually complex landscape to the extent
8 that it would exceed the visual absorption capability of the valley in which the SEZ is located,
9 leading to a perception of visual “clutter” that could be perceived negatively by viewers.

10
11 Because the SEZ would occupy so much of the horizontal field of view, strong visual
12 contrasts from solar energy development within the SEZ would be expected at this viewpoint,
13 although contrast levels would depend on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar
14 facilities and their designs, and other visibility factors.

15
16 Immediately after passing the western boundary of the SEZ, westbound vehicles would
17 pass the southern end of the Arrow Canyon Range, completely cutting off views of low-height
18 facilities in the SEZ. U.S. 93 would then turn north and travel parallel to the Arrow Canyon
19 Range until passing entirely out of the SEZ viewshed north of the SEZ. For the stretch of the
20 roadway west of the Arrow Canyon Range (about 11 mi [18 km], or about 10 minutes driving
21 time at highway speeds) intermittent visibility of the upper portions of power towers in particular
22 locations within the SEZ would be possible, but if such views did occur, they would be fleeting
23 and visual contrast levels would be expected to be minimal.

24
25 Southbound travelers on U.S. 93 would see the same types and levels of visual contrasts
26 from solar development within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ as northbound travelers, but in
27 reverse order. The upper portions of tall power towers could potentially be seen briefly starting
28 just north of the SEZ, but glimpses would be fleeting and contrast levels minimal; however, after
29 the southern end of the Arrow Canyon Range was passed, visual contrast levels would very
30 quickly reach strong levels as travelers would immediately pass along the southern border of
31 the SEZ.

32
33 In summary, solar facilities within the SEZ could be in view from U.S. 93 for about
34 15 minutes driving time at highway speeds, but most travelers’ views would be much briefer.
35 Facilities within the SEZ could be in view from about 13 mi (21 km) of the roadway.
36 Northbound travelers on U.S. 93 would first see solar facilities within the SEZ at the I-15
37 interchange, with strong visual contrasts visible for several minutes until views of the SEZ would
38 be screened by the Arrow Canyon Range. After that point, expected contrast levels would drop
39 to minimal levels. Southbound travelers would see minimal contrast until they passed the Arrow
40 Canyon Range, and they would likely see strong contrasts thereafter until they reached I-15.

41
42
43 ***Communities of Glendale, Moapa, Paradise, and Winchester.*** The viewshed analyses
44 indicate potential visibility of the SEZ from the communities of Glendale (about 19 mi [31 km]
45 northeast of the SEZ), Moapa (about 17 mi [27 km] northeast of the SEZ), Paradise (about 25 mi
46 [40 km] southeast of the SEZ), and Winchester (about 22 mi [35 km] southeast of the SEZ). For

1 all of these communities, the viewshed analysis indicates that visibility would be limited to the
2 upper portions of tall power towers.
3

4 The communities of Paradise and Winchester are suburbs of Las Vegas and are located
5 within the highly urbanized Las Vegas area. Because of screening by buildings and vegetation,
6 solar facilities within the SEZ would not be visible, and no visual impacts would be expected.
7

8 The community of Moapa is 17 mi (27 km) northeast of the SEZ, and Glendale is close
9 by at 19 mi (31 km). Within these communities, at least partial screening of ground-level views
10 of the SEZ are likely, due either to slight variations in topography, structures, vegetation, or a
11 combination of these screening types. A detailed future site-specific NEPA analysis is required
12 to determine visibility precisely; however, expected visual contrast levels for these communities
13 would be minimal.
14

15 *Other Impacts.* In addition to the impacts described for the resource areas above, nearby
16 residents and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities
17 located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) from their
18 residences, or as they travel area roads. The range of impacts experienced would be highly
19 dependent on viewer location, project types, locations, sizes, and layouts, as well as the presence
20 of screening, but under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, from some
21 locations, strong visual contrasts from solar development within the SEZ could potentially be
22 observed.
23
24

25 ***11.3.14.2.3 Summary of Visual Resource Impacts for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ*** 26

27 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, the SEZ would contain
28 multiple solar facilities utilizing differing solar technologies, as well as a variety of roads and
29 ancillary facilities. The array of facilities could create a visually complex landscape that would
30 contrast strongly with the strongly horizontal landscape of the flat valley in which the SEZ is
31 located. Large visual impacts on the SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed would
32 be associated with solar energy development within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ because of
33 major modification of the character of the existing landscape. The potential exists for additional
34 impacts from construction and operation of transmission lines and access roads within and
35 outside the SEZ.
36

37 The SEZ is in an area of low scenic quality, with major cultural disturbances already
38 present in and around the SEZ. Visitors to the area, workers, and residents of nearby areas may
39 experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any
40 associated access roads and transmission lines) as they travel area roads.
41

42 Utility-scale solar energy development within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is likely to
43 result in strong visual contrasts for some high-elevation viewpoints in the Desert National
44 Wildlife Range, which is 2.3 mi (3.7 km) west of the SEZ.
45

1 Strong visual contrasts would also be expected for some high-elevation viewpoints on the
2 Old Spanish National Historic Trail, which passes within 1.3 mi (2.1 km) of the SEZ. The points
3 of highest potential visual contrast are located within a high-potential segment of the trail.
4

5 Strong visual contrasts would also be expected for some high-elevation viewpoints in the
6 Arrow Canyon WA, located 2.5 mi (4.0 km) north of the SEZ. Moderate to strong visual
7 contrasts would be expected for some high-elevation viewpoints the Muddy Mountains WA,
8 which is 6.6 mi (10.6 km) southeast of the SEZ, and strong contrast levels would be expected for
9 viewpoints in the partially overlapping Muddy Mountains SRMA, located 4.5 mi (7.2 km) east
10 of the SEZ. Moderate visual contrast levels would be expected for high-elevation viewpoints in
11 the Nellis Dunes SRMA, 4.3 mi (6.9 km) south of the SEZ. Minimal to weak visual contrasts
12 would be expected for some viewpoints within other sensitive visual resource areas within the
13 SEZ 25-mi (40-km) viewshed.
14

15 Almost 38 mi (61 km) of I-15 are within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ viewshed, and
16 almost 3.7 mi (6.0 km) of I-15 pass along and through the SEZ's southeasternmost portion.
17 Travelers on I-15 would be likely to experience strong visual contrasts from solar energy
18 development within the SEZ. Almost 13 mi (21 km) of U.S. 93 are within the SEZ viewshed,
19 and about 4.5 mi (7.2 km) of U.S. 93 pass along the SEZ's southwestern boundary. Travelers on
20 U.S. 93 would also be likely to experience strong visual contrasts from solar energy development
21 within the SEZ.
22
23

24 **11.3.14.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

25

26 No SEZ-specific design features have been identified to protect visual resources for the
27 proposed Dry Lake SEZ. As noted in Section 5.12, the presence and operation of large-scale
28 solar energy facilities and equipment would introduce major visual changes into non-
29 industrialized landscapes and could create strong visual contrasts in line, form, color, and texture
30 that could not easily be mitigated substantially. Implementation of programmatic design features
31 intended to reduce visual impacts (described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, of this PEIS) would
32 be expected to reduce visual impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy development
33 within the SEZ; however, the degree of effectiveness of these design features could be assessed
34 only at the site- and project-specific level. Given the large scale, reflective surfaces, strong
35 regular geometry of utility-scale solar energy facilities, and the lack of screening vegetation and
36 landforms within the SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities away from sensitive visual resource
37 areas and other sensitive viewing areas is the primary means of mitigating visual impacts. The
38 effectiveness of other visual impact mitigation measures would generally be limited.
39

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1 **11.3.15 Acoustic Environment**

2
3
4 **11.3.15.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located in the north-central portion of Clark County in
7 southernmost Nevada. Neither the State of Nevada nor Clark County has established quantitative
8 noise-limit regulations applicable to solar energy development.
9

10 The southern portion of Dry Lake SEZ is bordered or crossed by I-15, which runs
11 northeast–southwest; it is also bordered by U.S. 93, which trends southeast–northwest. Several
12 dirt roads through the SEZ are present. A railroad, paralleling a part of I-15, runs close to the
13 southern SEZ boundary or crosses the SEZ. The nearest airport is Nellis Air Force Base, which is
14 about 12 mi (19 km) southwest of the SEZ and is under military airspace. Other nearby airports
15 include North Las Vegas Air Terminal, about 20 mi (32 km) southwest of the SEZ; Echo Bay
16 Airport, about 23 mi (37 km) east-southeast; Overton Municipal Airport, about 24 mi (39 km)
17 east-northeast; and Las Vegas McCarran International Airport, about 25 mi (40 km) southwest.
18 There are no agricultural activities in and around the SEZ, but cattle grazing seems to occur
19 within the SEZ. Henry Allen Generating Station, a large electric substation, and a natural gas
20 compressor station exist within the SEZ. Several transmission lines and two natural gas pipelines
21 run across the SEZ. Many industrial activities, including a quarry, lime and gypsum facilities, a
22 waste management facility, several natural gas–fired power plants, and transmission lines, exist
23 outside the southern SEZ boundary. Recreational land use such as OHV and shooting use occurs
24 within the SEZ. No sensitive receptors (e.g., residences, hospitals, schools, or nursing homes)
25 exist close to the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. The nearest residences lie about 12 mi (19 km)
26 southwest of the SEZ, near Nellis Air Force Base in North Las Vegas. Other nearby residences
27 and communities are located in the Moapa Valley, including Moapa, as close as 19 mi (31 km)
28 northeast, and Overton, about 23 mi (37 km) east of the SEZ. Accordingly, noise sources around
29 the SEZ include road traffic, railroad traffic, aircraft flyover, cattle grazing, industrial activities,
30 and recreational activities. Other than in the southern portion, the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is
31 mostly undeveloped and its overall character is considered to range from rural in the north to
32 industrial to the south. Background noise levels in the southern portion of the SEZ would be
33 higher, especially along I-15, while those in the northern portion of the SEZ would be lower. To
34 date, no environmental noise survey has been conducted around the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. On
35 the basis of the population density, the day–night average noise level (L_{dn} or DNL) is estimated
36 to be 44 dBA for Clark County, near the upper end of the range of 33 to 47 dBA L_{dn} typical of a
37 rural area (Eldred 1982; Miller 2002).¹⁰
38
39
40

¹⁰ Rural and undeveloped areas have sound levels in the range of 33 to 47 dBA as L_{dn} (Eldred 1982). Typically, nighttime levels are 10 dBA lower than daytime levels, and they can be interpreted as 33 to 47 dBA (mean 40 dBA) during daytime hours and 23 to 37 dBA (mean 30 dBA) during nighttime hours.

1 **11.3.15.2 Impacts**
2

3 Potential noise impacts associated with solar projects in the Dry Lake SEZ would occur
4 during all phases of the projects. During the construction phase, potential noise impacts on the
5 nearest residences (about 12 mi [19 km] to the southwest of the SEZ boundary) associated with
6 operation of heavy equipment would be minimal due to considerable separation distance. During
7 the operations phase, potential impacts on the nearest residences would be anticipated to be
8 minimal as well. Even though the Dry Lake SEZ is fully developed, potential noise impacts on
9 residences along the roads from commuter, visitor, support, and delivery vehicular traffic to
10 and from the SEZ would be minimal, compared with current heavy traffic volume along I-15.
11 Noise impacts shared by all solar technologies are discussed in detail in Section 5.13.1, and
12 technology-specific impacts are presented in Section 5.13.2. Impacts specific to the proposed
13 Dry Lake SEZ are presented in this section. Any such impacts would be minimized through
14 the implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
15 Section A.2.2 and through any additional SEZ-specific design features applied (see
16 Section 11.3.15.3 below). This section primarily addresses potential noise impacts on humans,
17 although potential impacts on wildlife at nearby sensitive areas are discussed. Additional
18 discussion on potential noise impacts on wildlife is presented in Section 5.10.2.
19
20

21 **11.3.15.2.1 Construction**
22

23 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ has a relatively flat terrain; thus, minimal site preparation
24 activities would be required, and associated noise levels would be lower than those during
25 general construction (e.g., erecting building structures and installing equipment, piping, and
26 electrical).
27

28 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, the highest construction noise
29 levels would occur at the power block area, where key components (e.g., steam turbine/
30 generator) needed to generate electricity are located; a maximum of 95 dBA at a distance of
31 50 ft (15 m) is assumed, if impact equipment such as pile drivers or rock drills is not being used.
32 Typically, the power block area is located in the center of the solar facility, at a distance of more
33 than 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from the facility boundary. Noise levels from construction of the solar array
34 would be lower than 95 dBA. When geometric spreading and ground effects are considered, as
35 explained in Section 4.13.1, noise levels would attenuate to about 40 dBA at a distance of
36 1.2 mi (1.9 km) from the power block area. This noise level is typical of daytime mean rural
37 background levels. In addition, mid- and high-frequency noise from construction activities is
38 significantly attenuated by atmospheric absorption under the low-humidity conditions typical of
39 an arid desert environment, and by temperature lapse conditions typical of daytime hours; thus,
40 noise attenuation to a 40-dBA level would occur at distances somewhat shorter than 1.2 mi
41 (1.9 km). If a 10-hour daytime work schedule is considered, the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA
42 L_{dn} for residential areas (EPA 1974) would occur about 1,200 ft (370 m) from the power block
43 area, which would be well within the facility boundary. For construction activities occurring
44 near the residences closest to the southern SEZ boundary, estimated noise levels at the nearest
45 residences would be about 14 dBA, which is well below the typical daytime mean rural

1 background level of 40 dBA. In addition, an estimated 40-dBA L_{dn} ¹¹ at these residences (i.e., no
2 contribution from construction activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for
3 residential areas.
4

5 It is assumed that a maximum of two projects at any one time would be developed for
6 SEZs greater than 10,000 acres (40.5 km²) but less than 30,000 acres (121.4 km²), such as the
7 Dry Lake SEZ. If two projects were to be built in the southern portion of the SEZ near the closest
8 residences, noise levels would be about 17 dBA, 3 dBA higher than the value for a single project.
9 These levels would be still well below the typical mean rural background level, and thus their
10 contribution to the existing L_{dn} would be minimal.
11

12 In addition, noise levels are estimated at the specially designated areas within a 5-mi
13 (8-km) range of the Dry Lake SEZ, which is the farthest distance that noise, except extremely
14 loud noise, would be discernable. There are several specially designated areas within the range
15 where noise might be an issue: Coyote Springs ACEC, about 0.25 mi (0.4 km) west of the SEZ;
16 Old Spanish National Historic Trail, as close as about 1.3 mi (2.1 km) southeast; Desert NWR,
17 about 2.2 mi (3.5 km) west of the SEZ; Arrow Canyon WA, about 2.5 mi (4.0 km) north; and
18 Muddy Mountains WA, about 4.5 mi (7.2 km) southeast. For construction activities occurring
19 near the SEZ boundary close to the specially designated areas, noise levels are estimated to be
20 about 58 and 39 dBA at the boundaries of the Coyote Springs ACEC and Old Spanish National
21 Historic Trail, respectively, which are much higher and comparable to the typical daytime mean
22 rural background level of 40 dBA. As discussed in Section 5.10.2, sound levels above 90 dB
23 are likely to adversely affect wildlife (Manci et al. 1988). Thus, construction noise from the
24 SEZ is not likely to adversely affect wildlife at nearby specially designated areas. In addition,
25 construction noise from the SEZ is not anticipated to affect any activities at the Old Spanish
26 National Historic Trail.
27

28 Depending on soil conditions, pile driving might be required for installation of solar dish
29 engines. However, the pile drivers used, such as vibratory or sonic drivers, would be relatively
30 small and quiet, in contrast to the impulsive impact pile drivers frequently used at large-scale
31 construction sites. Potential impacts on the nearest residences would be anticipated to be
32 negligible, considering the distance to the nearest residences (about 12 mi [19 km] from the
33 southern SEZ boundary).
34

35 It is assumed that most construction activities would occur during the day, when noise is
36 better tolerated than at night because of the masking effects of background noise. In addition,
37 construction activities for a utility-scale facility are temporary in nature (typically a few years).
38 Construction within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ would cause negligible unavoidable, but
39 localized, short-term noise impacts on neighboring communities, even when construction
40 activities occurred near the southern SEZ boundary, close to the nearest residences.
41

42 Construction activities could result in various degrees of ground vibration, depending
43 on the equipment used and construction methods employed. All construction equipment causes

¹¹ For this analysis, background levels of 40 and 30 dBA for daytime and nighttime hours, respectively, are assumed, which result in a day-night average noise level (L_{dn}) of 40 dBA.

1 ground vibration to some degree, but activities that typically generate the most severe vibrations
2 are high-explosive detonations and impact pile driving. As is the case for noise, vibration would
3 diminish in strength with distance. For example, vibration levels at receptors beyond 140 ft
4 (43 m) from a large bulldozer (87 VdB at 25 ft [7.6 m]) would diminish below the threshold of
5 perception for humans, which is about 65 VdB (Hanson et al. 2006). During the construction
6 phase, no major construction equipment that can cause ground vibration would be used, and no
7 residences or sensitive structures are located in close proximity. Therefore, no adverse vibration
8 impacts are anticipated from construction activities, including pile driving for dish engines.

9
10 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
11 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 500-kV transmission line
12 might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-
13 specific analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However,
14 some construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ. Potential noise impacts on
15 nearby residences would be a minor component of construction impacts in comparison to solar
16 facility construction, and would be temporary in nature.

17 18 19 **11.3.15.2.2 Operations**

20
21 Noise sources common to all or most types of solar technologies include equipment
22 motion from solar tracking, maintenance and repair activities (e.g., washing mirrors or replacing
23 broken mirrors) at the solar array area; commuter/visitor/support/delivery traffic within and
24 around the solar facility; and control/administrative buildings, warehouses, and other auxiliary
25 buildings/structures. Diesel-fired emergency power generators and firewater pump engines
26 would be additional sources of noise, but their operations would be limited to several hours per
27 month (for preventive maintenance testing).

28
29 With respect to the main solar energy technologies, noise-generating activities in the
30 PV solar array area would be minimal, related mainly to solar tracking, if used. On the other
31 hand, dish engine technology, which employs collector and converter devices in a single unit,
32 generally has the strongest noise sources.

33
34 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, most noise sources during
35 operations would be in the power block area, including the turbine generator (typically in an
36 enclosure), pumps, boilers, and dry- or wet-cooling systems. The power block is typically
37 located in the center of the facility. On the basis of a 250-MW parabolic trough facility with a
38 cooling tower (Beacon Solar, LLC 2008), simple noise modeling indicates that noise levels
39 around the power block would be more than 85 dBA, but about 51 dBA at the facility boundary,
40 about 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from the power block area. For a facility located near the southern SEZ
41 boundary, the predicted noise level would be about 20 dBA at the nearest residences, located
42 about 12 mi (19 km) from the SEZ boundary, which is well below the typical daytime mean rural
43 background level of 40 dBA. If TES were not used (i.e., if the operation were limited to daytime,
44 12 hours only¹²), the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA (as L_{dn} for residential areas) would occur at

¹² Maximum possible operating hours at the summer solstice, but limited to 7 to 8 hours at the winter solstice.

1 about 1,370 ft (420 m) from the power block area, and thus, would not be exceeded outside of
2 the proposed SEZ boundary. At the nearest residences, about 40 dBA L_{dn} (i.e., no contribution
3 from facility operation) would be estimated. This is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA
4 L_{dn} for residential areas. As for construction, if two parabolic trough and/or power tower
5 facilities were operating close to the nearest residences, combined noise levels would be about
6 23 dBA, 3 dBA higher than the value for a single project. These levels are still well below the
7 typical daytime mean background level of 40 dBA, and their contribution to existing L_{dn} levels
8 would be minimal. However, day–night average noise levels higher than those estimated above
9 by using simple noise modeling would be anticipated if TES were used during nighttime hours,
10 as explained below and in Section 4.13.1.

11
12 On a calm, clear night typical of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ setting, the air temperature
13 would likely increase with height (temperature inversion), because of strong radiative cooling.
14 Such a temperature profile tends to focus noise downward toward the ground. There would be
15 little, if any, shadow zone¹³ within 1 or 2 mi (1.6 or 3 km) of the noise source in the presence of
16 a strong temperature inversion (Beranek 1988). In particular, such conditions add to the
17 effect of noise being more discernable during nighttime hours, when the background noise
18 levels are lowest. To estimate the day-night average noise level (L_{dn}), 6-hour nighttime
19 generation with TES is assumed after 12-hour daytime generation. For nighttime hours under
20 temperature inversion, 10 dB is added to noise levels estimated from the uniform atmosphere
21 (see Section 4.13.1). On the basis of these assumptions, the estimated nighttime noise level at the
22 nearest residences (about 12 mi [19 km] from the southern SEZ boundary) would be 30 dBA,
23 which is equivalent to the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. The day–
24 night average noise level is estimated to be about 41 dBA L_{dn} , which is still well below the EPA
25 guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. The assumptions are conservative in terms of
26 operating hours, and no credit was given to other attenuation mechanisms, so it is likely that
27 noise levels would be lower than 41 dBA L_{dn} at the nearest residences, even if TES were used at
28 a solar facility. Consequently, operating parabolic trough or power tower facilities using TES
29 and located near the southern SEZ boundary could result in minimal adverse noise impacts on
30 the nearest residences, depending on background noise levels and meteorological conditions.

31
32 Associated with operation of solar facilities occurring near the western SEZ boundary
33 and using TES, the estimated daytime level of 48 dBA at the boundary of the Coyote Springs
34 ACEC is higher than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA, while the
35 estimated nighttime level of 58 dBA is much higher than the typical nighttime mean rural
36 background level of 30 dBA. However, sound levels above 90 dB are likely to adversely affect
37 wildlife; thus, operation noise from solar facilities with TES is not likely to adversely affect
38 wildlife at the nearby specially designated areas (Manci et al. 1988). For a solar facility near the
39 southern SEZ boundary, daytime and nighttime noise levels at the Old Spanish National Historic
40 Trail are estimated to be 39 and 49 dBA, respectively. Operations noise from a solar facility with
41 TES would not be anticipated to affect any daytime activities at the Old Spanish National
42 Historic Trail, but could have adverse impacts on nighttime activities there. A considerable
43 portion of the operation noise might be masked by nearby road traffic on I-15, railroad traffic,
44 and industrial activities along I-15.

45
¹³ A shadow zone is defined as the region in which direct sound does not penetrate because of upward diffraction.

1 In the permitting process, refined noise propagation modeling might be warranted, along
2 with measurement of background noise levels.

3
4 The solar dish engine is unique among CSP technologies, because it generates electricity
5 directly and does not require a power block. A single, large solar dish engine has relatively
6 low noise levels, but a solar facility might employ tens of thousands of dish engines, which
7 would cause high noise levels around such a facility. For example, the proposed 750-MW
8 SES Solar Two dish engine facility in California would employ as many as 30,000 dish engines
9 (SES Solar Two, LLC 2008). At the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, on the basis of the assumption
10 of dish engine facilities of up to 1,391-MW total capacity (covering 80% of the total area, or
11 12,519 acres [50.7 km²]), up to 55,640 25-kW dish engines could be employed. For a large dish
12 engine facility, about a thousand step-up transformers would be embedded in the dish engine
13 solar field, along with a substation; however, the noise from these sources would be masked by
14 dish engine noise.

15
16 The composite noise level of a single dish engine would be about 88 dBA at a distance of
17 3 ft (0.9 m) (SES Solar Two, LLC 2008). This noise level would be attenuated to about 40 dBA
18 (typical of the mean rural daytime environment) within 330 ft (100 m). However, the combined
19 noise level from tens of thousands of dish engines operating simultaneously would be high in the
20 immediate vicinity of the facility. For example, they would be about 51 dBA at 1.0 mi (1.6 km)
21 and 47 dBA at 2 mi (3 km) from the boundary of the square-shaped dish engine solar field; both
22 values are higher than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. However,
23 these levels would occur at somewhat shorter distances than the aforementioned distances,
24 considering noise attenuation by atmospheric absorption and temperature lapse during daytime
25 hours. To estimate noise levels at the nearest residences, it was assumed dish engines were
26 placed all over the Dry Lake SEZ at intervals of 98 ft (30 m). Under these assumptions, the
27 estimated noise level at the nearest residences, about 12 mi (19 km) southwest of the SEZ
28 boundary, would be about 32 dBA, which is below the typical daytime mean rural background
29 level of 40 dBA. On the basis of 12-hr daytime operation, the estimated 40 dBA L_{dn} at these
30 residences (i.e., no contribution from dish engines) is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA
31 L_{dn} for residential areas. On the basis of other noise attenuation mechanisms, noise levels at the
32 nearest residences would be lower than the values estimated above. Accordingly, noise from dish
33 engines is not anticipated to cause adverse impacts on the nearest residences, even assuming
34 lower background noise levels and unfavorable meteorological conditions.

35
36 For dish engines placed all over the SEZ, estimated noise levels would be about 54 and
37 47 dBA at the boundaries of the Coyote Springs ACEC and Old Spanish National Historic Trail,
38 respectively, which are higher than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA.
39 However, dish engine noise from the SEZ is not likely to adversely affect wildlife at the nearby
40 specially designated areas (Manci et al. 1988). In addition, dish engine noise from the SEZ could
41 have some adverse impacts on the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. A considerable portion of
42 this dish engine noise might be masked by nearby road traffic on I-15, railroad traffic, and
43 industrial activities along I-15.

1 Thus, consideration of minimizing noise impacts is very important when siting dish
2 engine facilities. Direct mitigation of dish engine noise through noise control engineering could
3 also be considered, depending on refined noise modeling in the permitting process.
4

5 During operations, no major ground-vibrating equipment would be used. In addition,
6 no sensitive structures are located close enough to the proposed Dry Lake SEZ to experience
7 physical damage. Therefore, during operation of any solar facility, potential vibration impacts
8 on surrounding communities and vibration-sensitive structures would be negligible.
9

10 Transformer-generated humming noise and switchyard impulsive noises would be
11 generated during the operation of solar facilities. These noise sources would be located near the
12 power block area, typically near the center of a solar facility. Noise from these sources would
13 generally be limited within the facility boundary and not be heard at the nearest residences,
14 assuming a 12.5-mi (20-km) distance (at least 0.5 mi [0.8 km] to the facility boundary and 12 mi
15 [19 km] to the nearest residences). Accordingly, potential impacts of these noise sources on the
16 nearest residences would be negligible.
17

18 For impacts from transmission line corona discharge noise during rainfall events
19 (Section 5.13.1.5), the noise level at 50 ft (15 m) and 300 ft (91 m) from the center of a 230-kV
20 transmission line tower would be about 39 and 31 dBA (Lee et al. 1996), respectively, typical of
21 daytime and nighttime mean background noise levels in rural environments. The noise levels at
22 65 ft (20 m) and 300 ft (91 m) from the center of 500-kV transmission line towers would be
23 about 49 and 42 dBA, typical of high-end and mean, respectively, daytime background noise
24 levels in rural environments. Corona noise includes high-frequency components, which may be
25 judged to be more annoying than other environmental noises. However, corona noise would not
26 likely cause impacts, unless a residence was located close to the source (e.g., within 500 ft
27 [152 m] of a 230-kV transmission line or 0.5 mi [0.8 km] of a 500-kV transmission line). The
28 proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located in an arid desert environment, and incidents of corona
29 discharge would be infrequent. Therefore, potential impacts on nearby residents along the
30 transmission line ROW would be negligible.
31
32

33 ***11.3.15.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation*** 34

35 Decommissioning/reclamation requires many of the same procedures and equipment
36 used in traditional construction. Decommissioning/reclamation would include dismantling of
37 solar facilities and support facilities such as buildings/structures and mechanical/electrical
38 installations, disposal of debris, grading, and revegetation as needed. Activities for
39 decommissioning would be similar to those for construction, but more limited. Potential noise
40 impacts on surrounding communities would be correspondingly lower than those for
41 construction activities. Decommissioning activities would be of short duration, and their
42 potential impacts would be minimal and temporary in nature. The same mitigation measures
43 adopted during the construction phase could also be implemented during the decommissioning
44 phase.
45

1 Similarly, potential vibration impacts on surrounding communities and vibration-
2 sensitive structures during decommissioning of any solar facility would be lower than those
3 during construction and thus negligible.
4

5
6 **11.3.15.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
7

8 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
9 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for noise impacts from
10 development and operation of solar energy facilities. Due to the considerable separation
11 distances, activities within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ during construction and operation would
12 be anticipated to cause only minimal increases in noise levels at the nearest residences and to
13 have minor impacts on nearby specially designated areas. Accordingly, no SEZ-specific design
14 features are required.
15
16

1 **11.3.16 Paleontological Resources**

2
3
4 **11.3.16.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The surface geology of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is predominantly composed of
7 thick alluvial deposits (more than 100-ft [30.5-m] thick), ranging in age from the Pliocene to
8 Holocene, with some playa deposits of similar age in the east-central portion of the SEZ. The
9 total acreage of the alluvial deposits within the SEZ is 14,063 acres (57 km²), or nearly 90%
10 of the SEZ; there are 980 acres (4 km²) of playa deposits, or 6% of the SEZ. Portions of the
11 western edge of the SEZ are composed of residual materials developed in carbonate rocks.
12 These discontinuous residual deposits account for 648 acres (2.6 km²), or slightly more than
13 4% of the SEZ. In the absence of a PFYC map for Nevada, a preliminary classification of PFYC
14 Class 3b is assumed for the playa and residual deposits. Class 3b indicates that the potential for
15 the occurrence of significant fossil materials is unknown and needs to be investigated further
16 (see Section 4.8 for a discussion of the PFYC system). A preliminary classification of PFYC
17 Class 2 is assumed for the young Quaternary alluvial deposits, similar to that assumed for the
18 Amargosa Valley SEZ (Section 11.1.16). Class 2 indicates that the potential for the occurrence
19 of significant fossil material is low.
20

21
22 **11.3.16.2 Impacts**

23
24 Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely to occur in 90%
25 of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of the
26 SEZ is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted. If the geological
27 deposits are determined to be as described above and are classified as PFYC Class 2, further
28 assessment of paleontological resources in most of the SEZ is not likely to be necessary.
29 Important resources could exist; if identified, they would need to be managed on a case-by-case
30 basis. The potential for impacts on significant paleontological resources in the remaining 10% of
31 the SEZ is unknown. A more detailed investigation of the playa and residual deposits is needed
32 prior to project approval. A paleontological survey will likely be needed following consultation
33 with the BLM. The appropriate course of action would be determined as established in
34 BLM IM2008-009 and IM2009-011 (BLM 2007a, 2008c). Section 5.14 discusses the types of
35 impacts that could occur to any significant paleontological resources found to be present within
36 the Dry Lake SEZ. Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
37 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
38

39 Indirect impacts on paleontological resources outside of the SEZ, such as through looting
40 or vandalism, are unknown but unlikely because any such resources would be below the surface
41 and not readily accessed. Programmatic design features for controlling water runoff and
42 sedimentation would prevent erosion-related impacts on buried deposits outside of the SEZ.
43

44 No new roads or transmission lines are currently anticipated for the Dry lake SEZ,
45 assuming existing corridors would be used; thus no impacts on paleontological resources are
46 anticipated related to the creation of new access pathways. Impacts on paleontological resources

1 related to the creation of new corridors not assessed in this PEIS would be evaluated at the
2 project-specific level if new road or transmission construction or line upgrades are to occur.
3

4 A programmatic design feature requiring a stop work order in the event of an inadvertent
5 discovery of paleontological resources would reduce impacts by preserving some information
6 and allowing excavation of the resource, if warranted. Depending on the significance of the find,
7 it could also result in some modification to the project footprint. Since the SEZ is located in an
8 area partially classified as PFYC Class 3b, a stipulation would be included in permitting
9 documents to alert solar energy developers of the possibility of a delay if paleontological
10 resources were uncovered during surface-disturbing activities.
11

12 13 **11.3.16.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness** 14

15 Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic
16 design features, including a stop-work stipulation in the event that paleontological resources are
17 encountered during construction, as described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
18

19 If the geological deposits are determined to be as described above and are classified as
20 PFYC Class 2, mitigation of paleontological resources within 90% of the Dry Lake SEZ is not
21 likely to be necessary. The need for and nature of any SEZ-specific design features for the
22 remaining 10% of the SEZ would depend on the results of future paleontological investigations.
23
24

1 **11.3.17 Cultural Resources**
2

3 Cultural resources present or adjacent to the Dry Lake SEZ include archaeological sites,
4 landscapes, and features sacred to Native Americans; prehistoric and historic trails; historic
5 railroad grades and associated sites; historic mining camps and associated artifacts and sites
6 relating to the NTS and Nellis Air Force Base.
7

8
9 **11.3.17.1 Affected Environment**
10

11
12 **11.3.17.1.1 Prehistory**
13

14 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located in the eastern portion of the Mojave Desert,
15 within the geographical area referred to as the Great Basin. The earliest known human use of the
16 area was likely during the Paleoindian Period, sometime between 12,000 and 10,000 years B.P.
17 Surface finds of Paleoindian fluted projectile points, the hallmark of the Clovis culture, have
18 been found in the area, but no sites with any stratigraphic context have been excavated. The
19 Clovis culture is characterized by the aforementioned fluted projectile point and a hunting and
20 gathering subsistence economy that followed migrating herds of Pleistocene mega fauna. The
21 ephemeral nature of Paleoindian sites in the southeastern Great Basin has given rise to
22 speculation that the Paleoindians may have been inclined to subsist off of the lake and marsh
23 habitats provided by the ancient Pleistocene pluvial lakes that occupied a large portion of the
24 Great Basin, and consequently the sites are difficult to find because they have been buried by the
25 ebb and flow of the pluvial lakes. This slightly later cultural material associated with the pluvial
26 lake habitations is referred to as the Western Pluvial Lakes Tradition or Lake Mojave culture.
27 The archaeological assemblage associated with this cultural tradition is characterized by
28 stemmed projectile points, leaf-shaped bifaces, scrapers, crescents, and in some cases
29 groundstone tools for milling plant material (Fowler and Madsen 1986).
30

31 The Early Archaic Period in the region began with the recession of most of the pluvial
32 lakes in the area, about 8,000 to 6,000 B.P. and lasted until about 4,000 B.P. Archaic Period
33 groups likely still congregated around marsh areas, but also used the vast caves that can be found
34 in the mountains of the Great Basin. The settlement system in some areas was likely based
35 around a central base camp, with temporary camps on the margins of their territory to exploit
36 resources not in the immediate vicinity. Some of the key Archaic sites in the area near the
37 proposed Dry Lake SEZ are Corn Creek Dunes and Tule Springs, both located north of Las
38 Vegas and west of the proposed SEZ; Stuart Rockshelter to the north of the SEZ; and Gypsum
39 Cave to the south. The Lake Lahontan Basin, a large Pleistocene pluvial lake north of the
40 proposed Dry Lake SEZ, is also home to several early Archaic Period sites; the archaeological
41 assemblages from these sites maintain some cultural continuity with the previous period,
42 consisting of Pinto points, leaf-shaped bifaces, scrapers, drills, graters, and manos and metates
43 (Fowler and Madsen 1986).
44

45 The Middle Archaic Period, 4,000 to 1,500 B.P., saw the climactic shift known as the
46 Little Pluvial, a wetter and cooler climate that caused some of the pluvial lakes to fill back up.

1 The cultural material of this time period is similar to that of the Early Archaic, with an increased
2 concentration of millingstones, mortars, and pestles and the appearance of normally perishable
3 items, such as wicker baskets, split-twig figurines, duck decoys, and woven sandals (Neusius and
4 Gross 2007).

5
6 In the vicinity of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, the Late Archaic Period began about
7 1,500 B.P. and extended until contact with the Europeans. This period saw major technological
8 shifts, evidenced by smaller projectile points that were more useful because groups began using
9 bow-and-arrow technology instead of the atlatl, and by changes in subsistence techniques in the
10 use of horticulture. Most groups in the Muddy and Virgin River valleys were a part of the Virgin
11 Anasazi cultural group, an extension of the Puebloan groups from the southwest into the Great
12 Basin region. These groups brought with them the knowledge of horticulture, which they used on
13 the floodplains of the river valleys which they inhabited. Pueblo Grande de Nevada, east of the
14 proposed Dry Lake SEZ near Overton, Nevada, is a prime example of the Virgin Anasazi culture
15 in the vicinity of the SEZ. Also characteristic of this period are grey-ware ceramics (sometimes
16 decorated), rock art and intaglios, bedrock milling features, and turquoise mining. A site
17 consisting of rock circles in association with Paiute ceramics has been documented in the central
18 portion of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. The following section describes the cultural history of
19 the time period in greater detail.

20 21 22 ***11.3.17.1.2 Ethnohistory***

23
24 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located within the traditional use area of the Southern
25 Paiute. While Southern Paiute groups tended to be wide ranging and shared resources, the SEZ
26 lies in the area most often attributed to the Moapa Band, whose core areas of settlements and
27 activities were along the Moapa or Muddy River and the Virgin River (Kelly 1934; Kelly and
28 Fowler 1986). The Moapa Valley was a central location where the western Southern Paiute
29 bands gathered and traded (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983) and may have been associated with the
30 ritually important Salt Song Trail (Laird 1976). Close to this important gathering place, the SEZ
31 is likely to have been known to many of the Southern Paiute bands, including the neighboring
32 Las Vegas Band, other bands traveling along the Moapa River to the Colorado River, and well-
33 traveled groups of Chemehuevi.

34 35 36 **Southern Paiute**

37
38 The Southern Paiute appear to have moved into southern Nevada and southwestern Utah
39 about 1150 (Euler 1964). Most of the territory occupied by the Southern Paiute lies within the
40 Mojave Desert, stretching from the high Colorado Plateaus westward through canyon country
41 and southwestward following the bend in the Colorado River through the Basin and Range
42 geologic province into southeastern California. The territory includes several different vegetation
43 zones, reflected in corresponding differences in subsistence practices. There is some evidence
44 that before the arrival of Euro-American colonists, the Southern Paiute may have been organized
45 on a tribal level under the ritual leadership of High Chiefs and that their territory was bound
46 together by a network of trails used by specialist runners (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). The

1 proposed Dry Lake SEZ falls within *Paranayi*, the western subdivision of the Southern Paiute
2 Nation (Stoffle et al. 1997). Situated in the Dry Lake Valley, it is directly adjacent to the Moapa
3 River Reservation. It is bounded on the east and west by low but rugged mountains characteristic
4 of Moapa Band territory (Kelly 1934). The culturally important Arrow Canyon Range is on the
5 east and the Dry Lake Range on the west. The nearby ribbon oasis of the Virgin River and its
6 tributaries was the single most important ribbon oasis in Southern Paiute Territory (Stoffle and
7 Dobyns 1983).

8
9 When first described by ethnographers, Southern Paiute groups had survived a 75%
10 reduction in population resulting from the spread of European diseases, Ute slave raids, and
11 displacement from high-quality resource areas by Euro-American settlers. They did not
12 maintain any overall tribal organization; territories were self-sufficient economically; and the
13 only known organizations were kin-based bands, often no larger than that of a nuclear family
14 (Kelly and Fowler 1986). The Southern Paiute practiced a mixed subsistence economy. They
15 maintained floodplain and irrigated agricultural fields and husbanded wild plants through
16 transplanting, pruning, burning, and irrigation. They supplemented their food supply by hunting
17 and fishing (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). The diet of the Southern Paiute was varied, but the harsh
18 climate of the area at times made subsistence precarious. They made use of a wide variety of
19 indigenous plants. Botanical knowledge was maintained primarily by the women, and this
20 knowledge of seasonal plant exploitation meant that at times the agricultural fields would have
21 been little maintained while groups were away from their base camp gathering resources
22 (Stoffle et al. 1999). The Southern Paiute maintained dwellings to match the seasons. In the
23 summer, they constructed sun shades and windbreaks. After the fall harvest, they resided in
24 conical or subconical shaped houses or in caves. It was not until the late nineteenth century that
25 teepees and sweathouses were adopted from the Utes. Basketry was one of the most important
26 crafts practiced by the Southern Paiute. Conical burden baskets, fan-shaped trays for winnowing
27 and parching, seed beaters, and water jugs were made from local plants. Pottery, usually unfired,
28 was also made for daily use. The annual cycle of seasonal plant exploitation required great
29 mobility on the part of the Southern Paiute, and consequently they often used the lightweight
30 burden baskets (Kelly and Fowler 1986).

31
32 The Southern Paiute were not a war-like group, and consequently they were often the
33 target of raids by their more aggressive neighbors. Despite the Ute aggression, the Southern
34 Paiute were on friendly terms with most of the other groups north of the Colorado River and
35 would visit, trade, hunt, or gather in each other's territory and occasionally intermarry.

36
37 The arrival of Europeans in the New World had serious consequences for the Southern
38 Paiute. Even before direct contact occurred, the spread of European diseases and the slave trade
39 implemented by Utes and Navajo on horseback for the Spanish colonial markets in New Mexico,
40 Sonora, and California resulted in significant depopulation. The Southern Paiutes retreated from
41 areas where there was an increased presence of Euro-American travelers, such as along the Old
42 Spanish Trail. They were further displaced by Euro-American settlers in Utah and Nevada, who
43 sought the same limited water supplies used by the Southern Paiute. Dependence on wild plant
44 resources increased during this time, as the Southern Paiute withdrew into more remote areas. As
45 Euro-American settlements grew, the Southern Paiute were drawn into the new economy, often
46 serving as transient wage labor. Settlements or colonies of laborers grew up around settlements,

1 farms, and mines, often including individuals from across the Southern Paiute homeland (Kelly
2 and Fowler 1986).

3
4 In 1865, an initial attempt by the U.S. Government to settle the Southern Paiutes in
5 northeastern Utah with their traditional enemies, the Utes, failed. Mormon settlers began to
6 arrive in the Moapa Valley the same year, but returned to Utah in 1871. The Moapa River
7 Reservation was established in 1875, although the original reservation as authorized by President
8 Ulysses S. Grant was severely reduced by Congress to 1,000 acres (4 km²) of mostly unirrigable
9 land. Nonetheless, limited commercial farming was established. Although plagued by disease
10 and poor water, the reservation slowly became more prosperous. Capitalizing on its share of a
11 judgment awarded by the Indian Claims Commission and on the 1980 restoration of part of their
12 original reservation, Moapa River Reservation has continued to develop into a center of Southern
13 Paiute activity (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983).

14 15 16 ***11.3.17.1.3 History*** 17

18 The earliest documented European presence in the Great Basin region was the
19 Dominguez-Escalante Expedition, which began in July 1776.¹⁴ Two Catholic priests, Fathers
20 Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante, were looking for a route from
21 the Spanish capital city of Santa Fe to the Spanish settlement of Monterey on the California
22 coast. The group did not initially complete the goal of reaching California—they turned back
23 to Santa Fe when the weather got too bad; however, their maps and journals describing their
24 travels and encounters would prove valuable to later expeditions that traversed the area, such as
25 Spanish/New Mexican traders and Anglo-American fur trappers traveling the Old Spanish Trail
26 in the 1820s and 1830s (BLM 1976).

27
28 The Old Spanish Trail was an evolving trail system generally established in the early
29 nineteenth century, tending to follow previously established paths used by earlier explorers like
30 Dominguez and Escalante, but also Native Americans. The trail is not a direct route due to a
31 desire to avoid hostile Indian Tribes, as well as natural land formations such as the Grand
32 Canyon. Several forks and cutoffs were established as more and more travelers made use of the
33 trail system. The 2,700-mi (4,345-km) trail network crosses through six states with various paths
34 between Santa Fe and Los Angeles. It was used primarily between 1829 and 1848 by New
35 Mexican traders exchanging textiles for horses. In 1829 while following the Old Spanish Trail,
36 Antonio Armijio found an oasis that served as a crucial stopping point along the trail. This oasis
37 was named Las Vegas, Spanish for “The Meadows,” and in utilizing this oasis groups traveling
38 on the trail were able to significantly shorten their trip through the harsh desert (Fehner and
39 Gosling 2000). The Old Spanish National Historic Trail is a congressionally designated trail, and
40 consequently, the trail, trail resources, and setting are required to be managed in accordance with
41 the National Trail System Act. Within the eastern portion of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, a site
42 is identified as a portion of the Old Spanish Trail and is listed in the NRHP as part of a larger

¹⁴ Although slavery was technically illegal, traders from New Spain (New Mexico) would travel north to acquire Native American slaves for New Mexican settlers from at least the mid 1700s.

1 Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road District. However, this section of trail is not identified as part
2 of the congressionally designated Old Spanish National Historic Trail, located farther to the east.
3

4 With the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which closed out the
5 Mexican-American War, the area came under American control. In 1847, the first American
6 settlers arrived in the Great Basin, among them Mormon immigrants under the leadership of
7 Brigham Young, who settled in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. They sought to bring
8 the entire Great Basin under their control, establishing an independent State of Deseret. From its
9 center in Salt Lake City, the church sent out colonizers to establish agricultural communities in
10 surrounding valleys and missions to acquire natural resources such as minerals and timber.
11 Relying on irrigation to support their farms, the Mormons often settled in the same places as the
12 Fremont and Virgin Anasazi centuries before. The result was a scattering of planned agricultural
13 communities from northern Arizona to southern Idaho and parts of Wyoming, Nevada, and
14 southern California. In 1855 Brigham Young sent 30 men, led by William Bringham, to the
15 Las Vegas valley, southwest of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, in an effort to establish a mission in
16 the southern portion of Nevada. They called their mission Las Vegas Fort, but stayed in the area
17 for only a few years before abandoning the mission because of the harsh climate and the closing
18 of the nearby Potosi mine that provided the majority of the income and patronage at the mission
19 (Fehner and Gosling 2000).
20

21 Nevada's nickname is the "Silver State," so named for the 1859 Comstock Lode strike in
22 Virginia City about 290 mi (467 km) north of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. This was the first
23 major silver discovery in the United States, and with the news of the strike hopeful prospectors
24 flocked to the area in an effort to capitalize on the possible wealth under the surface of the earth.
25 The discovery of the Comstock Lode led to the creation of Virginia City and other nearby towns
26 that served the burgeoning population influx. The population increase was so dramatic that in
27 1850 there were less than a dozen non-native people in the state of Nevada; by 1860 there were
28 6,857; and by 1875 an estimated 75,000 people had migrated to the state. The Comstock Lode
29 strike is important to the history of Nevada not only because of the population growth and
30 significant amount of money that was consequently brought to the area, but also for
31 technological innovations that were created and employed in the mines, namely, the use of
32 square-set timbering. This technique kept loose soil from collapsing on miners, a concept that
33 eventually was employed around the world in other mines (Paher 1970).
34

35 Mining for valuable deposits occurred in all regions of the state of Nevada, including in
36 the vicinity of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Clark County is home to the earliest lode mine in the
37 state at Potosi mine, about 65 mi (105 km) southwest of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Other
38 notable mines were Goodspring Mine, near Jean, Nevada; Searchlight Mine, at the town of the
39 same name; and El Dorado Canyon Mine, near Nelson, Nevada, all located about 15 to 20 mi
40 (24 to 32 km) southwest of Las Vegas. There were also two smaller mines closer to the proposed
41 Dry Lake SEZ: Key West, a copper mine near Glendale, Nevada, northwest of the SEZ; and
42 Gold Butte, a short-lived gold mine east of the SEZ, on the eastern side of Lake Mead. Mining in
43 the area was likely undertaken by the Native Americans in the area prior to the arrival of the
44 Euro-Americans, mainly for copper deposits. Intensive mining by Euro-Americans began around
45 1865 at the Potosi mine by Mormons, and continued until the abandonment of the area by the
46 Mormons about 1863.
47

1 The construction of railroads in Nevada was often directly related to the mining activities
2 that occurred in the state, and the San Pedro, Salt Lake, and Los Angeles Railroad acted as a
3 stimulant to the depraved mining economy with its construction in 1905. A portion of the still-
4 used railroad runs through the extreme far eastern portion of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. The
5 construction of this railroad was one of the most significant factors in making Las Vegas the city
6 that it has become. At the turn of the nineteenth century, no railroad existed that connected two
7 of the largest towns in the western United States, Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. Fierce
8 competition between U.S. Senator William Clark and UP owner Edward Harriman ensued,
9 eventually resulting in Clark constructing the critical railroad, shortening the trip from Salt Lake
10 City to Los Angeles to one day and making Las Vegas a critical railroad hub along the line.
11 Several sites have been documented in the SEZ related to the railroad and its construction. The
12 railroad itself has been designated as a site, although it is currently under the ownership of the
13 UP Railroad. This railroad passes through the southeastern portion of the SEZ. Another recorded
14 site is a railroad grade affiliated with the San Pedro, Salt Lake, and Los Angeles Railroad. Two
15 railroad camps associated with the construction of the San Pedro, Salt Lake, and Los Angeles
16 Railroad have been documented in the SEZ: one of the sites consists of 31 features, 28 of which
17 are structures; and another consists of several structural features and artifact scatters—both sites
18 are in the southeastern portion of the SEZ. In addition to the railroads and the Old Spanish Trail,
19 the Old Arrowhead Highway passes through portions of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Currently a
20 frontage road for I-15, this road was the earliest highway developed across southern Nevada,
21 connecting Las Vegas and St. Thomas (a town now under Lake Mead, south of Overton).
22 Completed in 1915, this road followed portions of earlier emigrant trails, and although it was
23 renamed several times in its existence, it continued to provide a valuable transportation route for
24 southern Nevada until the construction of I-15.

25
26 Several historic towns in the vicinity of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ were not related to
27 mining activities but to Mormon settlement: West Point, Nevada (near present day Glendale);
28 St. Joseph, Nevada; Junction City, Nevada; and St. Thomas, Nevada. Although all but West
29 Point are now under Lake Mead, remnants of some of the foundations of some of the buildings
30 can be seen when the lake levels are low. The Mormon presence in southern Nevada is further
31 evidenced by the fact that the Old Spanish Trail is also sometimes referred to as the Mormon
32 Road, because this route became a popular emigrant route for the Mormons to take from Salt
33 Lake City to points south (Fehner and Gosling 2000; Paher 1970).

34
35 Nevada's desert-mountain landscape has made it a prime region for use by the
36 U.S. military for several decades. Beginning in October 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt
37 established the Las Vegas Bombing and Gunnery Range, a 3.5-million-acre (14,164-km²) parcel
38 of land northwest of Las Vegas, near Indian Springs, Nevada. The main purpose of the range was
39 to serve as air-to-air gunnery practice, but at the end of World War II, the gunnery range was
40 closed. It was reopened at the start of the Cold War in 1948, recommissioned as the Las Vegas
41 Air Force Base, and later renamed Nellis Air Force Base in 1950 (Fehner and Gosling 2000).

42
43 Prior to the dropping of the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and
44 Hiroshima, the only testing of nuclear weapons on U.S. soil was at the Trinity site, near
45 Los Alamos Laboratory in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Tests of nuclear weapons had been
46 conducted at the newly acquired Marshall Islands in the Pacific, but because of logistical

1 constraints, financial expenditures, and security reasons, a test site for nuclear weapons was
2 needed in a more convenient region. Project Nutmeg commenced in 1948 as a study to determine
3 the feasibility and necessity of a test site in the continental United States. It was determined that
4 because of public relations issues, radiological safety, and security issues, a continental test site
5 should be pursued only in the event of a national emergency. In 1949 that emergency occurred
6 when the Soviet Union conducted its first test of a nuclear weapon and the Korean War started in
7 the summer of 1950. Five initial test sites were proposed: Alamogordo/White Sands Missile
8 Range in New Mexico, Camp LeJeune in North Carolina, the Las Vegas–Tonopah Bombing and
9 Gunnery Range in Nevada, a site in central Nevada near Eureka, and Utah’s Dugway Proving
10 Ground/Wendover Bombing Range. Several factors were considered in making the final
11 decision, such as fallout patterns, prevailing winds and predictability of weather, terrain,
12 downwind populations, security, and public awareness and relations. The Las Vegas–Tonopah
13 Bombing and Gunnery Range was chosen as the NTS by President Truman in December 1950.
14

15 Covering 879,997 acres (3,561 km²), the NTS was a part of the Las Vegas–Tonopah
16 Bombing and Gunnery Range, stretching from Mercury, Nevada in the southeast to Pahute Mesa
17 in the northwest. The first set of nuclear tests was conducted in January 1951, originally named
18 FAUST (First American Drop United States Test) and later renamed Ranger; these bombs were
19 detonated over Frenchman Flat, an area about 70 mi (113 km) west of the proposed Dry Lake
20 SEZ. Tests were later conducted at Yucca Flat, an area northwest of Frenchman Flat, in an effort
21 to minimize the effect of the blasts on the population in Las Vegas, which reported some
22 disturbances (nonradiological in nature) from the series of tests conducted at Frenchman Flat.
23 Tests were also conducted at Jackass Flats, west of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, and Pahute
24 Mesa, north and west of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Nuclear tests were conducted in an effort
25 to verify new weapons concepts, proof test existing weapons, test the impact of nuclear weapons
26 on man-made structures and the physical environment, and conduct experimental testing in
27 search of possible peaceful uses, namely, the Pluto ramjet, Plowshare, and Rover rocket
28 programs. The Pluto ramjet project was funded by the Air Force to design a system that could
29 propel a vehicle at supersonic speeds and low altitudes, while the Rover rocket was a design for a
30 nuclear-powered rocket for space travel. The Plowshare project was an attempt to show that
31 nuclear weapons could be effective in moving large amounts of earth for canal and harbor
32 construction. None of these three projects resulted in any sustained results in terms of their goals,
33 yet they were important in their contribution to the overall work done at the NTS. In the fall of
34 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower declared a moratorium on nuclear testing, with the Soviet
35 Union following suit, until 1961 when testing resumed. However, this testing was performed
36 mostly underground at the NTS, and most atmospheric tests were conducted in the Pacific. The
37 last atmospheric test at the NTS was on July 17, 1962, with the Limited Test Ban Treaty being
38 signed by the United States and the Soviet Union on August 5, 1963, ending nuclear testing in
39 the atmosphere, ocean, and space. The last underground nuclear detonation at the NTS was on
40 September 23, 1992, after which Congress declared a moratorium on nuclear testing. In 1996 a
41 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was proposed by an international organization. It has yet to be
42 ratified by the U.S. Senate, but nuclear tests have not been conducted since then. In total, 1,021
43 of the 1,149 nuclear detonations by the United States during the Cold War were conducted at the
44 NTS (Fehner and Gosling 2000).
45
46

1 **11.3.17.1.4 Traditional Cultural Properties—Landscape**
2

3 The Southern Paiutes have traditionally taken a holistic view of the world, in which the
4 sacred and profane are inextricably intertwined. According to their traditions, they were created
5 in their traditional use territory and have a divine right to the land along with a responsibility to
6 manage and protect it. Landscapes as a whole are often culturally important. Adverse effects on
7 one part damage the whole (Stoffle 2001). From their perspective, landscapes include places of
8 power. Among the most important such places are sources of water; peaks, mountains, and
9 elevated features; caves; distinctive rock formations; and panels of rock art. Places of power are
10 important to the religious beliefs of the Southern Paiute. They may be sought out for individual
11 vision quests or healing and may likewise be associated with culturally important plant and
12 animal species. The view from such a point of power or the ability to see from one important
13 place to another can be an important element of its integrity (Stoffle and Zedeño 2001b).
14 Landscapes as a whole are tied together by a network of culturally important trails (Stoffle and
15 Dobyns 1983; Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a).
16

17 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is close to the core traditional Southern Paiute use area
18 formed by the Virgin River and its tributaries. The Virgin River lies 26 mi (42 km) to the east. Its
19 major tributary, the Moapa River, which runs through the culturally important Arrow Canyon, is
20 14 mi (23 km) to the north–northeast. Euro-American travelers passing through the area in the
21 mid-nineteenth century described well-developed Native American agriculture along the Moapa
22 River. Arrow Canyon connected the Moapa River villages with summer villages to the northwest
23 in Pahrangat Valley and was a source of game and important wild plants. The SEZ lies at the
24 southern end of the Arrow Canyon Range, identified by Southern Paiutes from across their
25 traditional range as culturally important, but of particular importance to the Moapa Band. The
26 bajada at the northern end of this range traditionally was a culturally important meeting
27 ground—the site of ceremonial gatherings and trade. The mountains themselves provided habitat
28 for bighorn sheep an important game animal. Members of the Moapa Band also consider the Dry
29 Lake Range to be culturally important, but somewhat less so than the Arrow Canyon Range
30 (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983).
31

32 The southern Paiutes consider the visible remains of traditional foot paths, which have
33 been identified by Southern Paiute informants, as a culturally significant part of the landscape
34 (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Such trails tied villages and camps with important resources. Some
35 trails have a ritual as well as a physical component. The Salt Song Trail, both a physical and
36 spiritual trail, important in Southern Paiute mortuary rituals appears to cross the Moapa River in
37 this area and proceeds to the southwest to the Las Vegas area, coming close to or through the
38 SEZ (Laird 1976).
39

40
41 **11.3.17.1.5 Cultural Surveys and Known Archaeological and Historical Resources**
42

43 With respect to the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, 58 cultural resource surveys have been
44 conducted in the SEZ, covering about 9,446 acres (38 km²), 60.2% of the total SEZ area. Within
45 5 mi (8 km) of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, another 125 surveys have been conducted. These
46 surveys have resulted in the recording of 22 sites in the SEZ and at least 229 sites within 5 mi

1 (8 km) of the SEZ. Of the 22 sites in the SEZ, 7 are prehistoric; 15 are historic. Six of the sites
2 in the SEZ have been determined to be eligible for inclusion in the NRHP (de Dufour 2009).
3 The Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road intersects the southeastern portion of the proposed
4 Dry Lake SEZ. A railroad grade associated with the San Pedro, Salt Lake, and Los Angeles
5 Railroad is also in the southeastern portion of the SEZ. The railroad itself and two camps
6 affiliated with the construction of the railroad are also present within the SEZ boundaries. The
7 Old Arrowhead Highway intersects portions of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ as well.
8

9 Of the 229 sites that have been documented within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ, 171 are
10 prehistoric in nature, 56 are historic, and 2 are multicomponent. Fifteen of these sites have been
11 determined to be NRHP-eligible. Nine of these sites are rockshelters and are located in the
12 mountains surrounding the Dry Lake SEZ. Other prehistoric NRHP-eligible sites include a camp
13 with fire-affected rock and metates and two lithic scatters likely dating to the Late Archaic
14 Period. The NRHP-eligible sites from the historic period are all related to the railroad and its
15 construction, including a campsite associated with the railroad and the historic trails that pass
16 through the area, a railroad siding and a construction camp, and an historic camp associated with
17 the railroad as well.
18

19 The BLM has designated several ACECs in the vicinity of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ to
20 protect the cultural resources contained within these areas. The Hidden Valley ACEC is about
21 9 mi (14 km) east of the SEZ; the Rainbow Gardens ACEC is 10 mi (16 km) south; and the
22 Arrow Canyon ACEC is about 13 mi (21 km) south. The Arden ACEC, Sloan Rock ACEC, and
23 Virgin River ACEC are protected for their cultural resources but are located farther than 25 mi
24 (40 km) from the SEZ.
25

26 Other known cultural resources near the Dry Lake SEZ are the congressionally
27 designated Old Spanish National Historic Trail, including a high-potential segment; the San
28 Pedro, Salt Lake, and Los Angeles Railroad (now the UP line); and the Old Arrowhead
29 Highway. Additionally, the NTS and Nellis Air Force Base are located just west of the SEZ,
30 adding to the rich cultural heritage of the region.
31
32

33 ***National Register of Historic Places***

34
35 There is one property listed in the NRHP that falls within the boundaries of the SEZ, the
36 Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road. Six additional sites in the SEZ have been determined to be
37 NRHP-eligible. Within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ there are no sites listed in the NRHP, however,
38 15 of these sites that have been documented have been determined to be NRHP-eligible.
39

40 In Clark County, 53 properties are listed in the NRHP, 32 of which are in Las Vegas
41 or the vicinity of Las Vegas, about 17 mi (27 km) southwest of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ.
42 Other NRHP sites are located in Overton (5 sites), 23 mi (37 km) east of the SEZ, and in
43 Indian Springs (1 site), 25 mi (40 km) west of the SEZ. The remaining NRHP sites are further
44 than 25 mi (40 km) from the SEZ: 6 in Boulder City, 4 in Mesquite and Bunkerville, 1 in
45 Goodsprings, 2 in Laughlin, and 2 in Searchlight.
46
47

1 **11.3.17.2 Impacts**
2

3 Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed Dry Lake
4 SEZ; however, further investigation is needed. At least 22 sites have been recorded within the
5 SEZ, one of which is listed in the NRHP, the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road, and 6 additional
6 sites that have been determined to be NRHP-eligible. Consistent with findings at other SEZs,
7 dune areas continue to have potential to contain significant sites within the valley floors suitable
8 for solar development. A cultural resource survey of the entire area of potential effects, including
9 consultation with affected Native American Tribes, would need to be conducted first to identify
10 archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and traditional cultural properties, and then
11 an evaluation would follow to determine whether any are eligible for listing in the NRHP as
12 historic properties. Section 5.15 discusses the types of effects that could occur on the seven
13 known sites and any additional significant cultural resources found within the proposed Dry
14 Lake SEZ. Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic
15 design features described in Section A.2.2 of Appendix A. Programmatic design features assume
16 that the necessary surveys, evaluations, and consultations will occur. No traditional cultural
17 properties have been identified to date within the vicinity of the SEZ.
18

19 Indirect impacts on cultural resources that result from erosion outside of the SEZ
20 boundary (including along ROWs) are unlikely, assuming programmatic design features to
21 reduce water runoff and sedimentation are implemented (as described in Appendix A,
22 Section A.2.2).
23

24 Visual impacts on the Old Spanish National Historic Trail are possible, but depending on
25 the exact location of the high potential segment near the proposed SEZ, it would appear that
26 intervening topography may alleviate the potential impact. Verification of the location of the trail
27 would be needed to assess impact. GIS data for the congressionally designated National Historic
28 Trail location and the site location of the NRHP-listed Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road appear
29 to be in conflict. If portions of the Old Spanish Trail National Register District go through the
30 proposed SEZ, direct impacts could occur on the trail during construction.
31

32 No needs for new transmission or access corridors have currently been identified,
33 assuming existing corridors would be used; therefore, no new areas of cultural concern would be
34 made accessible as a result of development within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, so indirect
35 impacts resulting from vandalism or theft of cultural resources are not anticipated. However,
36 impacts on cultural resources related to the creation of new corridors not assessed in this PEIS
37 would be evaluated at the project-specific level if new road or transmission construction or line
38 upgrades are to occur.
39

40 **11.3.17.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
41

42 Programmatic design features to mitigate adverse effects on significant cultural
43 resources, such as avoidance of significant sites and features, cultural awareness training for the
44 workforce, and measures for addressing possible looting/vandalism issues through formalized
45 agreement documents, are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
46
47

1 . SEZ-specific design features would be determined in consultation with the Nevada SHPO
2 and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations.
3

- 4 • Coordination with the Trail Administration for the Old Spanish Trail and Old
5 Spanish Trail Association is recommended for identifying potential mitigation
6 strategies for avoiding or minimizing potential impacts on the congressionally
7 designated Old Spanish National Historic Trail, and also to any remnants of
8 the NRHP-listed site associated with the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road
9 that may be located within the SEZ. Avoidance of the Old Spanish Trail
10 NRHP-listed site within the southeastern portion of the proposed SEZ is
11 recommended.
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1 **11.3.18 Native American Concerns**

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3 Native Americans share many environmental and socioeconomic concerns with other
4 ethnic groups. This section focuses on concerns that are specific to Native Americans or to which
5 Native Americans bring a distinct perspective. For a discussion of issues of possible Native
6 American concern shared with the population as a whole, several sections in this PEIS should be
7 consulted. General topics of concern are addressed in Section 4.16. Specifically for the proposed
8 Dry Lake SEZ, Section 11.3.17 discusses archaeological sites, structures, landscapes, trails, and
9 traditional cultural properties; Section 11.3.8 discusses mineral resources; Section 11.3.9.1.3
10 discusses water rights and water use; Section 11.3.10 discusses plant species; 11.3.11 discusses
11 wildlife species, including wildlife migration patterns; Section 11.3.13 discusses air quality;
12 Section 11.3.14 discusses visual resources; Sections 11.3.19 and 11.3.20 discuss socioeconomics
13 and environmental justice, respectively; and issues of human health and safety are discussed in
14 Section 5.21.

15
16
17 **11.3.18.1 Affected Environment**

18
19 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ falls within the Tribal traditional use area generally
20 attributed to the Southern Paiute (Kelly and Fowler 1986). All federally recognized Tribes with
21 Southern Paiute roots have been contacted and provided an opportunity to comment or consult
22 regarding this PEIS. They are listed in Table 11.3.18.1-1. Details of government-to-government
23 consultation efforts are presented in Chapter 14; a listing of all federally recognized Tribes
24 contacted for this PEIS is found in Appendix K.
25
26

**TABLE 11.3.18.1-1 Federally Recognized Tribes
with Traditional Ties to the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ**

Tribe	Location	State
Chemehuevi Indian Tribe	Lake Havasu	California
Kaibab Paiute Tribe	Fredonia	Arizona
Las Vegas Paiute Tribe	Las Vegas	Nevada
Moapa Band of Paiutes	Moapa	Nevada
Pahrump Paiute Tribe	Pahrump	Nevada
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah	Cedar City	Utah
Cedar Band	Cedar City	Utah
Indian Peak Band	Cedar City	Utah
Kanosh Band	Kanosh	Utah
Koosharem Band	Cedar City	Utah
Shivwits Band	Ivins	Utah
San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe	Tuba City	Arizona

27
28
29

1 ***11.3.18.1.1 Territorial Boundaries***

2
3
4 **Southern Paiutes**

5
6 The traditional territory of the Southern Paiute lies mainly in the Mojave Desert,
7 stretching from California to the Colorado Plateau. It generally follows the right bank of the
8 Colorado River, including its tributary streams and canyons in southern Nevada and Utah; this
9 includes most of Clark and Lincoln Counties in Nevada and extends as far north as Beaver
10 County in Utah (Kelly and Fowler 1986). This area has been judicially recognized as the
11 traditional use area of the Southern Paiute by the Indian Claims Commission (Royster 2008).

12
13
14 ***11.3.18.1.2 Plant Resources***

15
16 The Southern Paiutes continue to make use of a wide range of indigenous plants for food,
17 medicine, construction material, and other uses. The vegetation present at the proposed Dry Lake
18 SEZ is described in Section 11.3.10. The cover type present at the SEZ is predominantly Sonora–
19 Mojave Creosotebush–White Bursage Desert Shrub, with smaller areas of North American
20 Warm Desert Playa, and small patches of Sonora-Mojave Mixed Salt Desert Scrub, and North
21 American Warm Desert Wash (USGS 2005a). The SEZ is sparsely vegetated and crisscrossed
22 with dirt roads and power lines. It includes part of a dry lake or playa. Creosotebush and white
23 bursage are the dominant species, with some mesquite and yucca appearing in swale and wash
24 environments. Of these, creosotebush has Native American medicinal uses, while mesquite and
25 yucca were food sources. As shown in Table 11.3.18.1-2, there are likely to be some plants used
26 by Native Americans for food in the SEZ (Stoffle et al. 1999; Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Project-
27 specific analyses will be needed to determine their presence at any proposed building site.
28 Traditional plant knowledge is found most abundantly among Tribal elders, especially female
29 elders (Stoffle et al. 1999).

30
31
32 ***11.3.18.1.3 Other Resources***

33
34 Members of the Moapa Band rate springs as the most important cultural resource in their
35 cultural landscape (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Water is an essential prerequisite for life in the
36 arid areas of the Great Basin. As a result, water is a keystone of many desert cultures’ religion.
37 They tend to consider all water sacred and a purifying agent. Water sources are often associated
38 with rock art. Springs are often associated with powerful beings, and hot springs in particular
39 figure in Southern Paiute creation stories. Water sources are seen as connected, so damage to
40 one damages all (Fowler 1991; Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a). Tribes are also sensitive regarding
41 the use of scarce local water supplies for the benefit of far-distant communities and recommend
42 determination of adequate water supplies be a primary consideration in determining whether a
43 site is suitable for the development of a utility-scale solar energy facility (Moose 2009).

TABLE 11.3.18.1-2 Plant Species Important to Native Americans Observed or Likely To Be Present in the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Food		
Beavertail Prickly Pear	<i>Opuntia basilaris</i>	Observed
Desert Trumpet (Buckwheat)	<i>Eriogonum inflatum</i>	Observed
Cat Claw	<i>Acacia greggii</i>	Possible
Cholla Cactus	<i>Cylindropuntia</i> spp.	Observed
Dropseed	<i>Sporobolus</i> spp.	Possible
Greasewood	<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>	Observed
Indian Rice Grass	<i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>	Possible
Iodine Bush	<i>Allenrolfea occidentalis</i>	Possible
Honey Mesquite	<i>Prosopis Glandolosa</i>	Observed
Wolfberry	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	Possible
Yucca	<i>Yucca</i> spp.	Observed
Medicine		
Burro Bush	<i>Hymenoclea salsola</i>	Possible
Creosotebush	<i>Larrea tridentata</i>	Observed
Greasewood	<i>Sacarbatus vermiculatus</i>	Possible
Mormon Tea	<i>Ephedra</i> sp.	Observed
Palmer's Phacelia	<i>Phacelia palermi</i>	Possible
Saltbush	<i>Atriplex</i> spp.	Observed

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005a); Stoffle and Dobyns (1983); Stoffle et al. (1999).

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Wildlife likely to be found in the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is described in Section 11.3.11. Bighorn sheep are the animals of greatest concern to local Native Americans. They recognize two varieties: a smaller version inhabiting the Arrow Canyon Range and a larger, preferred variety found farther east in the Sheep Range. Although now restricted, in the past, the hunting of sheep was an important part of Southern Paiute culture with religious significance, as reflected in the many panels of sheep petroglyphs found throughout Southern Paiute territory. The desert tortoise is often mentioned by the Moapa Band as a species that should be protected, and was once a food source (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Although generally arid, the SEZ is within the range of some game species traditionally important to Native Americans (see Table 11.3.18.1-3). The most important is the black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*) (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983; Kelly and Fowler 1986). Large game species possible in the SEZ include mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), and bighorn sheep (*Ovis Canadensis*) are likely present in the neighboring mountains. Smaller game species important to Native Americans that can be found in the SEZ include desert cottontails (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) and woodrats (*Neotoma lepida*).

TABLE 11.3.18.1-3 Animal Species Used by Native Americans as Food whose Range Includes the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Mammals		
Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	All year
Black-tailed jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>	All year
Bobcat	<i>Lynx rufus</i>	All year
Desert cottontail	<i>Silvilagus audubonii</i>	All year
Kangaroo rats	<i>Dipodomys</i> spp.	All year
Kit fox	<i>Vulpes macotis</i>	All year
Mule deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	All year
Pocket gopher	<i>Thomomys bottae</i>	All year
Porcupine	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>	All year
Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	All year
Rock squirrel	<i>Spermophilus variegates</i>	All year
Birds		
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	All year
Greater roadrunner	<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>	All year
Mourning dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	All year
Reptiles		
Large lizards	Various species	All year

Sources: USGS (2005b); Fowler (1986); Stoffle and Dobyns (1983).

1
2
3 Other animals traditionally important to the Southern Paiute include lizards, which are
4 likely to occur in the SEZ, and the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). The SEZ falls within the
5 range of the wide-ranging eagle.

6
7 Other natural resources traditionally important to Native Americans include clay for
8 pottery, salt, and naturally occurring mineral pigments for the decoration and protection of the
9 skin (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Of these, clay beds are possible in the dry lake within the SEZ
10 (see Section 11.3.7).

11 11.3.18.2 Impacts

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14
15 During past project-related consultation, the Southern Paiutes have expressed concerns
16 over project impacts on a variety of resources. From their holistic perspective, cultural and
17 natural features are inextricably bound together. Effects on one part have ripple effects on
18 the whole. Western distinctions between the sacred and the secular have no meaning in their
19 traditional worldview (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). While no comments specific to the
20 proposed Dry Lake SEZ have been received from Native American Tribes to date, the Paiute

1 Indian Tribe of Utah has asked to be kept informed of PEIS developments. During energy
2 development projects in adjacent areas, the Southern Paiute have expressed concern over adverse
3 effects on a wide range of resources. Geophysical features and physical cultural remains are
4 discussed in Section 11.3.17.1.4. These sites and features are often seen as important because
5 they are the location of or have ready access to a range of plant, animal, and mineral resources
6 (Stoffle et al. 1997). Resources considered important include food plants, medicinal plants,
7 plants used in basketry, plants used in construction, large game animals, small game animals,
8 birds, and sources of clay, salt, and pigments (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Those likely to be
9 found within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ are discussed in Section 3.1.18.1.2.

10
11 The Moapa River Valley is a core area of Southern Paiute population and culture. Dry
12 Lake Valley is adjacent to the valley and may lie on a communication corridor leading from the
13 Moapa River towards Las Vegas. Although the SEZ is sparsely vegetated, its proximity to a
14 traditionally settled area and a modern reservation suggests that the area is likely well known to
15 modern Southern Paiutes, and that the resources that do exist there are likely to be exploited by
16 them. That said, other nearby areas, such as Arrow Canyon and the Arrow Canyon Range, are
17 likely to be more important sources of plant and animal resources. This should be confirmed
18 during consultation with the Tribes.

19
20 The culturally important Salt Song Trail approaches or passes through the SEZ and could
21 experience visual and noise impacts from the development of utility-scale solar energy facilities
22 within the proposed SEZ.

23
24 The development of utility-scale solar power facilities within the SEZ would most likely
25 result in the removal of some culturally important plants and result in the loss of some habitat for
26 culturally important wildlife species. Impacts to vegetation are expected to be moderate to small
27 (Section 11.3.10) because similar vegetation is widespread in the area. Likewise there is
28 abundant similar habitat and impacts to wildlife are expected to be small (Section 11.3.11).
29 These expected impacts should be confirmed through government-to-government consultation.
30 As consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it is
31 also possible that there will be Native American concerns expressed over potential visual and
32 other effects on specific resources and any culturally important landscapes within or adjacent to
33 the SEZ.

34
35 Implementation of programmatic design features, as presented in Appendix A,
36 Section A.2.2, should eliminate impacts on Tribes' reserved water rights and the potential for
37 groundwater contamination issues.

40 **11.3.18.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

41
42 Programmatic design features to address impacts of potential concern to Native
43 Americans, such as avoidance of sacred sites, water resources, and tribally important plant
44 and animal species are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Mitigation of impacts on
45 archaeological sites and traditional cultural properties is discussed in Section 11.3.17.3, in
46 addition to design features for historic properties discussed in Section A.2.2 in Appendix A.

1 The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features addressing issues of potential
2 concern would be determined during government-to-government consultation with the affected
3 Tribes listed in Table 11.3.18.1-1.
4
5

1 **11.3.19 Socioeconomics**

2
3
4 **11.3.19.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section describes current socioeconomic conditions and local community services
7 within the ROI surrounding the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. The ROI, which consists solely of
8 Clark County, Nevada, encompasses the area in which workers are expected to spend most of
9 their salaries and in which a portion of site purchases and non-payroll expenditures from the
10 construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of solar facilities in the proposed SEZ is
11 expected to take place.

12
13
14 **11.3.19.1.1 ROI Employment**

15
16 In 2008, employment in the ROI stood at 922,878 (Table 11.3.19.1-1). Over the period
17 1999 to 2008, the annual average employment growth rate was 3.2% in Clark County, which was
18 higher than the average rate for Nevada as a whole (2.7%). In 2006, the services sector provided
19 the highest percentage of employment in the ROI at 59.6%, followed by wholesale and retail
20 trade at 14.8%, with a smaller employment share held by construction (11.6%)
21 (Table 11.3.19.1-2).

22
23
24 **11.3.19.1.2 ROI Unemployment**

25
26 Over the period 1999 to 2008, the average unemployment rate in Clark County was 5.0%,
27 the same as the average rate for the state as a whole (Table 11.3.19.1-3). Unemployment rates for
28 the first 11 months of 2009 contrast with rates for 2008 as a whole. The average rates for the ROI
29 (11.8%) and for Nevada as a whole (11.7%) were also higher during this period than the
30 corresponding average rates for 2008.

31
32
33 **11.3.19.1.3 ROI Urban Population**

34
35 The population of the ROI in 2008 was 57% urban. The largest city, Las Vegas, had an
36 estimated 2008 population of 562,849; other large cities in Clark County include Henderson
37 (253,693) and North Las Vegas (217,975) (Table 11.3.19.1-4). The county also has two smaller
38 cities—Mesquite (16,528) and Boulder City (14,954). A number of unincorporated urban areas
39 in Clark County are not included in the urban population, meaning that the percentage of the
40 county population not living in urban areas is overstated.

41
42 Population growth rates in the ROI have varied over the period 2000 to 2008
43 (Table 11.3.19.1-4). North Las Vegas grew at an annual rate of 8.3% during this period, with
44 higher than average growth also experienced in Mesquite (7.3%) and Henderson (4.7%).
45 Las Vegas (2.1%) experienced a lower growth rate between 2000 and 2008, while Boulder City
46 (0.0%), experienced static growth during this period.

TABLE 11.3.19.1-1 Employment in the ROI for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Location	1999	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999–2008 (%)
Clark County	675,693	922,878	3.2
Nevada	978,969	1,282,012	2.7

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a,b).

TABLE 11.3.19.1-2 Employment in the ROI for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ by Sector, 2006

Industry	Clark County	Percentage of Total
Agriculture ^a	213	0.0
Mining	522	0.1
Construction	100,817	11.6
Manufacturing	25,268	2.9
Transportation and public utilities	38,529	4.4
Wholesale and retail trade	128,498	14.8
Finance, insurance, and real estate	56,347	6.5
Services	516,056	59.6
Other	105	0.0
Total	866,093	

^a Agricultural employment includes 2007 data for hired farmworkers.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a); USDA (2009).

11.3.19.1.4 ROI Urban Income

Median household incomes vary across cities in the ROI. Two cities for which data are available for 2006 to 2008—Henderson (\$67,886), North Las Vegas (\$60,506)—had median incomes in 2006 to 2008 that were higher than the state average (\$56,348), while median incomes in Las Vegas (\$55,113) were slightly lower than the state average (Table 11.3.19.1-4).

Income growth rates between 1999 and 2006 to 2008 were small in North Las Vegas (0.2%), and negative in Henderson (-0.7%) and Las Vegas (-0.3%). The average median household income growth rate for the state as a whole over this period was 0.2%.

**TABLE 11.3.19.1-3 Unemployment Rates (%)
in the ROI for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ**

Location	1999–2008	2008	2009 ^a
Clark County	5.0	6.6	11.8
Nevada	5.0	6.7	11.7

^a Rates for 2009 are the average for January through November.

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a–c).

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TABLE 11.3.19.1-4 Urban Population and Income in the ROI for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

City	Population			Median Household Income (\$ 2008)		
	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000–2008 (%)	1999	2006–2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999 and 2006–2008 (%) ^a
Boulder City	14,966	14,954	0.0	65,049	NA ^b	NA
Henderson	175,381	253,693	4.7	72,035	67,886	–0.7
Las Vegas	478,434	562,849	2.1	56,739	55,113	–0.3
Mesquite	9,389	16,528	7.3	52,005	NA	NA
North Las Vegas	115,488	217,975	8.3	56,299	60,506	0.2

^a Data are averages for the period 2006 to 2008.

^b NA = data not available.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b-d).

3
4

11.3.19.1.5 ROI Population

6

7 Table 11.3.19.1-5 presents recent and projected populations in the ROI and state as a
8 whole. Population in the ROI stood at 1,879,093 in 2008, having grown at an average annual
9 rate of 4.0% since 2000. Growth rates for ROI were higher than the state rate for Nevada (3.4%)
10 over the same period. The ROI population is expected to increase to 2,710,303 by 2021 and to
11 2,791,161 by 2023.

12
13

11.3.19.1.6 ROI Income

15

16 Total personal income in Clark County stood at \$74.1 billion in 2007, having grown at an
17 annual average rate of 5.0% for the period 1998 to 2007 (Table 11.3.19.1-6). Per-capita income

TABLE 11.3.19.1-5 Population of the ROI for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Location	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000–2008 (%)	2021	2023
Clark County	1,375,765	1,879,093	4.0	2,710,303	2,791,161
Nevada	1,998,257	2,615,772	3.4	3,675,890	3,779,745

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009e,f); Nevada State Demographers Office (2008).

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TABLE 11.3.19.1-6 Personal Income in the ROI for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Location	1998	2007	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1998–2007 (%)
Clark County			
Total income ^a	45.7	74.1	5.0
Per-capita income (\$)	36,509	40,307	1.0
Nevada			
Total income ^a	68.9	105.3	4.3
Per-capita income (\$)	37,188	41,022	1.0

^a Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ billion 2008.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce (2009); U.S. Bureau of Census (2009e,f).

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also rose over the same period at an annual rate of 1.0%, increasing from \$36,509 to \$40,307. Personal income growth rates in the ROI were higher than the state rate (4.3%), but per-capita income growth rates in Clark County was the same as in Nevada as a whole (0.8%).

Median household income in the ROI in 2006 to 2008 stood at \$49,615 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009d).

1 **11.3.19.1.7 ROI Housing**

2
3 In 2007, more than 754,000 housing units were located in Clark County
4 (Table 11.3.19.1-7). Owner-occupied units composed about 59% of the occupied units, with
5 rental housing making up 41% of the total. Vacancy rates in 2007 were 12.2% in Clark County.
6 There were 92,144 vacant housing units in the ROI in 2007, of which 37,381 are estimated to be
7 rental units that would be available to construction workers. There were 8,416 units in seasonal,
8 recreational, or occasional use in the ROI at the time of the 2000 Census, with 1.5% of housing
9 units in Clark County used for seasonal or recreational purposes.

10
11 Housing stock in the ROI as a whole grew at an annual rate of 4.3% over the period 2000
12 to 2007, with 194,370 new units added (Table 11.3.19.1-7). The median value of owner-
13 occupied housing in Clark County in 2008 was \$243,150 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009c,d).

14
15 The median value of owner-occupied housing in 2006 to 2008 was \$299,200 in Clark
16 County (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009g).

17
18
19 **11.3.19.1.8 ROI Local Government Organizations**

20
21 The various local and county government organizations in the ROI are listed in
22 Table 11.3.19.1-8. In addition, two Tribal governments are located in the ROI. Members of other
23 Tribal groups also are located in the state, but their Tribal governments are located in adjacent
24 states.

25
26
27 **11.3.19.1.9 ROI Community and Social Services**

28
29 This section describes educational, health-care, law enforcement, and firefighting
30 resources in the ROI.

31
**TABLE 11.3.19.1-7 Housing Characteristics
in the ROI for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ**

Parameter	2000	2007 ^a
Clark County		
Owner-occupied	302,834	393,453
Rental	209,419	268,572
Vacant units	47,546	92,144
Seasonal and recreational use	8,416	NA
Total units	559,799	754,169

^a NA = data not available.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009h-j).

TABLE 11.3.19.1-8 Local Government Organizations and Social Institutions in the ROI for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Governments

City

Boulder City	Mesquite
Henderson	North Las Vegas
Las Vegas	

County

Clark County

Tribal

Las Vegas Tribe of Paiute Indians of the Las Vegas Indian Colony, Nevada
 Moapa Band of Paiute Indians of the Moapa River Indian Reservation, Nevada

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b); U.S. Department of the Interior (2010).

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Schools

In 2007, the ROI had 344 public and private elementary, middle, and high schools (NCES 2009). Table 11.3.19.1-9 provides summary statistics for enrollment and educational staffing and two indices of educational quality—student-teacher ratios and levels of service (number of teachers per 1,000 population). The student-teacher ratio in Clark County schools was 19.0, while the level of service was 8.7.

Health Care

The total number of physicians in Clark County was 4,220, and the level of service was 2.3 physicians per 1,000 population (Table 11.3.19.1-10).

TABLE 11.3.19.1-9 School District Data for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ ROI, 2007

Location	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Student-Teacher Ratio	Level of Service ^a
Clark County	303,448	15,930	19.0	8.7

^a Number of teachers per 1,000 population.

Source: NCES (2009).

18
19

TABLE 11.3.19.1-10 Physicians in the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ ROI, 2007

Location	Number of Primary Care Physicians	Level of Service ^a
Clark County	4,220	2.3

^a Number of physicians per 1,000 population.

Source: AMA (2009).

Public Safety

Several state, county, and local police departments provide law enforcement in the ROI (Table 11.3.19.1-11). Clark County has 3,214 officers and would provide law enforcement services to the SEZ. The level of service of police protection in Clark County is 1.7 officers per 1,000 population. Currently, there are 991 professional firefighters in the ROI (Table 11.3.19.1-11).

11.3.19.1.10 ROI Social Structure and Social Change

Community social structures and other forms of social organization within the ROI are related to various factors, including historical development, major economic activities and sources of employment, income levels, race and ethnicity, and forms of local political organization. Although an analysis of the character of community social structures is beyond the scope of the current programmatic analysis, project-level NEPA analyses would include a description of ROI social structures, contributing factors, their uniqueness, and, consequently, the susceptibility of local communities to various forms of social disruption and social change.

TABLE 11.3.19.1-11 Public Safety Employment in the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ ROI

Location	Number of Police Officers ^a	Level of Service ^b	Number of Firefighters ^c	Level of Service
Clark County	3,214	1.7	991	0.5

^a 2007 data.

^b Number per 1,000 population.

^c 2008 data; number does not include volunteers.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2008); Fire Departments Network (2009).

1 Various energy development studies have suggested that once the annual growth in
 2 population is between 5 and 15% in smaller rural communities, alcoholism, depression, suicide,
 3 social conflict, divorce, and delinquency would increase, and levels of community satisfaction
 4 would deteriorate (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996). Data on violent crime and property crime rates and
 5 on alcoholism and illicit drug use, mental health, and divorce, which might be used as indicators
 6 of social change, are presented in Tables 11.3.19.1-12 and 11.3.2.19.1-13. Violent crime in Clark
 7 County in 2007 stood at 8.0 crimes per 1,000 population (Table 11.3.19.1-12), while property-
 8 related crime rates was 34.5 per 1,000 people, producing an overall crime rate of 42.5 per 1,000.
 9 Data on other measures of social change—alcoholism, illicit drug use, and mental health—are
 10 not available at the county level and thus are presented for the SAMHSA region in which the
 11 ROI is located (Table 11.3.19.1-13).

12
13

TABLE 11.3.19.1-12 Crime Rates^a for the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ ROI

Location	Violent Crime ^b		Property Crime ^c		All Crime	
	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate
Clark County	15,505	8.0	66,905	34.5	82,410	42.5

^a Rates are the number of crimes per 1,000 population.

^b Violent crime includes murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

^c Property crime includes burglary, larceny, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2009a,b).

14
15

TABLE 11.3.19.1-13 Alcoholism, Drug Use, Mental Health, and Divorce in the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ ROI

Location	Alcoholism ^a	Illicit Drug Use ^a	Mental Health ^b	Divorce ^c
Nevada Clark	8.2	2.7	10.5	NA ^d
Nevada				6.5

^a Data for alcoholism and drug use represent percentage of the population over 12 years of age with dependence or abuse of alcohol or illicit drugs. Data are averages for 2004 to 2006.

^b Data for mental health represent percentage of the population over 18 years of age suffering from serious psychological distress. Data are averages for 2002 to 2004.

^c Divorce rates are the number of divorces per 1,000 population. Data are for 2007.

^d NA = data not available.

Sources: SAMHSA (2009); CDC (2009).

1 **11.3.19.1.11 ROI Recreation**

2
3 Various areas in the vicinity of the proposed SEZ are used for recreational activities, with
4 natural, ecological, and cultural resources in the ROI attracting visitors for a range of recreation,
5 including hunting, fishing, boating, canoeing, wildlife watching, camping, hiking, horseback
6 riding, mountain climbing, and sightseeing. These activities are discussed in Section 11.3.5.
7

8 Because data on the number of visitors using state and federal lands for recreational
9 activities are not available from the various administering agencies, the value of recreational
10 resources in these areas, based solely on the number of recorded visitors, is likely to be an
11 underestimation. In addition to visitation rates, the economic valuation of certain natural
12 resources can also be assessed in terms of the potential recreational destination for current and
13 future users, that is, their nonmarket value (see Section 5.17.1.1.1).
14

15 Another method is to estimate the economic impact of the various recreational activities
16 supported by natural resources on public land in the vicinity of the proposed solar development
17 by identifying sectors in the economy in which expenditures on recreational activities occur.
18 Not all activities in these sectors are directly related to recreation on state and federal lands,
19 with some activity occurring on private land (e.g., dude ranches, golf courses, bowling alleys,
20 and movie theaters). Expenditures associated with recreational activities form an important
21 part of the economy of the ROI. In 2007, 241,376 people were employed in the ROI in the
22 various sectors identified as recreational, constituting 26.8% of total ROI employment
23 (Table 11.3.19.1-14). Recreation spending also produced more than \$9,421 million in income
24 in the ROI in 2007. The primary sources of recreation-related employment were hotels and
25 lodging places and eating and drinking places.
26
27

**TABLE 11.3.19.1-14 Recreation Sector Activity in
the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ ROI, 2007**

Sector	Employment (No. People)	Income (\$ million)
Amusement and recreation services	4,614	143.7
Automotive rental	2,902	118.0
Eating and drinking places	107,014	3,209.6
Hotels and lodging places	116,510	5,615.4
Museums and historic sites,	285	17.8
Recreational vehicle parks and campsites	331	9.9
Scenic tours	5,424	220.3
Sporting goods retailers	4,296	86.4
Total ROI	241,376	9,421.1

Source: MIG, Inc. (2010).

28
29

1 **11.3.19.2 Impacts**
2

3 The following analysis of potential socioeconomic impacts from development of solar
4 energy facilities in the proposed SEZ begins with a description of the common impacts of
5 solar development, including common impacts on recreation and on social change. These
6 impacts would occur regardless of the solar technology developed in the SEZ. The impacts
7 of developments employing various solar energy technologies are analyzed in detail in
8 subsequent sections.
9

10 **11.3.19.2.1 Common Impacts**
11

12 Construction and operation of solar energy facilities at the proposed SEZ would produce
13 direct and indirect economic impacts. Direct impacts would occur as a result of expenditures on
14 wages and salaries, procurement of goods and services required for project construction and
15 operation, and the collection of state sales and income taxes. Indirect impacts would occur as
16 project wages and salaries, procurement expenditures, and tax revenues subsequently circulate
17 through the economy of each state, thereby creating additional employment, income, and tax
18 revenues. Facility construction and operation would also require in-migration of workers and
19 their families into the ROI surrounding the site, which would affect population, rental housing,
20 health service employment, and public safety employment. Socioeconomic impacts common to
21 all utility-scale solar energy developments are discussed in detail in Section 5.17. These impacts
22 will be minimized through the implementation of programmatic design features described in
23 Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
24
25

26 **Recreation Impacts**
27

28 Estimating the impact of solar facilities on recreation is problematic because it is not
29 clear how solar development in the proposed SEZ would affect recreational visitation and
30 nonmarket values (i.e., the value of recreational resources for potential or future visits; see
31 Section 5.17.1.2.3). While it is clear that some land in the ROI would no longer be accessible
32 for recreation, the majority of popular recreational locations would be precluded from solar
33 development. It is also possible that solar development in the ROI would be visible from popular
34 recreation locations, and that construction workers residing temporarily in the ROI would occupy
35 accommodations otherwise used for recreational visits, thus reducing visitation and consequently
36 affecting the economy of the ROI.
37
38

39 **Social Change**
40

41 Although an extensive literature in sociology documents the most significant components
42 of social change in energy boomtowns, the nature and magnitude of the social impact of energy
43 developments in small rural communities are still unclear (see Section 5.17.1.1.4). While some
44 degree of social disruption is likely to accompany large-scale in-migration during the boom
45 phase, there is insufficient evidence to predict the extent to which specific communities are
46

1 likely to be affected, which population groups within each community are likely to be most
2 affected, and the extent to which social disruption is likely to persist beyond the end of the boom
3 period (Smith et al. 2001). Accordingly, because of the lack of adequate social baseline data, it
4 has been suggested that social disruption is likely to occur once an arbitrary population growth
5 rate associated with solar energy development projects has been reached, with an annual rate of
6 between 5 and 10% growth in population assumed to result in a breakdown in social structures
7 and a consequent increase in alcoholism, depression, suicide, social conflict, divorce,
8 delinquency, and deterioration in levels of community satisfaction (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996).

9
10 In overall terms, the in-migration of workers and their families into the ROI would
11 represent an increase of 0.1% in county population during construction of the solar trough
12 technology, with smaller increases for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies,
13 and during the operation of each technology. While it is possible that some construction and
14 operations workers would choose to locate in communities closer to the SEZ, the lack of
15 available housing in smaller rural communities in the ROI to accommodate all in-migrating
16 workers and families and the insufficient range of housing choices to suit all solar occupations,
17 many workers are likely to commute to the SEZ from larger communities elsewhere in the ROI,
18 thereby reducing the potential impact of solar developments on social change. Regardless of the
19 pace of population growth associated with the commercial development of solar resources and
20 the likely residential location of in-migrating workers and families in communities some distance
21 from the SEZ itself, the number of new residents from outside the ROI is likely to lead to some
22 demographic and social change in small rural communities in the ROI. Communities hosting
23 solar developments are likely to be required to adapt to a different quality of life, with a
24 transition away from a more traditional lifestyle involving ranching and taking place in small,
25 isolated, close-knit, homogenous communities with a strong orientation toward personal and
26 family relationships, toward a more urban lifestyle, with increasing cultural and ethnic diversity
27 and increasing dependence on formal social relationships within the community.

28 29 30 ***11.3.19.2.2 Technology-Specific Impacts***

31
32 The economic impacts of solar energy development in the proposed SEZ were measured
33 in terms of employment, income, state tax revenues (sales), BLM acreage rental and capacity
34 payments, population in-migration, housing, and community service employment (education,
35 health, and public safety). More information on the data and methods used in the analysis are
36 provided in Appendix M.

37
38 The assessment of the impact of the construction and operation of each technology was
39 based on SEZ acreage, assuming 80% of the area could be developed. To capture a range of
40 possible impacts, solar facility size was estimated on the basis of the land requirements of
41 various solar technologies, assuming that 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) would be required for
42 power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies, and 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) would be
43 required for the solar trough technology. Impacts of multiple facilities employing a given
44 technology at each SEZ were assumed to be the same as impacts for a single facility with the
45 same total capacity. Construction impacts were assessed for a representative peak year of
46 construction, assumed to be 2021 for each technology. Construction impacts assumed that a

1 maximum of two projects could be constructed within a given year, with a corresponding
2 maximum land disturbance of up to 6,000 acres (24 km²). For operations impacts, a
3 representative first year of operations was assumed to be 2023 for trough and power tower,
4 2022 for the minimum facility size for dish engine and PV, and 2023 for the maximum facility
5 size for these technologies. The years of construction and operations were selected as
6 representative of the entire 20-year study period because they are the approximate midpoint;
7 construction and operations could begin earlier.
8
9

10 **Solar Trough**

11
12

13 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
14 and indirect impacts) from the use of solar trough technologies would be up to 5,842 jobs
15 (Table 11.3.19.2-1). Construction activities would constitute 0.4% of total ROI employment.
16 A solar facility would also produce \$361.5 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
17 \$2.4 million.
18

19 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
20 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
21 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
22 1,486 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
23 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
24 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) in the ROI mean that the impact of
25 solar facility construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to
26 be large, with 743 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would
27 represent 1.3% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
28

29 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
30 community service employment (education, health, and public safety). An increase in such
31 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
32 13 new teachers, 3 physicians, and 3 public safety employee (career firefighters and uniformed
33 police officers) would be required in the ROI. These increases would represent less than 0.1%
34 of total ROI employment expected in these occupations.
35
36

37 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
38 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using solar trough technologies would be 822 jobs
39 (Table 11.3.19.2-1). Such a solar facility would also produce \$31.1 million in income.
40 Direct sales taxes would be \$0.3 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar
41 Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), acreage rental payments would be \$2.9 million,
42 and solar generating capacity payments would total at least \$16.5 million.
43

44 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
45 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
46 from outside the ROI would be required, with 70 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although

**TABLE 11.3.19.2-1 Socioeconomic Impacts in the ROI
Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ
with Trough Facilities^a**

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	3,488	547
Total	5,842	822
Income ^b		
Total	361.5	31.1
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	2.4	0.3
BLM payments ^b		
Rental	NA ^c	2.9
Capacity ^d	NA	16.5
In-migrants (no.)	1,486	70
Vacant housing ^e (no.)	743	63
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	13	1
Physicians (no.)	3	0
Public safety (no.)	3	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 1,200 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 2,510 MW..

^b Unless otherwise indicated, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c NA = not applicable.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

^e Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

1 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
2 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
3 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
4 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 63 owner-occupied units expected to be
5 occupied in the ROI.
6

7 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
8 community service (health, education, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
9 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the provision of these
10 services in the ROI. Accordingly, one new teacher would be required in the ROI.
11

12 **Power Tower**

13
14
15
16 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
17 and indirect impacts) from the use of power tower technologies would be up to 2,327 jobs
18 (Table 11.3.19.2-2). Construction activities would constitute 0.2% of total ROI employment.
19 Such a solar facility would also produce \$144.0 million in income. Direct sales taxes would
20 be \$0.9 million.
21

22 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
23 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
24 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
25 592 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
26 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
27 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
28 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
29 with 296 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
30 0.5% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
31

32 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
33 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
34 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
35 five new teachers, one physician, and one public safety employee would be required in the
36 ROI. These increases would represent less than 0.1% of total ROI employment expected in
37 these occupations.
38

39
40 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
41 indirect impacts) of a build-out using power tower technologies would be 376 jobs
42 (Table 11.3.19.2-2). Such a solar facility would also produce \$13.0 million in income. Direct
43 sales taxes would be less than \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar
44 Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), acreage rental payments would be \$2.9 million,
45 and solar generating capacity payments would total at least \$9.2 million.
46

TABLE 11.3.19.2-2 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ with Power Tower Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	1,389	282
Total	2,327	376
Income ^b		
Total	144.0	13.0
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.9	<0.1
BLM payments ^b		
Rental	NA ^c	2.9
Capacity ^d	NA	9.2
In-migrants (no.)	592	36
Vacant housing ^e (no.)	296	32
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	5	0
Physicians (no.)	1	0
Public safety (no.)	1	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 667 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 1,395 MW.

^b Unless otherwise indicated, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c NA = not applicable.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

^e Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

1 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
2 operation of a solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their families from
3 outside the ROI would be required, with 36 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
4 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
5 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels and mobile home
6 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
7 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 32 owner-occupied units expected to be
8 required in the ROI.

9
10 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
11 service in the ROI.

12 13 14 **Dish Engine**

15
16
17 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
18 and indirect impacts) from the use of dish engine technologies would be up to 946 jobs
19 (Table 11.3.19.2-3). Construction activities would provide 0.1% of total ROI employment.
20 Such a solar facility would also produce \$58.5 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
21 \$0.4 million.

22
23 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
24 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
25 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
26 241 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
27 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
28 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
29 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
30 with 120 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
31 0.2% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

32
33 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
34 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
35 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly, two
36 new teachers, one physician, and one public safety employee would be required in the ROI.
37 These increases would represent less than 0.1% of total ROI employment expected in these
38 occupations.

39
40
41 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
42 indirect impacts) of a build-out using dish engine technologies would be 366 jobs
43 (Table 11.3.19.2-3). Such a solar facility would also produce \$12.6 million in income. Direct
44 sales taxes would be less than \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar
45 Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), acreage rental payments would be \$2.9 million,
46 and solar generating capacity payments would total at least \$9.2 million.

TABLE 11.3.19.2-3 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ with Dish Engine Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	565	274
Total	946	366
Income ^b		
Total	58.5	12.6
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.4	<0.1
BLM payments ^b		
Rental	NA ^c	2.9
Capacity ^d	NA	9.2
In-migrants (no.)	241	35
Vacant housing ^e (no.)	120	31
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	2	0
Physicians (no.)	1	0
Public safety (no.)	1	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 667 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 1,395 MW.

^b Unless otherwise indicated, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c NA = not applicable.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

^e Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

1
2

1 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
2 operation of a dish engine solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their
3 families from outside the ROI would be required, with 35 persons in-migrating into the ROI.
4 Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number
5 of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile
6 home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-
7 occupied housing units would not be expected to be large, with 31 owner-occupied units
8 expected to be required in the ROI.

9
10 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
11 service in the ROI.

12 13 14 **Photovoltaic**

15
16
17 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
18 indirect impacts) from the use of PV technologies would be up to 441 jobs (Table 11.3.19.2-4).
19 Construction activities would constitute less than 0.1 % of total ROI employment. Such a solar
20 development would also produce \$27.3 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
21 \$0.2 million.

22
23 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability in
24 the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
25 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
26 112 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
27 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
28 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
29 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
30 with 56 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
31 0.1% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

32
33 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
34 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
35 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
36 one new teacher would be required in the ROI. This increase would represent less than 0.1%
37 of total ROI employment expected in this occupation.

38
39
40 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
41 indirect impacts) of a build-out using PV technologies would be 36 jobs (Table 11.3.19.2-4).
42 Such a solar facility would also produce \$1.3 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
43 less than \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental
44 Policy (BLM 2010c), acreage rental payments would be \$2.9 million, and solar generating
45 capacity payments would total at least \$7.3 million.

TABLE 11.3.19.2-4 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ with PV Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	263	27
Total	441	36
Income ^b		
Total	27.3	1.3
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.2	<0.1
BLM payments ^b		
Rental	NA ^c	2.9
Capacity ^d	NA	7.3
In-migrants (no.)	112	3
Vacant housing ^e (no.)	56	3
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	1	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	0	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 667 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 1,395 MW.

^b Unless otherwise indicated, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c NA = not applicable.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

^e Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

1 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
2 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
3 from outside the ROI would be required, with 3 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
4 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
5 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
6 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
7 housing units would not be expected to be large, with three owner-occupied units expected to be
8 required in the ROI.

9
10 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
11 service in the ROI.

12 13 14 **11.3.19.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

15
16 No SEZ-specific design features addressing socioeconomic impacts have been identified
17 for the Dry Lake SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
18 Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program would reduce the potential for
19 socioeconomic impacts during all project phases.

1 **11.3.20 Environmental Justice**

2
3
4 **11.3.20.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 On February 11, 1994, the President signed Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to
7 Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” which
8 formally requires federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice as part of their missions
9 (*Federal Register*, Volume 59, page 7629, Feb. 11, 1994). Specifically, it directs them to
10 address, as appropriate, any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental
11 effects of their actions, programs, or policies on minority and low-income populations.

12
13 The analysis of the impacts of solar energy projects on environmental justice issues
14 follows guidelines described in the CEQ’s *Environmental Justice Guidance under the National*
15 *Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997). The analysis method has three parts: (1) a description is
16 undertaken of the geographic distribution of low-income and minority populations in the affected
17 area is undertaken; (2) an assessment is conducted to determine whether construction and
18 operation would produce impacts that are high and adverse; and (3) if impacts are high and
19 adverse, a determination is made as to whether these impacts disproportionately affect minority
20 and low-income populations.

21
22 Construction and operation of solar energy projects in the proposed SEZ could affect
23 environmental justice if any adverse health and environmental impacts resulting from either
24 phase of development are significantly high and if these impacts disproportionately affect
25 minority and low-income populations. If the analysis determines that health and environmental
26 impacts are not significant, there can be no disproportionate impacts on minority and low-income
27 populations. In the event impacts are significant, disproportionality would be determined by
28 comparing the proximity of any high and adverse impacts with the location of low-income and
29 minority populations.

30
31 The analysis of environmental justice issues associated with the development of solar
32 facilities considered impacts within the SEZ and within a 50-mi (80-km) radius around the
33 boundary of the SEZ. A description of the geographic distribution of minority and low-income
34 groups in the affected area was based on demographic data from the 2000 Census (U.S. Bureau
35 of the Census 2009k,1). The following definitions were used to define minority and low-income
36 population groups:

- 37
38 • **Minority.** Persons who identify themselves as belonging to any of the
39 following racial groups: (1) Hispanic, (2) Black (not of Hispanic origin) or
40 African American, (3) American Indian or Alaska Native, (4) Asian, or
41 (5) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

42
43 Beginning with the 2000 Census, where appropriate, the census form allows
44 individuals to designate multiple population group categories to reflect their
45 ethnic or racial origin. In addition, persons who classify themselves as being
46 of multiple racial origin may choose up to six racial groups as the basis of

1 their racial origins. The term minority includes all persons, including those
2 classifying themselves in multiple racial categories, except those who classify
3 themselves as not of Hispanic origin and as White or “Other Race”
4 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009k).

5
6 The CEQ guidance proposed that minority populations should be identified
7 where either (1) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50% or
8 (2) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully
9 greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or
10 other appropriate unit of geographic analysis.

11
12 This PEIS applies both criteria in using the Census data for census block
13 groups, wherein consideration is given to the minority population that is both
14 greater than 50% and 20 percentage points higher than in the state (the
15 reference geographic unit).

- 16
17 • **Low-Income.** Individuals who fall below the poverty line. The poverty line
18 takes into account family size and age of individuals in the family. In 1999,
19 for example, the poverty line for a family of five with three children below
20 the age of 18 was \$19,882. For any given family below the poverty line, all
21 family members are considered as being below the poverty line for the
22 purposes of analysis (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009I).

23
24 The data in Table 11.3.20.1-1 show the minority and low-income composition of the
25 total population located in the proposed SEZ based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines.
26 Individuals identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino are included in the table as a separate
27 entry. However, because Hispanics can be of any race, this number also includes individuals
28 identifying themselves as being part of one or more of the population groups listed in the table.

29
30 A large number of minority and low-income individuals are located in the 50-mi (80-km)
31 area around the boundary of the SEZ. Within the 50-mi (80-km) radius in Arizona, 13.4% of the
32 population is classified as minority, while 13.9% is classified as low-income. However, the
33 number of minority individuals does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area, and the
34 number of minority individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or
35 more; thus, in aggregate, there is no minority population in the Arizona portion of the SEZ area
36 based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines. The number of low-income individuals does not
37 exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more and does not exceed 50% of the total
38 population in the area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the Arizona
39 portion of the SEZ.

40
41 In the Nevada portion of the 50-mi (80-km) radius, 39.8% of the population is classified
42 as minority, while 10.8% is classified as low-income. The number of minority individuals does
43 not exceed 50% of the total population in the area, and the number of minority individuals does
44 not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more. Thus, in aggregate, there is no
45 minority population in the Nevada portion of the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ
46 guidelines. The number of low-income individuals does not exceed the state average by

TABLE 11.3.20.1-1 Minority and Low-Income Populations within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius Surrounding the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Parameter	Arizona	Nevada
Total population	6,138	1,370,970
White, non-Hispanic	5,315	824,859
Hispanic or Latino	588	301,519
Non-Hispanic or Latino minorities	235	244,592
One race	165	207,962
Black or African American	35	121,226
American Indian or Alaskan Native	82	7,766
Asian	25	71,078
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	12	5,855
Some other race	11	2,037
Two or more races	70	36,630
Total minority	823	546,111
Low-income	987	145,576
Percentage minority	13.4	39.8
State percentage minority	36.2	34.8
Percentage low-income	16.1	10.8
State percentage low-income	13.9	10.5

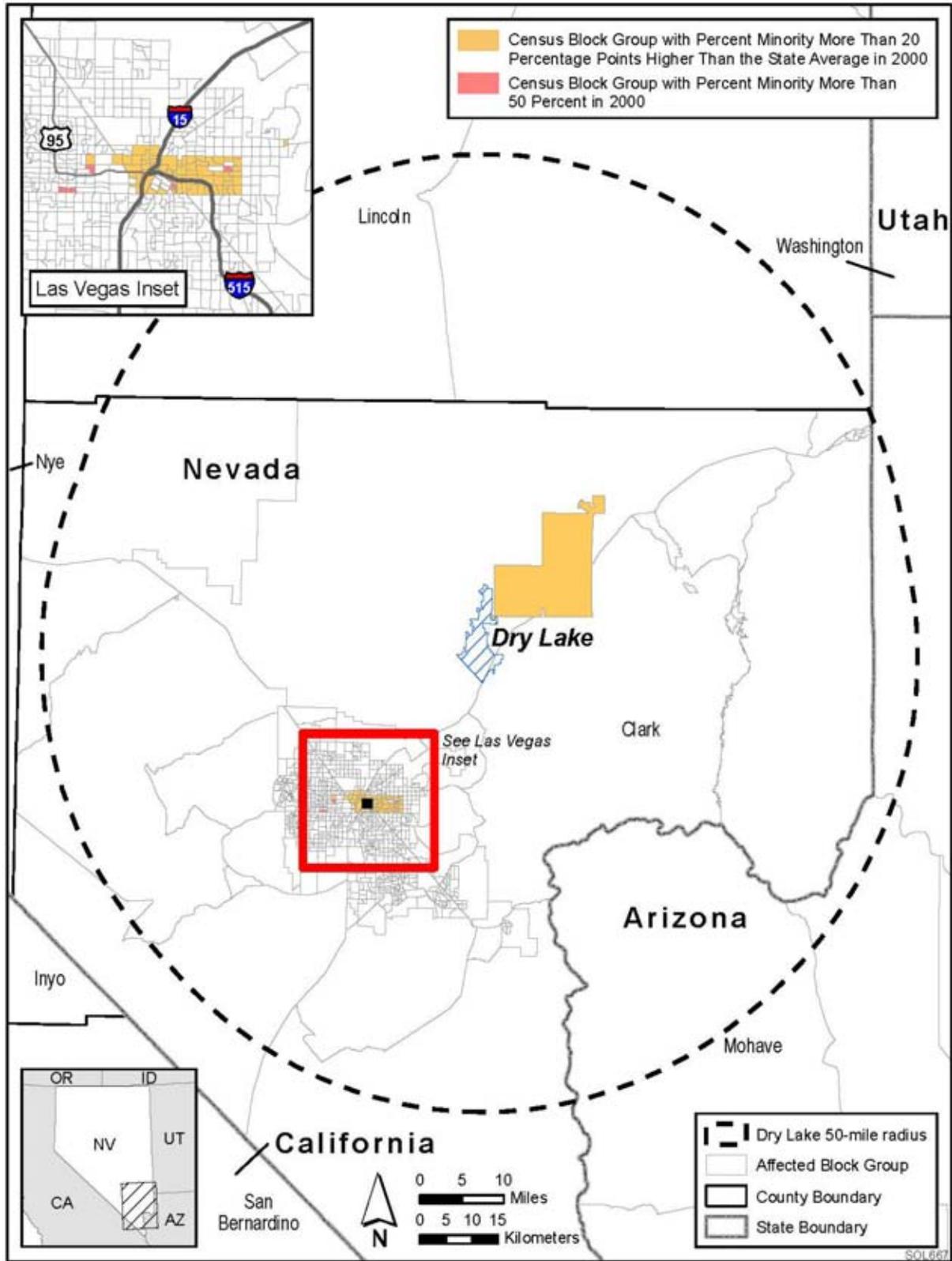
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009k,l).

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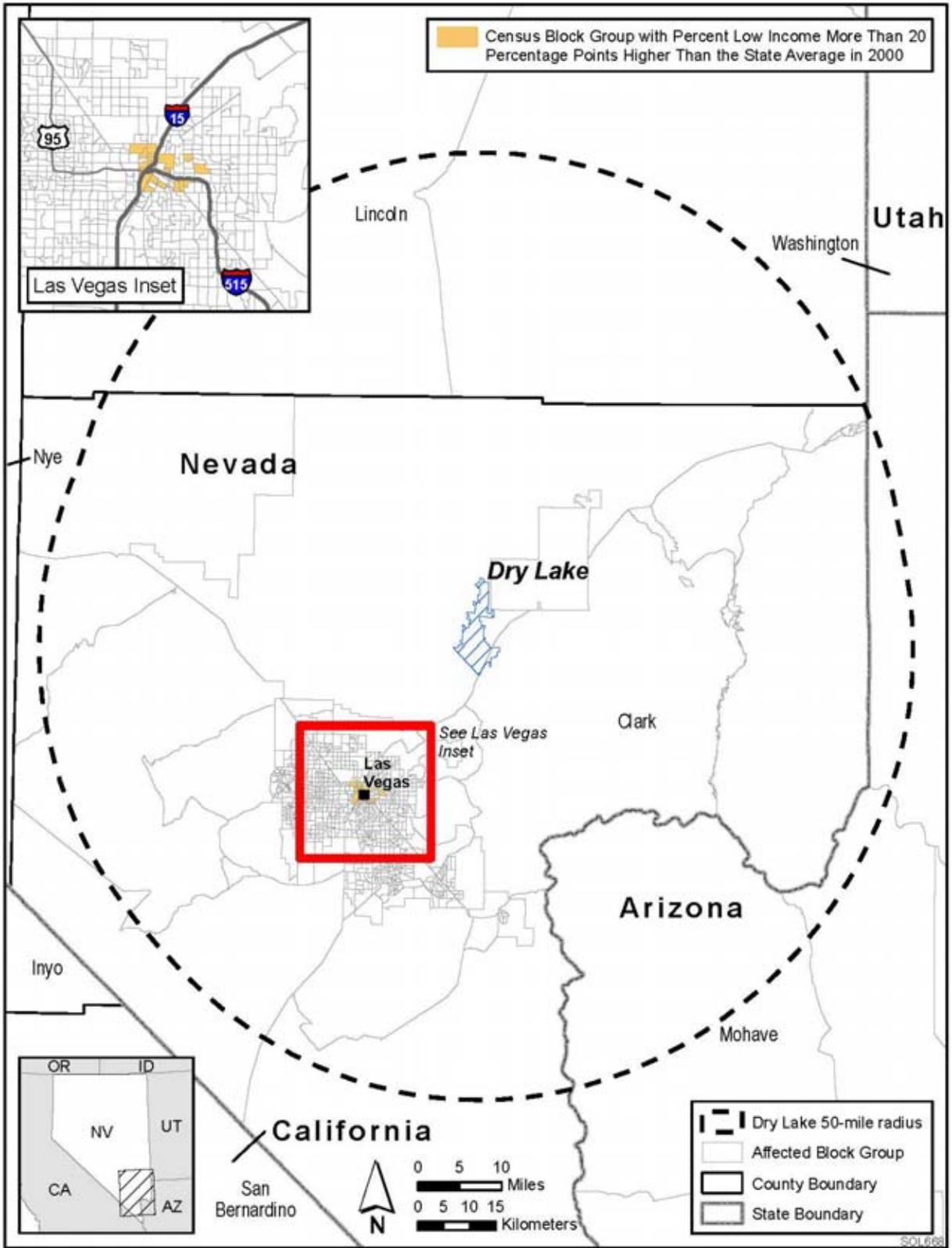
20 percentage points or more and does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the Nevada portion of the SEZ.

Figures 11.3.20.1-1 and 11.3.20.1-2 show the locations of minority and low-income population groups, respectively, within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ.

Within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the SEZ, more than 50% of the population is classified as minority in block groups located in the city of Las Vegas, in the downtown area, and east of downtown. Block groups with minority populations more than 20 percentage points higher than the state average located in the city of Las Vegas, to the west of the downtown area, and in one block group to the northeast of the city, associated with the Moapa River Indian Reservation.



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.3.20.1-1 Minority Population Groups within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius Surrounding**
 3 **the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ**



1

2 **FIGURE 11.3.20.1-2 Low-Income Population Groups within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius**
 3 **Surrounding the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ**

1 Census block groups within the 50-mi (80-km) radius where the low-income population
2 is more than 20 percentage points higher than the state average are located in the city of
3 Las Vegas, in the downtown area.
4

6 **11.3.20.2 Impacts**

7
8 Environmental justice concerns common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities are
9 described in detail in Section 5.18. These impacts will be minimized through the implementation
10 of the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, which address the
11 underlying environmental impacts contributing to the concerns. The potentially relevant
12 environmental impacts associated with solar facilities within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ include
13 noise and dust during the construction; noise and EMF effects associated with operations; visual
14 impacts of solar generation and auxiliary facilities, including transmission lines; access to land
15 used for economic, cultural, or religious purposes; and effects on property values as areas of
16 concern that might potentially affect minority and low-income populations.
17

18 Potential impacts on low-income and minority populations could be incurred as a result
19 of the construction and operation of solar facilities involving each of the four technologies.
20 Although impacts are likely to be small, there are minority populations defined by CEQ
21 guidelines (Section 11.3.20.1) within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ;
22 this means that any adverse impacts of solar projects could disproportionately affect minority
23 populations. Because there are low-income populations within the 50-mi (80-km) radius, there
24 could also be impacts on low-income populations.
25

26 **11.3.20.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

27
28
29 No SEZ-specific design features addressing environmental justice impacts have been
30 identified for the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features
31 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program would
32 reduce the potential for environmental justice impacts during all project phases.
33
34

1 **11.3.21 Transportation**
2

3 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is accessible by road and by rail. One interstate highway
4 and one U.S. highway serve the immediate area, as does a major railroad. A major airport also
5 serves the area, along with several smaller airports. General transportation considerations and
6 impacts are discussed in Sections 3.4 and 5.19, respectively.
7

8
9 **11.3.21.1 Affected Environment**
10

11 Interstate 15 (I-15) passes through the southeastern portion of the proposed Dry Lake
12 SEZ, running southwest–northeast, as shown in Figure 11.3.21.1-1. The Las Vegas metropolitan
13 area is approximately 15 mi (24 km) southwest of the SEZ along I-15. In the opposite direction,
14 Salt Lake City is approximately 400 mi (644 km) away along I-15. State Route 604 (North Las
15 Vegas Boulevard) runs parallel to I-15 along the southeast edge of the SEZ. Going south,
16 U.S. 93 joins I-15 at the southern tip of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Traveling to the northwest
17 from I-15, U.S. 93 borders the southwestern edge of the SEZ before it heads in a more northerly
18 direction after passing the SEZ. Several local unimproved dirt roads cross the SEZ. OHV use in
19 the SEZ and surrounding area has been designated as “Limited to existing roads, trails, and dry
20 washes” (BLM 2010b). As listed in Table 11.3.21.1-1, I-15 and U.S. 93 carry average traffic
21 volumes of about 20,000 and 1,900 vehicles per day, respectively, in the vicinity of the Dry Lake
22 SEZ (NV DOT 2010).
23

24 The UP Railroad serves the region. The main line passes through Las Vegas on its way
25 from Los Angeles to Salt Lake City. The railroad passes the southeastern border of the Dry Lake
26 SEZ about 15 mi (24 km) northeast of Las Vegas. The nearest rail access is in Las Vegas, and
27 additional access is available in Moapa, approximately 24 mi (39 km) to the northeast of the
28 SEZ.
29

30 Nellis Air Force Base, available only to military aircraft, is the nearest airport. It is
31 located approximately 13 mi (21 km) southwest of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Nellis Air Force
32 Base is one of the largest fighter bases in the world and is involved in conducting advanced
33 fighter training. Operations occur over the Nevada Test and Training Range, which offers
34 3 million acres (12,173 km²) of restricted land, more than 50 mi (80 km) northwest of the SEZ
35 (U.S. Air Force 2010).
36

37 The nearest public airport is the North Las Vegas Airport, a regional airport about a
38 21 mi (34 km) drive southwest of the SEZ. The airport does not have scheduled commercial
39 passenger service, but caters to smaller private and business aircraft (Clark County Department
40 of Aviation 2010a). In 2008, 22,643 and 23,950 passengers arrived at and departed from North
41 Las Vegas Airport, respectively (BTS 2009). Farther to the south, in Las Vegas, McCarran
42 International Airport is served by all major U.S. airlines. In 2008, 20.43 million and
43 20.48 million passengers arrived at and departed from McCarran International Airport,
44 respectively (BTS 2009). About 83.2 million lb (37.7 million kg) of freight departed and
45 117 million lb (53.2 million kg) arrived at McCarran in 2008 (BTS 2009).
46



FIGURE 11.3.21.1-1 Local Transportation Serving the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

1

2

TABLE 11.3.21.1-1 AADT on Major Roads near the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ for 2009

Road	General Direction	Location	AADT
I-15	Southwest–northeast	North of Speedway Blvd. (exit 54)	20,000
		North of State Route 604 (exit 58)	24,000
		Between Valley of Fire Highway (exit 75) and Ute interchange (exit 80)	18,000
U.S. 93	North–south	North of I-15 junction (I-15 exit 64)	2,300
State Route 604	Southwest–northeast	North of Nellis Air Force Base Main Gate	14,000
		South of I-15 interchange	2,000
Valley of Fire Highway	East–west	5 mi (8 km) east of I-15 junction (I-15 exit 75)	510

Source: NV DOT (2010).

1 In addition to the North Las Vegas and McCarran International Airports, there are five
2 small airports in the region, all within approximately a 55 mi (89 km) drive of the proposed Dry
3 Lake SEZ, as listed in Table 11.3.21.1-2. None of these airports have scheduled commercial
4 passenger service. Similarly to North Las Vegas Airport, Henderson Executive Airport caters to
5 smaller private and business aircraft (Clark County Department of Aviation 2010b) as Clark
6 County works to reduce congestion at McCarran International Airport. Boulder City Municipal
7 Airport, southeast of Las Vegas, is home to planes that provide sightseeing air tours of the Grand
8 Canyon and nearby areas (City of Boulder 2010).

11 11.3.21.2 Impacts

12
13 As discussed in Section 5.19, the primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be
14 from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day,
15 with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum) or possibly 4,000 vehicle trips per day
16 if two large projects were developed at the same time. The volume of traffic on I-15 would
17 represent an increase in traffic of about 10 or 20% in the area of the SEZ for one or two projects,
18 respectively. Such traffic levels would represent a 100 to 200% increase of the traffic level
19 experienced on U.S. 93 north of its junction with I-15 if all project traffic were routed through
20 U.S. 93. Because higher traffic volumes would be experienced during shift changes, traffic on
21 I-15 could experience minor slowdowns during these time periods near exits in the vicinity of the
22 SEZ where projects are located. Local road improvements would be necessary in the vicinity of
23 exits off I-15 or on any portion of U.S. 93 that might be developed so as not to overwhelm the
24 local access roads near any site access point(s).

25
26 Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes
27 designated open and available for public use. If there are any designated as open within the
28 proposed SEZ, open routes crossing areas issued ROWs for solar facilities would be
29 re-designated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for more details on how routes coinciding with
30 proposed solar facilities would be treated).

31 32 33 11.3.21.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness

34
35 No SEZ-specific design features have been identified related to impacts on transportation
36 systems around the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. The programmatic design features described in
37 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, including local road improvements, multiple site access locations,
38 staggered work schedules, and ride-sharing, would all provide some relief to traffic congestion
39 on local roads leading to the site. Depending on the location of solar facilities within the SEZ,
40 more specific access locations and local road improvements could be implemented.

TABLE 11.3.21.1-2 Airports Open to the Public in the Vicinity of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Airport	Location	Owner/Operator	Runway 1 ^a			Runway 2 ^a		
			Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition	Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition
Boulder City Municipal	Southeast of Las Vegas, near U.S. 93, approximately a 47-mi (76-km) drive from the SEZ	Boulder City	3,850 (1,173)	Asphalt	Good	4,800 (1,463)	Asphalt	Good
Echo Bay	South-southeast of the SEZ by Lake Mead, a 50-mi (80-km) drive, northeast on I-15 to Valley of Fire Highway (State Route 169), south on State Route 167	Lake Mead National Recreational Area	3,400 (1,036)	Asphalt	Good	– ^b	–	–
Henderson Executive	South of Las Vegas, about a 40-mi (64-km) drive from the SEZ	Clark County	5,001 (1,524)	Asphalt	Excellent	6,501 (1,982)	Asphalt	Excellent
North Las Vegas	Near I-15 in North Las Vegas, a 21-mi (34-km) drive from the SEZ	Clark County	4,202 (1,281)	Asphalt	Good	5,000 (1,524)	Asphalt	Good
			5,004 (1,525)	Asphalt	Good	–	–	–
McCarran International	Off I-15 in Las Vegas, about 29 mi (47 km)	Clark County	8,985 (2,739)	Concrete	Good	9,775 (2,979)	Concrete	Good
			10,526 (3,208)	Asphalt	Good	14,510 (4,423)	Asphalt	Good
			6,196 (1,889)	Asphalt	Good	7,161 (2,183)	Asphalt	Good
Mesquite	Near I-15, 55 mi (88 km) northeast on I-15	City of Mesquite	5,121 (1,561)	Asphalt	Good	–	–	–

TABLE 11.3.21.1-2 (Cont.)

Airport	Location	Owner/Operator	Runway 1 ^a			Runway 2 ^a		
			Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition	Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition
Perkins Field	I-15 northeast to State Route 169, south on State Route 169, 36 mi (58 km)	Clark County	4,800 (1,463)	Asphalt	Good	–	–	–

^a Source: FAA (2010).

^b A dash indicates not applicable.

1 **11.3.22 Cumulative Impacts**
2

3 The analysis presented in this section addresses the potential cumulative impacts in the
4 vicinity of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ in Clark County, Nevada. The CEQ guidelines for
5 implementing NEPA define cumulative impacts as environmental impacts resulting from the
6 incremental impacts of an action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable
7 future actions (40 CFR 1508.7). The impacts of other actions are considered without regard to
8 the agency (federal or nonfederal), organization, or person that undertakes them. The time frame
9 of this cumulative impacts assessment could appropriately include activities that would occur up
10 to 20 years in the future (the general time frame for PEIS analyses), but little or no information is
11 available for projects that could occur farther than 5 to 10 years in the future.
12

13 The Dry Lake SEZ is located 20 mi (32 km) northeast of downtown Las Vegas, Nevada,
14 and north of the intersection of I-15 and U.S. 93. The Apex Industrial Park, which already
15 contains two electric generating stations, is located here. The Moapa Valley National Wildlife
16 Refuge is located 10 mi (16 km) north of the SEZ; the Desert National Wildlife Range is located
17 2 mi (3 km) west of the SEZ; the Lake Mead National Recreation Area is about 25 mi (40 km) to
18 the east and south of the SEZ; Valley of Fire State Park is located 15 mi (24 km) east of the SEZ;
19 Grand Canyon–Parashant National Monument in Arizona is 45 mi (72 km) east of the SEZ; and
20 Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area is 30 mi (48 km) west of the SEZ. The Arrow
21 Canyon WA is located just north of the SEZ. Three other WAs are within 50 mi (80 km) of the
22 SEZ. The BLM administers approximately 68% of the lands in the Southern Nevada District that
23 contains the Dry Lake SEZ. In addition, the Delamar Valley SEZ is located about 51 mi (82 km)
24 north of the Dry Lake SEZ and the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located about 40 mi
25 (64 km) northeast; for some resources, the geographic extents of impacts from multiple SEZs
26 overlap.
27

28
29 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
30 resources near the Dry Lake SEZ is identified in Section 11.3.22.1. An overview of ongoing and
31 reasonably foreseeable future actions is presented in Section 11.3.22.2. General trends in
32 population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate change are discussed in
33 Section 11.3.22.3. Cumulative impacts for each resource area are discussed in Section 11.3.22.4.
34
35

36 **11.3.22.1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis**
37

38 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
39 resources evaluated near the Dry Lake SEZ is provided in Table 11.3.22.1-1. These geographic
40 areas define the boundaries encompassing potentially affected resources. Their extent may vary
41 based on the nature of the resource being evaluated and the distance at which an impact may
42 occur (thus, for example, the evaluation of air quality may have a greater regional extent of
43 impact than visual resources). The BLM, the USFWS, the NPS, and the Department of Defense
44 administer most of the land around the SEZ; there are also some nearby Tribal lands at the
45 Moapa River Reservation adjacent to the northeast boundary of the SEZ. The BLM administers
46 approximately 45.4% of the lands within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ.

TABLE 11.3.22.1-1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis by Resource Area: Proposed Dry Lake SEZ

Resource Area	Geographic Extent
Land Use	North Central Clark County
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Dry Lake SEZ
Rangeland Resources	North Central Clark County
Grazing	Grazing allotments within 5 mi (8 km) of the Dry Lake SEZ
Wild Horses and Burros	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the Center of the Dry Lake SEZ
Recreation	North Central Clark County
Military and Civilian Aviation	North Clark County, southwest Lincoln County, and central Nye County
Soil Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Dry Lake SEZ
Minerals	North Central Clark County
Water Resources	
Surface Water	Dry Lake and ephemeral wash tributaries to Dry Lake
Groundwater	Garnet Valley, Hidden Valley, and Coyote Spring Valley groundwater basins; central and lower portions of the regional groundwater flow system
Air Quality and Climate	A 31-mi (50-km) radius from the center of the Dry Lake SEZ
Vegetation, Wildlife and Aquatic Biota, Special Status Species	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Dry Lake SEZ, including portions of Clark and Lincoln Counties in Nevada, Washington County in Utah, and Mohave County in Arizona
Visual Resources	Viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Dry Lake SEZ
Acoustic Environment (noise)	Areas adjacent to the Dry Lake SEZ
Paleontological Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Dry Lake SEZ
Cultural Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Dry Lake SEZ for archaeological sites; viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Dry Lake SEZ for other properties, such as traditional cultural properties
Native American Concerns	Areas within and adjacent to the Dry Lake SEZ; viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Dry Lake SEZ
Socioeconomics	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Dry Lake SEZ
Environmental Justice	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Dry Lake SEZ
Transportation	I-15, U.S. 93

1 **11.3.22.2 Overview of Ongoing and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions**
2

3 The future actions described below are those that are “reasonably foreseeable;” that is,
4 they have already occurred, are ongoing, are funded for future implementation, or are included
5 in firm near-term plans. Types of proposals with firm near-term plans are as follows:
6

- 7 • Proposals for which NEPA documents are in preparation or finalized;
- 8
- 9 • Proposals in a detailed design phase;
- 10
- 11 • Proposals listed in formal NOIs published in the *Federal Register* or state
12 publications;
- 13
- 14 • Proposals for which enabling legislations has been passed; and
- 15
- 16 • Proposals that have been submitted to federal, state, or county regulators to
17 begin a permitting process.
- 18

19 Projects in the bidding or research phase or that have been put on hold were not included in the
20 cumulative impact analysis.
21

22 The ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions described below are grouped
23 into two categories: (1) actions that relate to energy production and distribution, including
24 potential solar energy projects under the proposed action (Section 11.3.22.2.1); and (2) other
25 ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions, including those related to electric power generation,
26 water management, natural gas and petroleum distribution, communication systems, residential
27 development, and mining (Section 11.3.22.2.2). Together, these actions and trends have the
28 potential to affect human and environmental receptors within the geographic range of potential
29 impacts over the next 20 years.
30

31
32 **11.3.22.2.1 Energy Production and Distribution**
33

34 On February 16, 2007, Governor Gibbons signed an Executive Order to encourage the
35 development of renewable energy resources in Nevada (Gibbons 2007a). The Executive Order
36 requires all relevant state agencies to review their permitting processes to ensure the timely and
37 expeditious permitting of renewable energy projects. On May 9, 2007, and June 12, 2008, the
38 Governor signed Executive Orders creating the Nevada Renewable Energy Transmission Access
39 Advisory Committee Phase I and Phase II that will propose recommendations for improved
40 access to the grid system for renewable energy industries (Gibbons 2007b, 2008). In May 28,
41 2009, the Nevada legislature passed a bill modifying the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards
42 (Nevada State Senate Bill 358, 2009). The bill requires that 25% of the electricity sold be
43 produced by renewable energy sources by 2025.
44

45 Reasonably foreseeable future actions related to renewable energy production and
46 energy distribution within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ are identified in

1 Table 11.3.22.2-1 and described in the following sections. Renewable energy project
2 applications on public lands are shown in Figure 11.3.22.2-1 by application serial number.
3
4

5 **Renewable Energy Development**

6

7 Renewable energy applications on public lands are considered in two categories, fast-
8 track and regular-track applications. Fast-track applications, which apply principally to solar
9 and wind energy facilities, are those applications on public lands for which the environmental
10 review and public participation process is under way and applications could be approved by
11 December 2010. A fast-track project would be considered foreseeable, because the permitting
12 and environmental review processes would be under way. Regular-track proposals are
13 considered potential future projects, but not necessarily foreseeable projects, since not all
14 applications would be expected to be carried to completion. These proposals are considered
15 together as a general level of interest in development of renewable energy in the region.
16 Foreseeable projects on private land are also considered.
17

18 Table 11.3.22.2-1 lists one foreseeable wind energy project and four foreseeable solar
19 energy projects; the solar projects are located on private land. Foreseeable renewable energy
20 projects are described in the following paragraphs.
21
22

23 ***Mohave County Wind Farm (AZA 032315).*** BP Wind Energy proposes to build the
24 500-MW Mohave County Wind Farm, comprising 335 wind turbine generators. Construction
25 would include access roads, ancillary facilities, meteorological towers, and transmission lines to
26 connect to the grid. The site would require 41,577 acres (198 km²) of public land, located 20 mi
27 (32 km) southeast of the Hoover Dam and 40 mi (64 km) southeast of the SEZ. It is estimated
28 that 169 acres (0.68 km²) would be permanently disturbed and 507 acres (2.05 km²) temporarily
29 disturbed. The expected date for commercial operation is 2012. The facility would be built in
30 several phases. Phase I would produce 350 MW from up to 235 turbines. Subsequent phases
31 would produce an additional 150 MW from 50 to 100 turbines. Construction would require
32 about 100 to 200 workers, operations would require about 10 to 20 employees (BLM 2010d).
33
34

35 ***Boulder City Solar.*** NextLight Renewable Power intends to build the Boulder City Solar
36 Plant, a 150-MW PV generating facility. The facility will be located on 1,100 acres (4.45 km²)
37 of private land about 12 mi (19 km) southwest of Boulder City, Nevada, and 40 mi (64 km) south
38 of the SEZ. Water use is projected to be less than 20 acre-ft/year (24,600 m³/yr) during
39 operation, which is expected to begin in 2010 (First Solar, Inc. 2009).
40
41

42 ***El Dorado Solar Expansion.*** Sempra Energy intends to expand its 10-MW El Dorado
43 Solar Plant, utilizing thin-film solar cell panels, to 58 MW. The facility will be located on
44 80 acres (0.32-km²) of private land, which is adjacent to the El Dorado Energy Generating
45 Station, 17 mi (27 km) southwest of downtown Boulder City, Nevada, and about 45 mi (72 km)
46 south of the SEZ. The expansion could be operational in 2010 (BRW 2009).

TABLE 11.3.22.2-1 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions Related to Energy Development and Distribution near the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ^a

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
Renewable Energy Projects			
Mohave County Wind Farm (AZA 32315), 500 MW, 41,577 acres	NOI Nov. 20, 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources, land use	40 mi (64 km) southeast of the SEZ in Arizona
Renewable Energy Projects on Private Lands			
Boulder City Solar, 150 MW, PV, 1100 acres	Construction stage	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, cultural resources, land use	40 mi (64 km) south of the SEZ
El Dorado Solar Expansion, 10 MW, PV, 80 acres	Construction stage	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, cultural resources, land use	45 mi (72 km) south of the SEZ
BrightSource Coyote Springs Project, 960 MW, solar tower, 7,680 acres	Planning stage	Terrestrial habitats, vegetation, wildlife, soil, water, visual, cultural	15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ
BrightSource Overton Project, 400 MW, solar tower	Planning stage	Terrestrial habitats, vegetation, wildlife, soil, water, visual, cultural	30 mi (48 km) northeast of the SEZ
Transmission and Distribution Systems			
One Nevada Transmission Line Project	Draft Supplemental EIS Nov. 30, 2009	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes through the SEZ
Southwest Intertie Project	FONSI issued July 30, 2008 In-service in 2010	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes through the SEZ
TransWest Transmission Project	Permit Application Nov. 2009	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes through the SEZ
Zephyr and Chinook Transmission Line Project	Permit Applications in 2011/2012	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes near or through the SEZ

^a Projects in later stages of agency environmental review and project development.

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BrightSource Energy Coyote Springs Project. BrightSource Energy is planning to build a 960-MW solar thermal-powered facility on private land at the Coyote Springs Investment Planned Development Project at the junction of U.S. 93 and State Route 168. The facility would utilize the Luz Power Tower, which consists of thousands of mirrors that reflect sunlight onto a boiler filled with water sitting on top of a tower. The high-temperature steam produced would be piped to a conventional turbine that generates electricity. The station would utilize a dry-cooling system. The site, approximately 7,680 acres (31 km²), would be 15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ (BrightSource Energy 2009).



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.3.22.2-1 Locations of Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on Public**
 3 **Land within a 50-mi (80-km) Radius of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ**

1 **BrightSource Energy Overton Project.** BrightSource Energy is planning to build three
2 400-MW solar thermal power facilities on private land east of the airport at Overton, Nevada.
3 The facility would utilize the Luz Power Tower, which consists of thousands of mirrors that
4 reflect sunlight onto a boiler filled with water sitting on top of a tower. The high temperature
5 steam produced would be piped to a conventional turbine that generates electricity. The station
6 would utilize a dry-cooling system. The site would be 30 mi (48 km) northeast of the SEZ. The
7 plan is for initial operation in 2012 (Cleantech 2008).
8
9

10 **Pending Solar ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Lands.** Applications for
11 ROW grants that have been submitted to the BLM include 16 pending solar projects, 4 pending
12 authorizations for wind site testing, 3 authorized projects for wind testing, and 2 pending
13 authorizations for development of wind facilities that would be located either within Dry Lake
14 SEZ or within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ (BLM 2009a,b). No applications for geothermal
15 projects have been submitted. Table 11.3.22.2-2 lists these applications and Figure 11.3.22.2-1
16 shows their locations.
17

18 The likelihood of any of the regular-track application projects actually being developed
19 is uncertain, but it is generally assumed to be less than that for fast-track applications. The
20 projects, listed in Table 11.3.22.2-2 for completeness, are an indication of the level of interest
21 in development of renewable energy in the region. Some number of these applications would
22 be expected to result in actual projects. Thus, the cumulative impacts of these potential projects
23 are analyzed in their aggregate effects.
24

25 Wind testing would involve some relatively minor activities that could have some
26 environmental effects, mainly the erection of meteorological towers and monitoring of wind
27 conditions. These towers may or may not employ guy wires and may be 200 ft (60 m) high.
28
29

30 **Transmission and Distribution Systems**

31

32 Table 11.3.22.2-1 identifies four major new transmission projects, which are described
33 below.
34
35

36 **One Nevada Transmission Line Project.** NV Energy proposes to construct and operate
37 a 236-mi (382-km) long, single-circuit, 500-kV transmission line with fiber-optic
38 telecommunication and appurtenant facilities in White Pine, Nye, Lincoln, and Clark counties.
39 It will consist of self-supporting, steel-lattice and steel-pole H-frame structures, placed 900 to
40 1,600 ft (274 to 488 m) apart. The width of the right-of-way is 200 ft (61 m). New 500-kV
41 electrical facilities would be installed inside the existing footprint of the Harry Allen Substation.
42 The proposed action includes new substations outside the ROI of the Dry Lake SEZ. The
43 transmission line would be within the SWIP utility corridor that passes through the SEZ.
44 Construction could have potential impacts on the Mojave Desert Tortoise (BLM 2009c).
45

TABLE 11.3.22.2-2 Pending Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Land within 50 mi (80 km) of the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ^{a,b}

Serial Number	Applicant	Application Received	Size (acres) ^c	MW	Technology	Status	Field Office
Solar Applications							
NVN 83083	Cogentrix Solar Services, LLC	Jan. 18, 2007	9,760	1,000	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 83129	Cogentrix Solar Services, LLC	Jan. 18, 2007	19,840	1,000	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 83914	Bright Source Energy Solar	– ^d	10,000	500	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 84052	NV Power Co.	Aug. 14, 2007	1,775	120	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 84232	First Solar	Oct. 22, 2007	5,500	400	PV	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 84236	First Solar	Oct. 22, 2007	3,800	400	PV	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 84467	Pacific Solar Investments, Inc.	Dec. 7, 2007	11,000	1,000	Parabolic Trough	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 84631	Bright Source Energy Solar	Jan. 28, 2008	2,000	1,200	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 85117	Bull Frog Green Energy	March 18, 2008	3,639	500	PV	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 85612	Cogentrix Solar Services, LLC	July 11, 2008	2,012	240	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 85773	Cogentrix Solar Services, LLC	July 11, 2008	11,584	1,000	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 85774	Bull Frog Green Energy	Aug. 14, 2008	3,177	500	PV	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 86156	Power Partners Southwest, LLC	–	10,815	250	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 86158	Power Partners Southwest, LLC	Sept. 18, 2008	3,885	250	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 86159	Power Partners Southwest, LLC	Sept. 19, 2008	1,751	250	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
AZA 34201	Boulevard Assoc., LLC	June 22, 2007	15,634	250	Parabolic Trough	Pending	Kingman
Wind Applications							
NVN 85746	Desert Research Institute	Aug. 1, 2008	28,428	–	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Las Vegas
NVN 87907	Pacific Wind Development	–	2,200	–	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Las Vegas
NVN 87970	Pacific Wind Development	Sept. 29, 2009	5,089	–	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Las Vegas
NVN 89219	Pioneer Green Energy	–	20,680	–	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Las Vegas
NVN 82311	Competitive Power Vent	July 3, 2006	8,944	–	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Las Vegas

TABLE 11.3.22.2-2 (Cont.)

Serial Number	Applicant	Application Received	Size (acres) ^c	MW	Technology	Status	Field Office
Wind Applications (Cont.)							
NVN 83041	Table Mtn Wind	Jan. 31, 2006	11,570	–	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Las Vegas
AZA 32315	BP Wind Energy	–	31,338	–	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Kingman
NVN 73726	Table Mtn Wind	May 5, 2000	8,320	–	Wind	Pending wind facilities development	Las Vegas
AZA 32315AA	BP Wind Energy	–	44,860	–	Wind	Pending wind facilities development	Kingman

^a Sources: BLM (2009a,b).

^b Information for pending solar and wind (BLM and USFS 2010b) energy projects downloaded from GeoCommunicator.

^c To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d A dash indicates data not available.

1 **Southwest Intertie Project (SWIP).** The SWIP is a 520-mi (830-km) long, single-circuit,
2 overhead 500-kV transmission line project. The first phase, the Southern Portion, is a 264-mi
3 (422-km) long transmission line that begins at the existing Harry Allen Substation in Dry Lake,
4 Nevada, and runs north to a proposed substation approximately 18 mi (29 km) northwest of Ely,
5 Nevada. The transmission line will pass through the SEZ. It will consist of self-supporting, steel-
6 lattice and steel-pole H-frame structures, placed 1,200 to 1,500 ft (366 to 457 m) apart. The
7 SWIP proposed completion date is 2012. Construction could have potential impacts on the
8 Mojave Desert Tortoise (BLM 2007b).

9
10
11 **TransWest Transmission Project.** TransWest Express proposes to construct a high-
12 voltage electric utility transmission line. The single-circuit 600-kV direct current transmission
13 line would extend from south central Wyoming to Southern Nevada, a distance of 765 mi
14 (1,224 km). It will consist of self-supporting steel-lattice and steel-pole structures. A
15 terminal/converter station would be located near Boulder City, Nevada. A communication
16 system for command and control will require a fiber-optic network and periodic regenerative
17 sites. The proposed routes have been sited to parallel existing facilities and occupy designated
18 utility corridors to the extent practicable, and will pass the southern boundary of the SEZ
19 (TransWest Express 2009).

20
21
22 **Zephyr and Chinook Transmission Line Project.** TransCanada is proposing the
23 construction of two 500-kV high-voltage DC transmission lines. The Zephyr project would
24 originate in southeastern Wyoming. The Chinook project would originate in south-central
25 Montana. Both would travel along the same corridor from northern Nevada, passing near or
26 through the SEZ, and terminate in the El Dorado Valley south of Las Vegas. Construction is
27 expected to be complete in 2015 or 2016 (TransCanada 2010).

28 29 30 **11.3.22.2 Other Actions**

31
32 There are a number of energy production facilities within a 50-mi (80-km) radius from
33 the center of the Dry Lake SEZ, which includes portions of Clark and Lincoln Counties in
34 Nevada, Washington County in Utah, and Mohave County in Arizona. Other major ongoing
35 and foreseeable actions within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed Dry Lake are listed in
36 Table 11.3.22.2-3 and described in the following sections.

37 38 39 **Ongoing Renewable Energy Projects**

40
41
42 **El Dorado Solar.** Sempra Energy operates the 10-MW El Dorado Solar Plant, utilizing
43 more than 167,000 thin-film, solar cell panels. The 80-acre (0.32-km²) site is adjacent to the
44 El Dorado Energy Generating Station, 17 mi (27 km) southwest of downtown Boulder City,
45 Nevada, and about 45 mi (72 km) south of the SEZ (Sempra Generation 2010).

TABLE 11.3.22.2-3 Other Ongoing and Foreseeable Actions near the Proposed Dry Lake SEZ^a

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
Renewable Energy Projects			
El Dorado Solar	Operating since 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, visual	45 mi (72 km) south of the SEZ
Nellis Air Force Base Solar	Operating since 2007	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, visual	10 mi (16 km) south of the SEZ
Nevada Solar One	Operating since 2007	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, cultural, visual	40 mi (64 km) south of the SEZ
Sithe Global Flat Top Mesa Solar	Proposed	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, cultural, visual	42 mi (67 km) northeast of the SEZ
Other Energy Projects			
Apex Generating Station	Operating since 2003	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	Adjacent to the SEZ
Chuck Lenzie Generating Station	Operating since 2006	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	Adjacent to the SEZ
Edward W. Clark Generating Station	Operating since 1973	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	25 mi (40 km) southwest of the SEZ
El Dorado Energy Generating Station	Operating since 2000	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	45 mi (72 km) south of the SEZ
Goodsprings Waste Heat Recovery Facility	EA and FONSI Sept. 2009	T&E species, air, visual	50 mi (80 km) southwest of the SEZ
Harry Allen Generating Station	Operating since early 1980s	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	Within the SEZ
Harry Allen Expansion	Under construction	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	Within the SEZ
Reid Gardner Generating Station	Operating since 1965	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	20 mi (32 km) northeast of the SEZ
Reid Gardner Expansion	EA and FONSI March 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, soil, air, water	20 mi (32 km) northeast of the SEZ
Saguaro Power Company	Operating since 2000	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	20 mi (32 km) south of the SEZ
Silverhawk Generating Station	Operating since 2004	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	Adjacent to the SEZ

TABLE 11.3.22.2-3 (Cont.)

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
Other Energy Projects (Cont.)			
Sunrise Generating Station	Operating since 1964	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	20 mi (32 km) south of the SEZ
Toquop Energy Project	Coal-fired plant FEIS 2009, changed to natural gas in 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, soil, water, air, cultural, visual	50 mi (80 km) northeast of the SEZ
Distribution Systems			
Kern River Gas Transmission System	Operating since 1992	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along pipeline ROW	Corridor passes through the SEZ
UNEV Pipeline Project	FEIS April 2010	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along pipeline ROW	Corridor passes through the SEZ
Other Projects			
Arizona Nevada Tower Corporation Communication Sites	EA issued April 2007	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, cultural resources	West and north of the SEZ
Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project	DEIS expected in 2011	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, groundwater	Within the SEZ
Coyote Springs Investment Planned Development Project	FEIS issued Sept. 2008, ROD issued Oct. 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, socioeconomics	15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ
Dry Lake Groundwater Testing/Monitoring Wells	EA and FONSI issued Sept. 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources	Within the SEZ
Lincoln County Land Act Groundwater Development and Utility ROW	FEIS issued May 2009 ROD Jan. 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, groundwater	45 mi (72 km) northeast of the SEZ
Meadow Valley Gypsum Project	EA and FONSI issued 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, soils, socioeconomics	35 mi (56 km) northeast of the SEZ
Mesquite Nevada General Aviation Replacement Airport	DEIS April 2008	Land use, terrestrial habitats, wildlife, soil, water, air, cultural, visual	40 mi (64 km) northeast of SEZ
NV Energy Microwave and Mobile Radio Project	Preliminary EA March 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, cultural resources	Two sites within the SEZ, one site 45 mi (72 km) north of SEZ

^a Projects ongoing or in later stages of agency environmental review and project development.

1 ***Nellis Air Force Base Solar.*** Nellis Air Force Base operates a 13.5-MW solar PV plant
2 consisting of about 72,000 solar panels, using a single-axis solar tracking system that follows
3 the sun throughout the day. The power produced is 400 volts DC, and transformers step up the
4 voltage to 12,470 volts, compatible with the Nellis Air Force Base system. All power is to be
5 used by the Base; it provides up to 30% of the Base requirements. The 140-acre (0.57-km²) site
6 is located in Area III on the northwest portion of the Base. Nellis Air Force Base is just northeast
7 of Las Vegas, Nevada, and 10 mi (16 km) south of the SEZ. No federal or state threatened or
8 endangered species, protected species, or rare plants exist on the site (U.S. Air Force 2006).

9
10
11 ***Nevada Solar One.*** Acciona’s Nevada Solar One is a 64-MW thermal-electric plant
12 consisting of 760 parabolic concentrators with more than 182,000 mirrors that raise a heat
13 transfer fluid to 735°F; it is then used to produce steam that drives a conventional turbine. The
14 facility is located on a 280-acre (1.1-km²) site about 12 mi (19 km) southwest of Boulder City,
15 Nevada, and 40 mi (64 km) south of the SEZ. The plant began operating in 2007 (Acciona 2009).

16
17
18 ***Sithe Global Flat Top Mesa Solar.*** Sithe Global is planning to build a 50-MW solar
19 photovoltaic power plant. The 450-acre (1.8-km²) site is located on private land 5 mi (8 km)
20 west of Mesquite Nevada and 42 mi (67 km) northeast of the SEZ. Approximately 200 workers
21 would be required during the 15-month construction period (Sithe Global 2010a).

22 23 24 **Other Ongoing and Foreseeable Energy Projects**

25
26
27 ***Apex Generating Station.*** The Apex Generating Station is a 600-MW, combined cycle,
28 natural gas–fired power plant, consisting of two combustion turbine generators, two heat
29 recovery steam generators, and one steam turbine generator. The plant is located within the
30 Apex Industrial Park near the intersection of I-15 and State Route 93. The site is within the
31 SEZ (Mirant Las Vegas 2007).

32
33
34 ***Chuck Lenzie Generating Station.*** The Chuck Lenzie Generating Station is a 1,102-MW,
35 combined cycle, natural gas–fired power plant located within the SEZ; it consists of four
36 combustion turbines, four heat recovery steam generators, and two steam turbines. The plant,
37 owned by NV Energy, has been operating at full power since 2006. The station utilizes a dry-
38 cooling system. Approximately 30 workers are required to operate the facility (NVE 2009a).

39
40
41 ***El Dorado Energy Generating Station.*** The El Dorado Energy Generating Station is a
42 480-MW, combined cycle, natural gas–fired power plant. The 138-acre (0.56-km²) site is 17 mi
43 (27 km) southwest of downtown Boulder City, Nevada, and about 45 mi (72 km) south of the
44 SEZ (Sempra Generation 2010).

1 **Edward W. Clark Generating Station.** The Edward W. Clark Generating Station is a
2 1,102-MW natural gas-fired power plant, which includes a total of 19 generating units with in-
3 service dates ranging from 1973 to 2008. Four are combined cycle turbine generators and 12 are
4 peaking units with capacity of 600 MW. The site is located a few miles south of the Las Vegas
5 Strip and about 25 mi (40 km) southwest of the SEZ. The plant includes a 75-kW high-
6 concentration PV system. Approximately 30 workers are required to operate the facility
7 (NVE 2009d).
8
9

10 **Goodsprings Waste Heat Recovery Generation Facility.** NV Energy proposes to
11 construct and operate a 6-MW waste heat recovery generation facility near Goodsprings,
12 Nevada. The source of the waste heat would be three Kern River Station gas compressor
13 turbines' exhaust. The 5-acre (0.02-km²) site is located 50 mi (80 km) southwest of the SEZ
14 (BLM 2009d).
15
16

17 **Harry Allen Generating Station.** The Harry Allen Generating Station is a two-unit,
18 144-MW, combined cycle gas-fired power plant. It was originally built as a "simple" cycle plant
19 operating only during the hot summer months. The first combined cycle unit (60 MW) began
20 operating in 1995 and the second unit (84 MW) went online in 2006. The plant is located north
21 of the intersection of I-15 and U.S. 93. The site is within the SEZ. Approximately 30 workers are
22 required to operate the facility (NVE 2009c).
23
24

25 **Harry Allen Generating Station Expansion.** The Harry Allen Generating Station is a
26 484-MW, combined cycle, natural gas-fired power plant that consists of two combustion turbine
27 generators, two heat recovery steam generators, and one steam turbine generator. The heat
28 rejection system will utilize a cooling system comprised of natural draft dry-cooling towers. The
29 plant is located on the site of the existing plant north of I-15 and State Route 93, within the SEZ
30 (NVE 2009c).
31
32

33 **Reid Gardner Generating Station.** The Reid Gardner Generating Station is a four-unit,
34 557-MW, coal-fired electric generation facility owned by NV Energy. The first unit went online
35 in 1965. All four units have been operating since 1983. The 480-acre (1.9-km²) site is located
36 near the town of Moapa, about 20 mi (32 km) northeast of the SEZ. The facility includes
37 evaporation ponds and fly ash, bottom ash, and solids landfills. Pollution control includes wet
38 scrubbers. The heat rejection system consists of wet-cooling towers. Coal is delivered by rail
39 (BLM 2008a).
40
41

42 **Reid Gardner Expansion Project.** The Reid Gardner Expansion Project will consist of
43 the construction of a 240-acre (0.97-km²) fly ash landfill and a 315-acre (1.27-km²) evaporation
44 pond to support the existing Reid Gardner Power Plant. The proposed expansion is adjacent to
45 the southern boundary of the existing site near the town of Moapa, about 20 mi (32 km)
46 southeast of the SEZ (BLM 2008a).
47

1 **Saguaro Power Company.** Saguaro Power Company operates two 35-MW natural gas
2 combustion turbine generators with heat recovery steam generators, a 23.1-MW
3 extraction/condensing steam turbine generator, and two waste heat recovery steam generators.
4 There are two auxiliary boilers that provide steam to manufacturing facilities. The power plant,
5 located 20 mi (32 km) south of the SEZ, is cooled by a wet mechanical draft cooling tower.
6 (Saguaro Power Company 2009).
7
8

9 **Silverhawk Generating Station.** The Silverhawk Generating Station is a 520-MW,
10 combined cycle, natural gas-fired power plant, consisting of two combustion turbine generators,
11 two heat recovery steam generators, and one steam turbine generator. The plant is located within
12 the Apex Industrial Park near the intersection of I-15 and State Route 93. The site is within the
13 SEZ. The station utilizes a dry-cooling system. The plant began operating in 2004.
14 Approximately 30 workers are required to operate the facility (NVE 2009b).
15
16

17 **Sunrise Generating Station.** Sunrise Generating Station is a 150-MW natural gas-fired
18 power plant. One unit is a steam boiler and the other is a combustion turbine. The plant also has
19 three peaking units with a capacity of 73 MW. The site is about 20 mi (32 km) southwest of the
20 SEZ (NVE 2009e).
21
22

23 **Toquop Energy Project.** The Toquop Energy Project, originally proposed as a 750-MW
24 coal-fired electric generation facility, is now planned as a 1,100-MW natural gas-fired combined-
25 cycle power plant, located on a 640-acre (2.6-km²) site 12 mi (19 km) northwest of the town of
26 Mesquite, Nevada, 50 mi (80 km) northeast of the SEZ. The project will be built in phases. Phase
27 I will be a nominal 550- to 600 MW combined-cycle plant. A water supply system, a gas
28 pipeline connecting the power plant to the Kern River pipeline, connection to the existing
29 Navajo-McCullogh transmission line, and road access to I-15 would also be required. The heat
30 rejection system will utilize a hybrid cooling system comprised of natural draft dry-cooling
31 towers with the ability to apply water overspray on the heating surfaces to provide additional
32 cooling at ambient air temperatures greater than about 80°F (27°C). The proposed project would
33 require 600 workers during construction, scheduled to begin in 2012 with commercial operation
34 in 2015 (BLM 2009e, Sithe Global 2010b).
35
36

37 **Ongoing and Foreseeable Distribution Systems**

38
39

40 **Kern River Gas Transmission System.** The Kern River Gas Transmission system
41 transports 1.7 billion ft³ of natural gas per day (4.8 million m³ per day) from Wyoming to the
42 Las Vegas area and then southwest as far as San Bernardino California. A two-pipeline delivery
43 system exists along most of the pipeline route. The pipeline passes through the SEZ
44 (FERC 2010).
45
46

1 **UNEV Pipeline Project.** Holly Energy Partners proposes to construct and operate a
2 399-mi (640-km) long, 12-in. (0.3-m) petroleum products pipeline that will originate at the Holly
3 Corporation's Woods Cross, Utah, refinery near Salt Lake City and terminate near the Apex
4 Industrial Park near the intersection of I-15 and State Route 93. The pipeline would generally
5 follow the Kern River ROW within Nevada and pass just south of the SEZ (BLM 2010e).
6
7

8 **Other Ongoing and Foreseeable Projects**

9

10
11 **Arizona Nevada Tower Corporation Communication Sites.** Arizona Nevada Tower
12 Corporation has constructed seven cellular telephone signal relay towers in Lincoln County
13 along the U.S. 93 corridor between Coyote Springs Valley and the town of Pioche. Four of the
14 seven sites are 100 ft × 100 ft (30.5 m × 30.5 m) parcels. The remaining three are 50 ft × 100 ft
15 (15.7 m × 30.5 m), 50 ft × 120 ft (15.7 m × 36.6 m), and 100 ft × 200 ft (30.5 m × 61.0 m).
16 Utility corridors were extended to six of the sites to supply electricity. Solar cells are the primary
17 source of power for the Alamo Peak site, with wind generation as the backup. The towers are
18 steel lattice, three-sided, and free standing, and each tower base is a 30 ft² (9.1 m²) concrete slab.
19 The towers at Alamo Peak and Highland Peak are 125 ft (38.1 m) high, and the other five are
20 195 ft (59.4 m) high (BLM 2007c).
21
22

23 **Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project.** The
24 Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) proposes to construct a groundwater development
25 project that would transport approximately 122,755 ac-ft/yr (151 million m³/yr) of groundwater
26 under existing water rights and applications from several hydrographic basins in eastern Nevada
27 and western Utah. The proposed facilities include production wells, 306 mi (490 km) of buried
28 water pipelines, 5 pumping stations, 6 regulating tanks, 3 pressure reducing stations, a buried
29 storage reservoir, a water treatment facility, and about 323 mi (517 km) of 230-kV overhead
30 power lines, 2 primary and 5 secondary substations. The project would develop groundwater in
31 the following amounts in two hydraulically connected valleys that are up-gradient of the Dry
32 Lake SEZ: Dry Lake Valley (11,584 ac-ft/yr [14.3 million m³/yr]) and Delamar Valley
33 (2,493 ac-ft/yr [3.1 million m³/yr]). In addition, an undetermined amount of water could be
34 developed and transferred from Coyote Spring Valley, which is north of the SEZ and down-
35 gradient of the other two basins (SNWA 2010)
36
37

38 **Coyote Springs Investment (CSI) Development Project.** CSI intends to develop a new
39 town in southern Lincoln County at the junction of U.S. 93 and State Route 168. The town would
40 be a master-planned community on 21,454 acres (86.8 km²), and would include residential,
41 commercial, and industrial land uses. Plans call for more than 111,000 residential dwelling units
42 at a density of 5 units per acre (0.004047 km²). Also included in the community would be public
43 buildings, hotels, resorts, casinos, commercial and light industrial areas, roads, bridges, and a
44 heliport. Utilities and other infrastructure would be developed to serve the town, including power
45 facilities, sanitary sewer and wastewater treatment facilities, stormwater facilities, solid waste
46 disposal transfer stations, and telecommunications facilities. Water supply treatment facilities,

1 monitoring wells, production wells, storage facilities, and transmission and distribution facilities
2 would also be built. Approximately 70,000 ac-ft/yr (86 million m³/yr) of water would be needed
3 for the community at full build-out, which may occur over a period of about 40 years. Currently,
4 CSI and its affiliates hold approximately 36,000 ac-ft/yr (44.0 million m³/yr) in certificated
5 groundwater rights in various basins within Lincoln County. CSI currently owns the 21,454-acre
6 (86.8-km²) development area and holds leases on an additional 7,548 acres (30.6 km²) of BLM
7 land in Lincoln County and 6,219 acres (25.2 km²) of BLM land in Clark County within or next
8 to the privately held land. These adjacent areas would be managed by BLM for the protection of
9 federally-listed threatened or endangered species; activities would be limited to non-motorized
10 recreation or scientific research. The development is 15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ (USFWS
11 2008).

12
13
14 ***Dry Lake Groundwater Testing/Monitoring Wells.*** The SNWA intends to construct two
15 to four groundwater wells within two 2.5-acre (0.01-km²) (1.0-acre [0.004-km²] long-term)
16 locations and a 1.5-acre [0.006-km²] short-term) location in Dry Lake. The dimensions for the
17 long-term ROW would be 168 ft × 260 ft (51 m × 79 m), and the dimensions for the short-term
18 ROW would be 330 ft × 330 ft (100 m × 100 m) for each site. Two 12-in. (0.3-m) and two 20-in.
19 (0.5-m) wells would be drilled to between 2,200 and 2,400 ft (670 and 730 m) in depth. Access
20 to the well sites would be from both existing roads and a new 809-ft (246-m) long access road.
21 Water generated during the tests would be discharged into the natural drainage network around
22 the sites. At the completion of hydraulic testing, the SNWA will continue to record data to
23 establish baseline ranges of the groundwater levels in the area.

24
25
26 ***Lincoln County Land Act (LCLA) Groundwater Development and Utility ROW.*** This
27 project involves the construction of the infrastructure required to pump and convey groundwater
28 resources in the Clover Valley and Tule Desert Hydrographic Areas. The construction includes
29 75 mi (122 km) of collection and transmission pipeline, 30 wells, 5 storage tanks, water pipeline
30 booster stations, transmission lines and substations, and a natural gas pipeline. A total of
31 240 acres (0.97 km²) will be permanently disturbed, and 1,878 acres (7.6 km²) will be
32 temporarily disturbed. The site is 45 mi (72 km) northeast of the SEZ (USFWS 2009c).

33
34
35 ***Meadow Valley Gypsum Project.*** Meadow Valley Gypsum was issued a Finding of
36 No Significant Impact (BLM 2008b) following an Environmental Assessment of proposed
37 mining, processing, and transporting gypsum on public lands. The project would be located
38 50 mi (80 km) south of Caliente in Lincoln County, Nevada. The project would disturb
39 46.7 acres (0.2 km²) and would consist of an open pit, processing plant, and 1.5-mi (2.4-km)
40 long access road.

41
42
43 ***Mesquite Nevada General Aviation Replacement Airport.*** The City of Mesquite,
44 Nevada, is proposing to replace its existing airport with a new airport on Mormon Mesa, adjacent
45 to I-15 near Riverside, Nevada, and about 40 mi (64 km) northeast of the SEZ. The airport would
46 require BLM to release 2,560 acres (10.36 km²) of BLM land for acquisition by the City of

1 Mesquite. The airport would include a new runway with associated parallel taxiway, general
2 aviation support, and maintenance facilities. The existing airport would be decommissioned and
3 the site would be released for nonaeronautical uses (FAA 2008).

4
5
6 ***NV Energy Microwave and Mobile Radio Project.*** NV Energy is proposing to install a
7 new microwave and radio communications network at 13 sites. Two sites are located within the
8 SEZ and one is located 45 mi (72 km) north of the SEZ. The two closest sites are small, about
9 0.1 acres (0.0004 km²). The further site is 0.6 acres (0.0024 km²), but requires 57 acres
10 (0.23 km²) of land disturbance for access and power-line ROW. Each site would include a
11 communication shelter, two propane tanks, and a generator. Two of the sites have a 160-ft
12 (50-m) self-supporting lattice tower, and one, an 80-ft (25-m) tower (BLM 2010f).

13 14 15 **Grazing**

16
17 There are no active grazing allotments in the immediate vicinity of the SEZ.

18 19 20 **Mining**

21
22 The Meadow Valley Gypsum Project is proposing to mine gypsum on public land,
23 approximately 35 mi (56 km) northeast of the SEZ, as noted above. A total of 46.7 acres
24 (0.189 km²) would be disturbed during the 10-year lifetime of the project. A 1.5-mi (2.5-km)
25 access road and a 1.8-acre (0.0073-km²) railroad siding would be constructed (BLM 2007d).

26 27 28 **11.3.22.3 General Trends**

29
30 General trends of population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate
31 change for the proposed Dry Lake SEZ are presented in this section. Table 11.3.22.3-1 lists the
32 relevant impacting factors for the trends.

33 34 35 ***11.3.22.3.1 Population Growth***

36
37 Over the period 2000 to 2008, the population grew annually by 4.0% in Clark County,
38 the ROI for the Dry Lake SEZ (Section 11.3.19.1.5). The population of the ROI in 2008 was
39 1,879,093. The annual growth rate for the state of Nevada as a whole was 3.4%. The ROI
40 population is projected to increase to 2,710,303 by 2021 and to 2,791,161 by 2023.

41 42 43 ***11.3.22.3.2 Energy Demand***

44
45 The growth in energy demand is related to population growth through increases in
46 housing, commercial floor space, transportation, manufacturing, and services. Given that

TABLE 11.3.22.3-1 General Trends Relevant to the Proposed SEZs in Nevada

General Trend	Impacting Factors
Population growth	Urbanization Increased use of roads and traffic Land use modification Employment Education and training Increased resource use (e.g., water and energy) Tax revenue
Energy demand	Increased resource use Energy development (including alternative energy sources) Energy transmission and distribution
Water availability	Drought conditions and water loss Conservation practices Changes in water distribution
Climate change	Water cycle changes Increased wildland fires Habitat changes Changes in farming production and costs

1
2
3 population growth is expected in seven SEZ areas in Nevada between 2006 and 2016, an
4 increase in energy demand is also expected. However, the EIA projects a decline in per-capita
5 energy use through 2030, mainly because of improvements in energy efficiency and high cost
6 of oil throughout the projection period. Primary energy consumption in the United States
7 between 2007 and 2030 is expected to grow by about 0.5% each year, with the fastest growth
8 projected for the commercial sector (at 1.1% each year). Transportation, residential, and
9 industrial energy consumption are expected to grow by about 0.5, 0.4, and 0.1% each year,
10 respectively (EIA 2009).

11
12
13 **11.3.22.3.3 Water Availability**

14
15 As described in Section 11.3.9.1.2, the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located within the
16 Garnet Valley groundwater basin. Groundwater depths in the basin have been recorded at
17 between 230 and 760 ft (70 and 230 m) below ground surface. Groundwater discharge through
18 evapotranspiration is minimal, while recharge from precipitation on the valley floor and the
19 surrounding mountains is estimated to be 400 ac-ft/yr (490,000 m³/yr). Inflows from the adjacent
20 Hidden Valley groundwater basin are estimated to be 400 ac-ft/yr (490,000 m³/yr), while
21 estimated discharge from the basin to the California Wash groundwater basin to the west is
22 800 ac-ft/yr (990,000 m³/yr).
23

1 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Clark County
2 were 680,000 ac-ft/yr (839 million m³/yr), of which 83% came from surface waters and 17%
3 came from groundwater. The largest water use was public supply at 526,000 ac-ft/yr
4 (649 million m³/yr), while thermoelectric water use was 28,000 ac-ft/yr (34 million m³/yr), and
5 irrigation use was about 17,000 ac-ft/yr (21 million m³/yr). Annual groundwater withdrawals in
6 Garnet Valley are permitted up to 3,400 ac-ft/yr (4.2 million m³/yr); withdrawals ranged from
7 797 to 1,558 ac-ft/yr (980,000 to 1.9 million m³/yr) between 2001 and 2009. Most of the
8 withdrawals were for mining and industrial uses. The Las Vegas Valley Water District has
9 leased the majority of the SNWA's rights to 2,200 ac-ft/yr (2.7 million m³/yr) of Garnet Valley
10 groundwater to dry-cooled power plants in the area (Section 11.3.9.1.3).

11
12 In 1990, Garnet Valley was designated as a groundwater basin by the State Engineer. The
13 preferred uses of groundwater were specified to exclude irrigation and to include municipal,
14 quasi-municipal, industrial, commercial, mining, stockwater, and wildlife purposes. In 2002,
15 the State Engineer suspended new applications for water in the carbonate-rock aquifer systems
16 within Garnet Valley to allow further study of the system. Applications for 44,500 ac-ft/yr
17 (55 million m³/yr) of water rights are currently being held in abeyance (Section 11.3.9.1.3).

18 19 20 ***11.3.22.3.4 Climate Change***

21
22 Governor Jim Gibbons' Nevada Climate Change Advisory committee (NCCAC)
23 conducted a study of climate change and its effects on Nevada (NCCAC 2008). The report
24 summarized the current scientific understanding of climate change and its potential impacts on
25 Nevada. A report on global climate change in the United States prepared by the U.S. Global
26 Change Research Program (GCRP 2009) documents current temperature and precipitation
27 conditions and historic trends. Excerpts of the conclusions from these reports indicate the
28 following:

- 29
30 • Decreased precipitation with a greater percentage of that precipitation
31 coming from rain, which will result in a greater likelihood of winter and
32 spring flooding, and decreased stream flow in the summer;
- 33
34 • The average temperature in the southwest has already increased by about
35 1.5°F compared to a 1960 to 1979 baseline, and the average annual
36 temperature is projected to rise 4°F to 10°F by the end of the century;
- 37
38 • Warming climate and related reduction in spring snowpack and soil moisture
39 have increased the length of the wildfire season and intensity of forest fires;
- 40
41 • Later snow and less snow coverage in ski resort areas could force ski areas to
42 shut down before the season would otherwise end;
- 43
44 • Much of the southwest has experienced drought conditions since 1999. This
45 represents the most severe drought in the last 110 years. Projections indicate
46 an increasing probability of drought in the region;
- 47

- 1 • As temperatures rise, landscape will be altered as species shift their ranges
2 northward and upward to cooler climates;
- 3
- 4 • Temperature increases, when combined with urban heat island effects for
5 major cities such as Las Vegas, present significant stress to health, electricity,
6 and water supply; and
- 7
- 8 • Increased minimum temperatures and warmer springs extend the range and
9 lifetime of many pests that stress trees and crops, and lead to northward
10 migration of weed species.
- 11
- 12

13 **11.3.22.4 Cumulative Impacts on Resources**

14

15 This section addresses potential cumulative impacts in the proposed Dry Lake SEZ on
16 the basis of the following assumptions: (1) because of the moderate size of the proposed SEZ
17 (10,000 to 30,000 acres [40.5 to 121 km²]), up to two projects could be constructed at a time, and
18 (2) maximum total disturbance over 20 years would be about 12,519 acres (50.7 km²) (80% of
19 the entire proposed SEZ). For purposes of analysis, it is also assumed that no more than
20 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) would be disturbed per project annually and 250 acres (1.01 km²)
21 monthly on the basis of construction schedules planned in current applications. Since an existing
22 500-kV transmission line runs through the SEZ, no analysis of impacts has been conducted for
23 the construction of a new transmission line outside of the SEZ that might be needed to connect
24 solar facilities to the regional grid (see Section 11.3.1.2). Regarding site access, the nearest major
25 roads are I-15 and U.S. 93, which lie along the southeast and southwest sides of the SEZ,
26 respectively. It is assumed that no new access roads would be constructed to support solar
27 development in the SEZ.

28

29 Cumulative impacts that would result from the construction, operation, and
30 decommissioning of solar energy development projects within the proposed SEZ when added
31 to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions described in the previous
32 section in each resource area are discussed below. At this stage of development, because of the
33 uncertain nature of future projects in terms of size, number, location within the proposed SEZ,
34 and the types of technology that would be employed, the impacts are discussed qualitatively or
35 semi-quantitatively, with ranges given as appropriate. More detailed analyses of cumulative
36 impacts would be performed in the environmental reviews for the specific projects in relation to
37 all other existing and proposed projects in the geographic areas.

38

39

40 **11.3.22.4.1 Lands and Realty**

41

42 The southern portion of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is highly developed with many
43 types of energy, water, and transportation infrastructure facilities present. Three designated
44 transmission corridors that pass through the area, including a 368 corridor, are heavily developed
45 with transmission lines, natural gas and refined petroleum product lines, and water lines. A
46 natural gas power plant is being expanded within the boundary of the SEZ, and two additional
47 natural gas power plants are located just southwest of the SEZ on private land. The northern

1 portion of the SEZ is relatively undeveloped. Dirt roads provide access to the interior of the SEZ
2 (Section 11.3.2.1).

3
4 Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish a
5 large industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps
6 in perpetuity. Access to such areas by both the general public and much wildlife would be
7 eliminated. Traditional uses of public lands would no longer be allowed. While there are
8 numerous energy-related developments in and around the SEZ, solar energy facilities would
9 become a dominating visual presence in the area because of their large size.

10
11 As shown in Table 11.3.22.2-2 and Figure 11.3.22.2-1, there are four foreseeable and
12 16 pending solar development applications and 1 foreseeable and 9 pending wind site testing
13 applications within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. Five of the
14 16 pending solar applications are partially or totally within the SEZ, as is one of the wind site
15 testing applications. The large number of applications along with the identified foreseeable
16 renewable energy projects indicates strong interest in the renewable energy development within
17 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ.

18
19 Several foreseeable projects of other types are of note within this distance, including
20 proposed groundwater development and associated utility projects and several proposed
21 transmission line and pipeline projects that would lie on or near the SEZ, and a planned
22 community development on 21,454 acres (86.8 km²) that would lie about 15 mi (24 km) north
23 of the SEZ. Proposed projects are described in Section 11.3.22.2.2.

24
25 The development of utility-scale solar projects in the proposed Dry Lake SEZ in
26 combination with other ongoing, foreseeable, and potential actions within the geographic extent
27 of effects, nominally 50 mi (80 km), could have cumulative effects on land use in the vicinity of
28 the proposed SEZ. Ongoing and foreseeable actions on or near the SEZ would add to impacts
29 from the SEZ and result in cumulative impacts on accessibility of land for other purposes and on
30 groundwater and visual resources, among other resource impacts, depending in part on where
31 and how many potential renewable energy projects are actually built.

32 33 34 ***11.3.22.4.2 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics***

35
36 There are nine specially designated areas within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Dry Lake
37 SEZ in Nevada (Section 11.3.3.1). Potential exists for there to be cumulative visual impacts on
38 these areas from the construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the SEZ and the
39 construction of transmission lines outside the SEZ. The exact nature of cumulative visual
40 impacts on the users of these areas would depend on the specific solar technologies employed in
41 the SEZ and the locations selected within the SEZ for solar facilities. Currently proposed solar
42 and wind projects on the SEZ and within the geographic extent of effects could cumulatively
43 affect sensitive areas. Renewable energy facilities and associated roads and transmission lines
44 and other future projects would add to the visual clutter of the area and could affect wilderness
45 characteristics, would produce fugitive dust emissions, and could strain water resources and
46 reduce access to specially designated areas.

1 **11.3.22.4.3 Rangeland Resources**

2
3 Because the Dry Lake SEZ does not contain any grazing allotments, solar energy
4 development within the SEZ would have no impact on livestock and grazing or contributions to
5 cumulative impacts on grazing (Section 11.3.4.1.1).
6

7 Because the Dry Lake SEZ is about 8 mi (13 km) or more from any wild horse and burro
8 HMA managed by BLM and about 33 mi (53 km) from any wild horse and burro territory
9 administered by the USFS, solar energy development within the SEZ would not directly or
10 indirectly affect wild horses and burros that are managed by these agencies and would not
11 contribute to cumulative impacts on these species.
12

13
14 **11.3.22.4.4 Recreation**

15
16 Limited outdoor recreation (e.g., backcountry driving, OHV use, and some camping and
17 hunting) occurs on or in the immediate vicinity of the SEZ. Construction of utility-scale solar
18 projects on the SEZ would preclude recreational use of the affected lands for the duration of the
19 projects. Road closures and access restrictions within the proposed SEZ would affect OHV use
20 in particular. Foreseeable and potential future actions would similarly affect areas of low
21 recreational use and would have minimal effects on recreation. Thus, cumulative impacts on
22 recreation within the geographic extent of effects are not expected.
23

24
25 **11.3.22.4.5 Military and Civilian Aviation**

26
27 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is not located under any military airspace. Nellis Air Force
28 Base has indicated that their operations may be impacted by solar towers or other tall structures
29 that could be located in the SEZ. In addition, structures higher than 50 ft (15 m) may present
30 unacceptable electromagnetic concerns for the National Test and Training Range located to the
31 west and north of the SEZ (Section 11.3.6.2). Foreseeable and potential solar facilities, proposed
32 communication towers, and proposed new transmission lines within and outside the SEZ could
33 present additional concerns for military aviation and could result in cumulative impacts on
34 military aviation. The North Las Vegas and McCarran International airports are located far
35 enough away from the SEZ that there would be no effect on their operations and thus no
36 cumulative effects on civilian aviation.
37

38
39 **11.3.22.4.6 Soil Resources**

40
41 Ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling) during the
42 construction phase of a solar project, including the construction of any associated transmission
43 line connections and new roads, would contribute to soil loss due to wind erosion. Road use
44 during construction, operations, and decommissioning of the solar facilities would further
45 contribute to soil loss. Programmatic design features would be employed to minimize erosion
46 and loss. Residual soil losses with mitigations in place would be in addition to losses from

1 construction of other foreseeable and potential renewable energy facilities, proposed
2 transmission lines, proposed water, oil, and gas pipelines, proposed residential development, and
3 from recreational uses. Overall, the cumulative impacts on soil resources could be small to
4 moderate from several large foreseeable solar projects and other types of projects within the
5 geographic extent of effects.
6

7 In addition to soil loss from erosion, landscaping of solar energy facilities and other
8 future projects within and outside the SEZ could alter drainage patterns and lead to increased
9 siltation of surface water streambeds. However, as for erosion, programmatic design features
10 would be in place to minimize such impacts.
11

12 ***11.3.22.4.7 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)***

13 As discussed in Section 11.3.8, a number of active mining claims and a mineral
14 processing plant lie in the southern tip of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, but no active oil and gas
15 leases or proposals for geothermal energy development are pending in the SEZ. Because of the
16 generally low level of mineral production in the area, because the impact of other foreseeable
17 actions on mineral accessibility within the geographic extent of effects is expected to be low,
18 and because the existing mineral rights in the southern tip of the proposed SEZ would not be
19 affected, no cumulative impacts on mineral resources are expected.
20
21
22

23 ***11.3.22.4.8 Water Resources***

24 Section 11.3.9.2 describes the water requirements for various technologies if they were to
25 be employed on the proposed SEZ to develop utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount of
26 water needed during the peak construction year for all evaluated solar technologies would be
27 2,408 to 3,480 ac-ft (3.0 million to 4.3 million m³). During operations, with full development of
28 the SEZ over 80% of its available land area, the amount of water needed for all evaluated solar
29 technologies would range from 71 to 37,593 ac-ft/yr (88 thousand to 46 million m³). The
30 amount of water needed during decommissioning would be similar to or less than the amount
31 used during construction. As discussed in Section 11.3.22.2.3, water withdrawals in 2005 in
32 Clark County were 680,000 ac-ft/yr (839 million m³/yr), of which 83% came from surface
33 waters and 17% came from groundwater. The largest water use category was public supply, at
34 526,000 ac-ft/yr (649 million m³/yr). Cumulatively, therefore, the additional water resources
35 needed for solar facilities in the SEZ during operations would constitute a very small (0.01%)
36 to moderate (5.5%) increment (the ratio of the annual operations water requirement to the
37 annual amount withdrawn in Clark County) depending on the solar technology used (PV
38 technology at the low end and the wet-cooled parabolic trough technology at the high end).
39 However, as discussed in Section 11.3.9.1.3, withdrawals from the Garnet Valley ranged from
40 797 to 1,558 ac-ft/yr (980,000 to 1.9 million m³/yr) between 2001 and 2009. Annual withdrawals
41 are permitted up to 3,400 ac-ft/yr (4.2 million m³/yr), of which 2,200 ac-ft/yr (2.7 million m³/yr)
42 is currently leased by Las Vegas Valley Water District, mainly to supply dry-cooled power
43 plants. Thus, solar developments on the SEZ would have the capacity to far exceed the permitted
44 groundwater withdrawal levels in the Garnet Valley basin using wet-cooling. Full development
45
46

1 with dry-cooled solar trough technologies would require up to 3,791 ac-ft/yr, or more than
2 currently permitted levels (Section 11.3.9.2.2). As discussed in Section 11.3.9.1, the Garnet
3 Valley basin-fill aquifer has an estimated perennial yield of 400 ac-ft/yr (490,000 m³/yr). Thus,
4 the current withdrawals in the basin are 2 to 4 times higher than the estimated perennial yield of
5 the basin-fill materials. Groundwater may be available within the carbonate aquifer, but further
6 study is needed to determine the connectivity of the system within Nevada and the potential
7 impacts from large-scale groundwater withdrawals.
8

9 While solar development of the proposed SEZ with water-intensive technologies would
10 likely be infeasible due to impacts on groundwater supplies and existing demands on water
11 rights, excessive groundwater withdrawals could disrupt the existing groundwater supplies in
12 the Garnet Valley and in hydraulically connected basins. In addition, land disturbance for solar
13 facility construction could cause localized soil erosion and sedimentation of ephemeral washes
14 and the dry lake, degrade associated habitats, and alter groundwater recharge and discharge
15 processes (Section 11.3.9.2.4). Thus, a significant increase in withdrawals from solar
16 development within the proposed SEZ could result in a major impact on groundwater, while
17 further cumulative impacts could occur when combined with other current and future uses in the
18 region, including from foreseeable and potential solar developments on public and private lands
19 nearby, as described in Section 11.3.22.2. Groundwater level declines could also affect flow in
20 the White River Groundwater Flow System and impact groundwater discharge to the Muddy
21 River Springs or the Virgin River. This section notes that several natural gas power plants are
22 already located near to or within the boundaries of the proposed SEZ. While a number of these
23 plants use dry cooling, all such plants require water for a variety of other operational purposes.
24

25 Small quantities of sanitary wastewater would be generated during the construction and
26 operation of the potential utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount generated from solar
27 facilities would be in the range of 19 to 148 ac-ft (23,000 to 183,000 m³) during the peak
28 construction year and would range from less than 2 up to 35 ac-ft/yr (up to 43,000 m³/yr) during
29 operations. Because of the small quantity, the sanitary wastewater generated by the solar energy
30 facilities would not be expected to put undue strain on available sanitary wastewater treatment
31 facilities in the general area of the SEZ. For technologies that rely on conventional wet-cooling
32 systems, there would also be from 395 to 711 ac-ft/yr (0.49 to 0.88 million m³) of blowdown
33 water from cooling towers. Blowdown water would need to be either treated on-site or sent to an
34 off-site facility. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure that treatment ponds
35 are effectively lined in order to prevent any groundwater contamination. Thus, blowdown water
36 would not contribute to cumulative effects on treatment systems or on groundwater.
37
38

39 ***11.3.22.4.9 Vegetation***

40
41 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located within the Creosotebush-Dominated Basins
42 ecoregion, which is characterized by sparse creosotebush, white bursage, and big galleta grass,
43 with cacti, yucca, ephedra, and Indian ricegrass also common. Sonora-Mojave Creosote-White
44 Bursage Desert Scrub is the predominant cover type within the proposed SEZ. Areas surrounding
45 the SEZ include the Creosotebush-Dominated Basins and Arid Footslopes ecoregions. The
46 dominant cover type in the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect effects is Sonora-Mojave Creosote-

1 White Bursage Desert Scrub. If utility-scale solar energy projects were to be constructed within
2 the SEZ, all vegetation within the footprints of the facilities would likely be removed during
3 land-clearing and land-grading operations. Full development of the SEZ over 80% of its area
4 would result in moderate impacts on the North American Warm Desert Pavement cover type and
5 small impacts on all other cover types in the affected area (Section 11.3.10.2.1). Dry Lake playa
6 habitats, riparian habitats, or dry wash communities within or downgradient from solar projects
7 could be affected by ground-disturbing activities, while increased runoff from facilities could
8 affect the hydrology of these areas. Dry Lake playa contains 3,310.5 acres (13.4 km²) of
9 wetlands, 1,022 acres (4.1 km²) within the SEZ. In addition, groundwater drawdown by solar
10 facilities could affect mesquite or other communities supported by shallow groundwater,
11 including those in Moapa Warm Springs or Corn Creek Springs. A further concern in disturbed
12 areas is the establishment and spread of noxious weeds and invasive species.

13
14 The fugitive dust generated during the construction of the solar facilities could increase
15 the dust loading in habitats outside a solar project area, in combination with that from other
16 construction, agriculture, recreation, and transportation. The cumulative dust loading could result
17 in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition. Similarly, surface runoff
18 from project areas after heavy rains could increase sedimentation and siltation in areas
19 downstream. Programmatic design features would be used to reduce the impacts from solar
20 energy projects and thus reduce the overall cumulative impacts on plant communities and
21 habitats.

22
23 Solar facilities within the SEZ in combination with other ongoing and reasonably
24 foreseeable future actions would have a cumulative effect on both common and uncommon
25 cover types within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects. Sensitive habitats, including
26 wetlands, would be of particular concern. Numerous ongoing, foreseeable and potential projects
27 lie within this range, including three solar facilities under development and 13 potential facilities
28 with applications covering over 75,000 acres (304 km²) (Section 11.3.22.2). Many other large-
29 acreage developments exist or are proposed within this area, including several large power
30 plants, transmission line and pipeline projects, the 21,454-acre (86.8-km²) Coyote Springs
31 Investment residential development, and a community airport. In addition, the city of Las Vegas
32 lies about 20 mi (32 km) southwest of the proposed SEZ, and the proposed East Mormon
33 Mountain SEZ lies about 43 mi (69 km) to the northeast. Taken together, current and future
34 projects could have moderate to large cumulative effects on vegetation in the region. The degree
35 of such impacts would depend to a large extent on the level of actual solar development in the
36 region. Other future developments, including the Coyote Springs residential project, would also
37 contribute significantly to cumulative effects. The Dry Lake SEZ would make a relatively small
38 contribution to cumulative effects, however, given its modest size in comparison to other
39 developments.

40 41 42 ***11.3.22.4.10 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota***

43
44 Wildlife species that could potentially be affected by the development of utility-scale
45 solar energy facilities in the proposed SEZ include amphibians, reptiles, birds, and
46 mammals. The construction of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ and any associated

1 transmission lines and roads in or near the SEZ would have an impact on wildlife through habitat
2 disturbance (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration), wildlife disturbance, and
3 wildlife injury or mortality. In general, impacted species with broad distributions and a variety of
4 habitats would be less affected than species with a narrowly defined habitat within a restricted
5 area. The use of programmatic design features would reduce the severity of impacts on wildlife.
6 These design features may include pre-disturbance biological surveys to identify key habitat
7 areas used by wildlife, followed by avoidance or minimization of disturbance to those habitats.
8

9 As noted in Section 11.3.22.2, other ongoing, reasonably foreseeable and potential
10 future actions within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ include three solar facilities under
11 development and 13 potential facilities with applications covering over 75,000 acres (304 km²)
12 on public land, two foreseeable large solar facilities on private land, several existing large power
13 plants, several proposed transmission line and pipeline projects, the proposed 21,454-acre
14 (86.8-km²) Coyote Springs Investment residential development, and a proposed new community
15 airport (Section 11.3.22.2). While impacts from full build-out over 80% of the proposed SEZ
16 would result in small impacts on amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species (Section 11.3.11),
17 impacts from foreseeable development within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects
18 could be moderate to large. However, many of the wildlife species present within the proposed
19 SEZ that could be affected by other actions would still have extensive available habitat within
20 the region, while contributions to cumulative impacts from solar facilities within the proposed
21 SEZ would be relatively small.
22

23 There are no perennial or intermittent streams within the proposed Dry Lake SEZ or in
24 the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect effects. Ephemeral washes in the SEZ contain water only
25 following rainfall and typically do not support wetland or riparian habitats. Dry Lake, 981 acres
26 (4 km²) of which are located within the SEZ, similarly has standing water mainly after rainfall.
27 Such areas may contain biota adapted to such conditions, as described in Section 11.3.11.4.1.
28 Thus, no standing aquatic communities are likely to be present in the proposed SEZ. The area
29 of indirect effects holds 6,185 acres (25 km²) of dry lakes and associated wetlands and 7 mi
30 (11 km) of two intermittent streams. Both streams are typically dry and are not expected to
31 contain permanent aquatic habitat or communities, but drain into perennial streams or Lake
32 Mead within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects, which do contain aquatic species,
33 including federally endangered fish species (Section 11.3.11.2). Soil disturbance from
34 construction of solar facilities in the SEZ could result in soil transport to surface streams via
35 water and airborne routes, but this is expected to be low with mitigations in place. Groundwater
36 drawdown by operating solar facilities within the SEZ could affect aquatic habitats in springs
37 supported by groundwater. Cumulative impacts on aquatic biota from all ongoing and
38 foreseeable development within the geographic extent of effects could be significant given the
39 high level of foreseen development. However, contributions to such impacts from solar
40 development within the proposed SEZ would be relatively small. The magnitude of overall
41 cumulative impacts on aquatic species would depend on the extent of eventual solar and other
42 development in the region.
43
44
45

1 **11.3.22.4.11 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and**
2 **Rare Species)**
3

4 On the basis of recorded occurrences or suitable habitat, as many as 63 special status
5 species could occur within the Dry Lake SEZ or could be affected by groundwater use there.
6 The following seven special status species are known to occur within the affected area of the
7 Dry Lake SEZ: Las Vegas bearpoppy, Meadow Valley sandwort, rosy two-tone beardtongue,
8 threecorner milkvetch, yellow two-tone beardtongue, desert tortoise, and Nelson’s bighorn
9 sheep. In addition, there are 13 groundwater-dependent species or species with habitats that may
10 be dependent on groundwater discharge from the Garnet Valley groundwater basin. Occurrences
11 of the desert tortoise have been recorded near the SEZ, while critical habitat for the desert
12 tortoise lies with the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect affects outside the SEZ. Numerous species
13 that occur on or in the vicinity of the SEZ are listed as threatened or endangered by the state of
14 Nevada or listed as a sensitive species by the BLM (Section 11.3.12.1). Avoidance of habitat
15 and minimization of erosion, sedimentation, and dust deposition are all design features to be
16 used to reduce or eliminate the potential for these species to be affected by the construction and
17 operation of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZs and related developments (e.g., access
18 roads and transmission line connections) outside the SEZ. Special-status species are also affected
19 by ongoing actions within the geographic extent of effects; these include impacts from urban
20 areas, roads, transmission lines, and power plants in the area. Future developments, including as
21 many as five large solar facilities under development, 13 potential facilities with applications
22 covering over 75,000 acres on public land, several proposed transmission line and pipeline
23 projects, the proposed 21,454-acre (86.8-km²) Coyote Springs Investment residential
24 development, and a proposed new community airport (Section 11.3.22.2), will add further
25 effects. Potential developments cover large areas and long linear distances and are likely to
26 affect special status species. Total cumulative impacts could be moderate to large. However,
27 contributions to cumulative impacts from solar development with the proposed SEZ would be
28 relatively small. Actual impacts would depend on the number, location, and technologies of
29 projects that are actually built. Future projects would employ mitigation measures to limit
30 effects.
31
32

33 **11.3.22.4.12 Air Quality and Climate**
34

35 While solar energy generates minimal emissions compared with fossil fuels, the site
36 preparation and construction activities associated with solar energy facilities would be
37 responsible for some amount of air pollutants. Most of the emissions would be particulate
38 matter (fugitive dust) and emissions from vehicles and construction equipment. When these
39 emissions are combined with those from other nearby projects outside the proposed SEZ or
40 when they are added to natural dust generation from winds and windstorms, the air quality in
41 the general vicinity of the projects could be temporarily degraded. For example, the maximum
42 24-hour PM₁₀ concentration at or near the SEZ boundaries could at times exceed the applicable
43 standard of 150 µg/m³. The dust generation from construction activities can be controlled by
44 implementing aggressive dust control measures, such as increased watering frequency or road
45 paving or treatment.
46

1 Operation of solar facilities within the area proposed for the SEZ would contribute
2 minimal air emissions from combustion to those from operation of existing and future industrial
3 sources in the area, mainly gas-fired power plants, so the only type of air pollutant of concern is
4 dust generated during construction of new facilities in addition to that produced by winds.
5 Because there are a fair number of other foreseeable and potential actions that could produce
6 fugitive dust emissions, it is possible that construction of two or more projects could overlap in
7 both time and affected area and produce small cumulative air quality effects due to dust
8 emissions.
9

10 Over the long term and across the region, the development of solar energy may have
11 beneficial cumulative impacts on the air quality and atmospheric values by offsetting the need
12 for energy production that results in higher levels of emissions, such as coal, oil, and natural gas.
13 As discussed in Section 11.3.13.2.2, air emissions from operating solar energy facilities are
14 relatively minor, while the displacement of criteria air pollutants, VOCs, TAPs, and GHG
15 emissions currently produced from fossil fuels could be significant. For example, if the Dry Lake
16 SEZ were fully developed (80% of its acreage) with solar facilities, the quantity of pollutants
17 avoided could be as large as 12% of all emissions from the current electric power systems in
18 Nevada.
19
20

21 ***11.3.22.4.13 Visual Resources*** 22

23 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ is located in the Dry Lake Valley east of the Arrow Canyon
24 Range and west of the Dry Lake Range. The valley is bounded by mountain ranges to the east,
25 southeast, and west (Section 11.3.14.1). The area is a combination of rural and industrial in
26 character, with a high level of cultural disturbance; disturbances include power plants, roads,
27 railroads, transmission lines, mining, and industrial facilities. The VRI values for the SEZ and
28 immediate surroundings are VRI Class IV, indicating low visual values.
29

30 Construction of utility-scale solar facilities in the SEZ would further alter the natural
31 scenic quality of the area. Because of the large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and
32 the generally flat, open nature of the proposed SEZ, some lands outside the SEZ would also
33 be subjected to visual impacts related to the construction, operation, and decommissioning
34 of utility-scale solar energy facilities. Potential impacts would include night sky pollution,
35 including increased skyglow, light spillage, and glare. Other foreseeable and potential solar
36 and wind projects and related roads and transmission lines outside the proposed SEZ would
37 cumulatively affect the visual resources in the area.
38

39 Visual impacts resulting from solar energy development within the SEZ would be in
40 addition to impacts caused by other potential projects in the area. There currently are four
41 foreseeable and 16 pending solar development applications and one foreseeable and 9 pending
42 wind site testing applications within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ
43 (Figure 11.3.22.2-1). In addition, several proposed transmission projects and pipeline projects
44 would pass through or near the proposed SEZ as discussed in Section 11.3.22.2. While the
45 contribution these potential projects would make to cumulative impacts in the area depends on
46 the location of facilities that are actually built, it may be concluded that the general visual

1 character of the landscape within this distance would be further altered from a natural state by
2 the presence of these developments. Because of the topography of the region, such
3 developments, located in basin flats, would be visible at great distances from surrounding
4 mountains, which include sensitive viewsheds. Given the proximity of some current proposals, it
5 is possible that two or more facilities would be viewable from a single location. In addition,
6 facilities would be located near major roads and thus would be viewable by motorists, who
7 would also be viewing transmission lines, towns, and other infrastructure, as well as the road
8 system itself.

9
10 As additional facilities are added, several projects might become visible from one
11 location, or in succession, as viewers move through the landscape, as by driving on local roads.
12 In general, the new developments would not be expected to be consistent in terms of their
13 appearance and, depending on the number and type of facilities, the resulting visual disharmony
14 could exceed the visual absorption capability of the landscape and add significantly to the
15 cumulative visual impact. Considering the above, moderate cumulative visual impacts could
16 occur within the geographic extent of effects from future solar, wind, and other existing and
17 future developments.

18 19 20 ***11.3.22.4.14 Acoustic Environment***

21
22 Numerous industrial, road, and aircraft noise sources lie around the proposed Dry Lake
23 SEZ, particularly the southern portion. The existing noise sources around the SEZ include
24 road traffic, railroad traffic, aircraft flyover, industrial activities, and recreational activities.
25 The construction of solar energy facilities could increase the noise levels periodically for up to
26 3 years per facility, but there would be little or minimal noise impacts on nearby residences
27 during operation of solar facilities, including from solar dish engine facilities and from parabolic
28 trough or power tower facilities using TES, which could affect nearby residences.

29
30 Other ongoing and reasonably foreseeable and potential future activities in the general
31 vicinity of the SEZs are described in Section 11.3.22.2. Because nearest residents are relatively
32 far from the SEZ and from other foreseeable projects with respect to noise impacts, cumulative
33 noise effects during the construction or operation of solar facilities are unlikely.

34 35 36 ***11.3.22.4.15 Paleontological Resources***

37
38 The proposed Dry Lake SEZ has low potential for the occurrence of significant fossil
39 material in about 90% of its area, mainly alluvial deposits, and unknown potential in about 10%
40 of its area, mainly playa deposits and residual materials (Section 11.3.16.1). While impacts on
41 significant paleontological resources are unlikely to occur in the SEZ, a review of the geological
42 deposits in the specific sites selected for future projects would be needed to determine whether a
43 paleontological survey was warranted. Any paleontological resources encountered would be
44 mitigated to the extent possible as determined through consultation with the BLM. No significant
45 contributions to cumulative impacts on paleontological resources are expected.

1 **11.3.22.4.16 Cultural Resources**
2

3 The area around Dry Lake is rich in cultural history, with settlements dating as far back
4 as 12,000 years. The area covered by the proposed Dry Lake SEZ has the potential to contain
5 significant cultural resources. Areas with potential for significant sites within the proposed SEZ
6 include dune areas within the valley floor. At least 22 sites have been recorded within the SEZ,
7 one of which, the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road, is listed in the NRHP; six additional sites
8 have been determined to be eligible for inclusion in the NRHP (Section 11.3.17.1). It is possible
9 that the development of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ would contribute to
10 cumulative impacts on cultural resources in the region, such as visual effects on the Old Spanish
11 National Historic Trail. Such contributions on the trail would be relatively small compared to
12 those from other ongoing, foreseeable, and potential development within the 25-mi (40-km)
13 geographic extent of effects (Section 11.3.22.2) because of the intervening topography that helps
14 mask some of the impact from the SEZ. While any future solar projects would disturb large
15 areas, the specific sites selected for future projects would be surveyed; historic properties
16 encountered would be avoided or mitigated to the extent possible. Through ongoing consultation
17 with the Nevada SHPO and appropriate Native American governments, it is likely that most
18 adverse effects on significant resources in the region could be mitigated to some degree. It is
19 unlikely that any sites recorded in the SEZ would be of such individual significance that, if
20 properly mitigated, development would cumulatively cause an irretrievable loss of information
21 about a significant resource type, but this would depend on the results of the future surveys and
22 evaluations.
23
24

25 **11.3.22.4.17 Native American Concerns**
26

27 The Moapa River Valley adjacent to Dry Lake Valley is a core area of Southern Paiute
28 population and culture and is the location of several proposed solar projects within and outside
29 the Dry Lake SEZ (Figure 11.3.22.2-1). While to date, no specific concerns have been raised to
30 the BLM regarding the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, it is possible that the development of utility-
31 scale solar energy projects in the SEZ would contribute to cumulative impacts on resources
32 important to Native Americans, including traditional plant and animal species; and water. When
33 commenting on past projects in the region, the Southern Paiute have expressed concern over
34 adverse effects on a wide range of resources (Section 11.3.18.2). The extent of potential impacts
35 can only be determined through consultation. The Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah has asked to be
36 kept informed of PEIS developments. Government-to-government consultation is under way
37 with federally recognized Native American Tribes with possible traditional ties to the Dry Lake
38 area. All federally recognized Tribes with Southern Paiute roots have been contacted and
39 provided an opportunity to comment or consult regarding this PEIS. Continued discussion with
40 the area Tribes through government-to-government consultation is necessary to effectively
41 consider and address the Tribes' concerns about solar energy development in the Dry Lake SEZ.
42
43

44 **11.3.22.4.18 Socioeconomics**
45

46 Solar energy development projects in the proposed Dry Lake SEZ could cumulatively
47 contribute to socioeconomic effects in the immediate vicinity of the SEZs and in the surrounding

1 ROI. The effects could be positive (e.g., creation of jobs and generation of extra income,
2 increased revenues to local governmental organizations through additional taxes paid by the
3 developers and workers) or negative (e.g., added strain on social institutions such as schools,
4 police protection, and health care facilities). Impacts from solar development would be most
5 intense during facility construction, but of greatest duration during operations. Construction
6 would temporarily increase the number of workers in the area needing housing and services.
7 Temporary workers involved in other new developments in the area, including other renewable
8 energy development would also contribute to these effects. The number of workers involved in
9 the construction of solar projects in the peak construction year (including the transmission lines)
10 could range from about 260 to 3,500, depending on the technology being employed, with solar
11 PV facilities at the low end and solar trough facilities at the high end. The total number of jobs
12 created in the area could range from approximately 440 (solar PV) to as high as 5,800 (solar
13 trough). Cumulative socioeconomic effects in the ROI from construction of solar facilities would
14 occur to the extent that multiple construction projects of any type were ongoing at the same time.
15 It is a reasonable expectation that this condition would occasionally occur within a 50-mi
16 (80-km) radius of the SEZ over the 20-year or more solar development period.

17
18 Annual impacts during the operation of solar facilities would be less, but of 20- to
19 30-year duration, and could combine with those from other new developments in the area,
20 including numerous foreseeable and potential solar and wind energy projects and several
21 proposed transmission line and pipeline projects (Section 11.3.22.2). The number of workers
22 needed at the SEZ solar facilities would be in the range of 30 to 550, with approximately 40 to
23 800 total jobs created in the region, assuming full build-out of the SEZ (Section 11.3.19.2.2).
24 Population increases would contribute to general upward trends seen in the region in recent
25 years. The socioeconomic impacts overall would be positive, through the creation of additional
26 jobs and income. The negative impacts, including some short-term disruption of rural community
27 quality of life, would not likely be considered large enough to require specific mitigation
28 measures.

31 ***11.3.22.4.19 Environmental Justice***

32
33 Any impacts from solar development could have cumulative impacts on minority and
34 low-income populations within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ in combination with other
35 development in the area. Such impacts could be both positive, such as from increased economic
36 activity, and negative, such as from visual impacts, noise, and exposure to fugitive dust. Actual
37 impacts would depend on the geographic range of effects and on where low-income populations
38 are located relative to solar and other proposed facilities. Overall, effects from facilities within
39 the SEZ are expected to be small, while other foreseeable and potential actions could contribute
40 additional small effects on minority and low-income populations, given the relatively high level
41 of development possible. While no minority or low-income populations are currently present
42 within the 50-mi (80-km) ROI (Section 11.3.20.1), any future minority and low-income
43 populations could experience small cumulative effects of some types; these could include effects
44 on visual resources or from fugitive dust, from all actions within the geographic extent of effects,
45 but contributions from solar development in the proposed Dry Lake SEZ would be small. If

1 needed, mitigation measures can be employed to reduce the impacts on these populations in the
2 vicinity of the SEZ.

3
4
5 **11.3.22.4.20 Transportation**
6

7 I-15 runs along and through the southeast edge of the proposed Dry Lake SEZ and
8 U.S. 93 runs along the southwest border of the SEZ. The Las Vegas metropolitan area lies
9 approximately 15 mi (24 km) to the southwest of the SEZ along I-15. The closest public airport
10 is the North Las Vegas Airport 21 mi (34 km) to the southwest. Nellis Air Force Base is located
11 13 mi (21 km) to the southwest. The closest railroad access is in Las Vegas and in Moapa, about
12 24 mi (39 km) to the northeast of the SEZ. During construction of utility-scale solar energy
13 facilities, there could be up to 1,000 workers commuting to the construction site at the SEZ,
14 which could increase the AADT on these roads by 2,000 vehicle trips for each facility under
15 construction. With as many as two facilities assumed to be under construction at the same time,
16 traffic on I-15 and U.S. 93 could experience slowdowns in the area of the SEZ
17 (Section 11.3.21.2). This increase in highway traffic caused by construction workers could
18 likewise have small to moderate cumulative impacts on traffic flow in combination with existing
19 traffic levels and increases from additional future developments in the area; this could include
20 impacts from any of several proposed solar projects near the proposed SEZ, should construction
21 schedules overlap. Local road improvements may be necessary on portions of I-15 near the SEZ.
22 Any impacts during construction activities would be temporary. The impacts can also be
23 mitigated to some degree by staggered work schedules and ride-sharing programs. Traffic
24 increases during operation would have little contribution to cumulative impacts and would be
25 relatively small because of the low number of workers needed to operate the solar facilities.
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11.3.23 References

Note to Reader: This list of references identifies Web pages and associated URLs where reference data were obtained for the analyses presented in this PEIS. It is likely that at the time of publication of this PEIS, some of these Web pages may no longer be available or their URL addresses may have changed. The original information has been retained and is available through the Public Information Docket for this PEIS.

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Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for

Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States



Volume 5, Part 2

Chapter 11: Nevada Proposed Solar Energy Zones

On the cover:

Typical Solar Fields for Various Technology Types (clockwise from upper left):
Solar Parabolic Trough (Source: Hosoya et al. 2008),
Solar Power Tower (Credit: Sandia National Laboratories. Source: NREL 2010a),
Photovoltaic (Credit: Arizona Public Service. Source: NREL 2010b), and
Dish Engine (Credit: R. Montoya. Source: Sandia National Laboratories 2008).
Reference citations are available in Chapter 1.

Background photo: Parabolic trough facility from an elevated viewpoint
(Credit: Argonne National Laboratory)

Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States (DES 10-59; DOE/EIS-0403)

Responsible Agencies: The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) are co-lead agencies. Nineteen cooperating agencies participated in the preparation of this PEIS: U.S. Department of Defense; U.S. Bureau of Reclamation; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. National Park Service; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, South Pacific Division; Arizona Game and Fish Department; California Energy Commission; California Public Utilities Commission; Nevada Department of Wildlife; N-4 Grazing Board, Nevada; Utah Public Lands Policy Coordination Office; Clark County, Nevada, including Clark County Department of Aviation; Dona Ana County, New Mexico; Esmeralda County, Nevada; Eureka County, Nevada; Lincoln County, Nevada; Nye County, Nevada; and Saguache County, Colorado.

Locations: Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

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Abstract: The BLM and DOE are considering taking actions to facilitate solar energy development in compliance with various orders, mandates, and agency policies. For the BLM, these actions include the evaluation of a new BLM Solar Energy Program applicable to all utility-scale solar energy development on BLM-administered lands in six southwestern states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah). For DOE, they include the evaluation of developing new program guidance relevant to DOE-supported solar projects. The Draft PEIS assesses the environmental, social, and economic effects of the agencies' proposed actions and alternatives.

For the BLM, the Draft PEIS analyzes a no action alternative, under which solar energy development would continue on BLM-administered lands in accordance with the terms and conditions of the BLM's existing solar energy policies, and two action alternatives for implementing a new BLM Solar Energy Program. Under the solar energy development program alternative (BLM's preferred alternative), the BLM would establish a new Solar Energy Program of administration and authorization policies and required design features and would exclude solar energy development from certain BLM-administered lands. Under this alternative, approximately 22 million acres of BLM-administered lands would be available for right-of-way (ROW) application. A subset of these lands, about 677,400 acres, would be identified as solar energy zones (SEZs), or areas where the BLM would prioritize solar energy and associated transmission infrastructure development. Under the SEZ program alternative, the same policies and design features would be adopted, but development would be excluded from all BLM-administered lands except those located within the SEZs.

For DOE, the Draft PEIS analyzes a no action alternative, under which DOE would continue to conduct environmental reviews of DOE-funded solar projects on a case-by-case basis, and one action alternative, under which DOE would develop programmatic guidance to further integrate environmental considerations into its analysis and selection of solar projects that it will support.

The EPA Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft PEIS was published in the *Federal Register* on December 17, 2010. Comments on the Draft PEIS are due by March 17, 2011.

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The detailed analysis of the proposed solar energy zones (SEZs) in Nevada, provided in Sections 11.1 through 11.7, will be used to inform BLM decisions regarding the size, configuration, and/or management of these SEZs. These sections also include proposed mitigation requirements (termed “SEZ-specific design features”). Please note that the SEZ-specific summaries of Affected Environment use the descriptions of Affected Environment for the six-state study area presented in Chapter 4 of the PEIS as a basis. Also note that the SEZ-specific design features have been proposed with consideration of the general impact analyses for solar energy facilities presented in Chapter 5, and on the assumption that all programmatic design features presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, will be required for projects that will be located within the SEZs.

BLM will implement its SEZ-specific decisions through the BLM Record of Decision for the Final PEIS. Comments received during the review period for the Draft PEIS will inform BLM decisions.

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NOTATION

The following is a list of acronyms and abbreviations, chemical names, and units of measure used in this document. Some acronyms used only in tables may be defined only in those tables.

GENERAL ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AADT	annual average daily traffic
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
AC	alternating current
ACC	air-cooled condenser
ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
ADEQ	Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
ADOT	Arizona Department of Transportation
ADWR	Arizona Department of Water Resources
AERMOD	AMS/EPA Regulatory Model
AFC	Application for Certification
AGL	above ground level
AIRFA	American Indian Religious Freedom Act
AMA	active management area
AML	animal management level
ANHP	Arizona National Heritage Program
APE	area of potential effect
APLIC	Avian Power Line Interaction Committee
APP	Avian Protection Plan
AQCR	Air Quality Control Region
AQRV	air quality-related value
ARB	Air Resources Board
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
ARRTIS	Arizona Renewable Resource and Transmission Identification Subcommittee
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
ARZC	Arizona and California
ATSDR	Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
AUM	animal unit month
AVWS	Audio Visual Warning System
AWBA	Arizona Water Banking Authority
AWEA	American Wind Energy Association
AWRM	Active Water Resource Management
AZ DOT	Arizona Department of Transportation
AZDA	Arizona Department of Agriculture
AZGFD	Arizona Game and Fish Department
AZGS	Arizona Geological Survey

1	BA	biological assessment
2	BAP	base annual production
3	BEA	Bureau of Economic Analysis
4	BISON-M	Biota Information System of New Mexico
5	BLM	Bureau of Land Management
6	BMP	best management practice
7	BNSF	Burlington Northern Santa Fe
8	BO	biological opinion
9	BOR	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
10	BPA	Bonneville Power Administration
11	BRAC	Blue Ribbon Advisory Council on Climate Change
12	BSE	Beacon Solar Energy
13	BSEP	Beacon Solar Energy Project
14	BTS	Bureau of Transportation Statistics
15		
16	CAA	Clean Air Act
17	CAAQS	California Air Quality Standards
18	Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
19	C-AMA	California-Arizona Maneuver Area
20	CAP	Central Arizona Project
21	CARB	California Air Resources Board
22	CAReGAP	California Regional Gap Analysis Project
23	CASQA	California Stormwater Quality Association
24	CASTNET	Clean Air Status and Trends NETwork
25	CAWA	Colorado Agricultural Water Alliance
26	CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
27	CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
28	CDCA	California Desert Conservation Area
29	CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
30	CDOT	Colorado Department of Transportation
31	CDOW	Colorado Division of Wildlife
32	CDPHE	Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
33	CDWR	California Department of Water Resources
34	CEC	California Energy Commission
35	CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
36	CES	constant elasticity of substitution
37	CESA	California Endangered Species Act
38	CESF	Carrizo Energy Solar Farm
39	CFR	<i>Code of Federal Regulations</i>
40	CGE	computable general equilibrium
41	CIRA	Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere
42	CLFR	compact linear Fresnel collector
43	CPC	Center for Plant Conservation
44	CNDDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
45	CNEL	community noise equivalent level
46	CNHP	Colorado National Heritage Program

1	Colorado DWR	Colorado Department of Water Resources
2	CPUC	California Public Utilities Commission
3	CPV	concentrating photovoltaic
4	CRBSCF	Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum
5	CREZ	competitive renewable energy zone
6	CRSCP	Colorado River Salinity Control Program
7	CSA	Candidate Study Area
8	CSC	Coastal Services Center
9	CSFG	carbon-sequestration fossil generation
10	CSP	concentrating solar power
11	CSQA	California Stormwater Quality Association
12	CSRI	Cultural Systems Research, Incorporated
13	CTG	combustion turbine generator
14	CTPG	California Transmission Planning Group
15	CTSR	Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad
16	CUP	Conditional Use Permit
17	CVP	Central Valley Project
18	CWA	Clean Water Act
19	CWCB	Colorado Water Conservation Board
20	CWHR	California Wildlife Habitat Relationship System
21		
22	DC	direct current
23	DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
24	DNA	Determination of NEPA Adequacy
25	DNI	direct normal insulation
26	DNL	day-night average sound level
27	DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
28	DOE	U.S. Department of Energy
29	DOI	U.S. Department of the Interior
30	DOL	U.S. Department of Labor
31	DOT	U.S. Department of Transportation
32	DRECP	California Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan
33	DSM	demand side management
34	DTC/C-AMA	Desert Training Center/California–Arizona Maneuver Area
35	DWMA	Desert Wildlife Management Area
36		
37	EA	environmental assessment
38	ECAR	East Central Area Reliability Coordination Agreement
39	ECOS	Environmental Conservation Online System (USFWS)
40	EERE	Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (DOE)
41	Eg	band gap energy
42	EIA	Energy Information Administration
43	EIS	environmental impact statement
44	EISA	Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007
45	EMF	electromagnetic field
46	E.O.	Executive Order

1	EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
2	EPRI	Electric Power Research Institute
3	EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
4	ERCOT	Electric Reliability Council of Texas
5	ERO	Electric Reliability Organization
6	ERS	Economic Research Service
7	ESA	Endangered Species Act of 1973
8	ESRI	Environmental Systems Research Institute
9		
10	FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
11	FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
12	FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
13	FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
14	FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
15	FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
16	FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
17	FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
18	FR	<i>Federal Register</i>
19	FRCC	Florida Reliability Coordinating Council
20	FSA	Final Staff Assessment
21	FTE	full-time equivalent
22	FY	fiscal year
23		
24	G&TM	Generation and Transmission Modeling
25	GCRP	U.S. Global Climate Research Program
26	GDA	generation development area
27	GHG	greenhouse gas
28	GIS	geographic information system
29	GPS	global positioning system
30	GTM	Generation and Transmission Model
31	GUAC	Groundwater Users Advisory Council
32	GWP	global warming potential
33		
34	HA	herd area
35	HAP	hazardous air pollutant
36	HAZCOM	hazard communication
37	HCE	heat collection element
38	HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan
39	HMA	Herd Management Area
40	HMMH	Harris Miller Miller & Hanson, Inc.
41	HRSG	heat recovery steam generator
42	HSPD	Homeland Security Presidential Directive
43	HTF	heat transfer fluid
44	HVAC	heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning
45		
46		

1	I	Interstate
2	IARC	International Agency for Research on Cancer
3	IBA	important bird area
4	ICE	internal combustion engine
5	ICWMA	Imperial County Weed Management Area
6	IEC	International Electrochemical Commission
7	IFR	instrument flight rule
8	IID	Imperial Irrigation District
9	IM	Instruction Memorandum
10	IMPS	Iron Mountain Pumping Station
11	IMS	interim mitigation strategy
12	INA	Irrigation Non-Expansion Area
13	IOP	Interagency Operating Procedure
14	IOU	investor-owned utility
15	IPPC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
16	ISA	Independent Science Advisor; Instant Study Area
17	ISB	Intermontane Seismic Belt
18	ISCC	integrated solar combined cycle
19	ISDRA	Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area
20	ISEGS	Ivanpah Solar Energy Generating System
21	ITP	incidental take permit
22	IUCNNR	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
23	IUCNP	International Union for Conservation of Nature Pakistan
24		
25	KGA	known geothermal resources area
26	KML	keyhole markup language
27	KOP	key observation point
28	KSLA	known sodium leasing area
29		
30	LCC	Landscape Conservation Cooperative
31	LCOE	levelized cost of energy
32	L _{dn}	day-night average sound level
33	LDWMA	Low Desert Weed Management Area
34	L _{eq}	equivalent sound pressure level
35	LLA	limited land available
36	LLRW	low-level radioactive waste (waste classification)
37	LRG	Lower Rio Grande
38	LSA	lake and streambed alteration
39	LSE	load-serving entity
40	LTVA	long-term visitor area
41		
42	MAAC	Mid-Atlantic Area Council
43	MAIN	Mid-Atlantic Interconnected Network
44	MAPP	methyl acetylene propadiene stabilizer; Mid-Continent Area Power Pool
45	MCAS	Marine Corps Air Station
46	MCL	maximum contaminant level

1	MFP	Management Framework Plan
2	MIG	Minnesota IMPLAN Group
3	MLA	maximum land available
4	MOA	military operating area
5	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
6	MPDS	maximum potential development scenario
7	MRA	Multiple Resource Area
8	MRI	Midwest Research Institute
9	MRO	Midwest Reliability Organization
10	MSDS	Material Safety Data Sheet
11	MSL	mean sea level
12	MTR	military training route
13	MWA	Mojave Water Agency
14	MWD	Metropolitan Water District
15	MWMA	Mojave Weed Management Area
16		
17	NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
18	NADP	National Atmospheric Deposition Program
19	NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
20	NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission (California)
21	NAIC	North American Industrial Classification System
22	NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
23	NCA	National Conservation Area
24	NCCAC	Nevada Climate Change Advisory Committee
25	NCDC	National Climatic Data Center
26	NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
27	NDCNR	Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
28	NDEP	Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
29	NDOT	Nevada Department of Transportation
30	NDOW	Nevada Department of Wildlife
31	NDWP	Nevada Division of Water Planning
32	NDWR	Nevada Division of Water Resources
33	NEAP	Natural Events Action Plan
34	NEC	National Electric Code
35	NED	National Elevation Database
36	NEP	Natural Events Policy
37	NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
38	NERC	North American Electricity Reliability Corporation
39	NHA	National Heritage Area
40	NHNM	National Heritage New Mexico
41	NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
42	NID	National Inventory of Dams
43	NM DOT	New Mexico Department of Transportation
44	NLCS	National Landscape Conservation System
45	NMAC	<i>New Mexico Administrative Code</i>
46	NMBGMR	New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources

1	NMDGF	New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
2	NMED	New Mexico Environment Department
3	NMED-AQB	New Mexico Environment Department-Air Quality Board
4	NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
5	NMOSE	New Mexico Office of the State Engineer
6	NMSU	New Mexico State University
7	NNHP	Nevada Natural Heritage Program
8	NNL	National Natural Landmark
9	NNSA	National Nuclear Security Administration
10	NOA	Notice of Availability
11	NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
12	NOI	Notice of Intent
13	NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
14	NP	National Park
15	NPL	National Priorities List
16	NPS	National Park Service
17	NRA	National Recreation Area
18	NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
19	NREL	National Renewable Energy Laboratory
20	NRHP	<i>National Register of Historic Places</i>
21	NRS	<i>Nevada Revised Statutes</i>
22	NSC	National Safety Council
23	NSO	no surface occupancy
24	NSTC	National Science and Technology Council
25	NTS	Nevada Test Site
26	NTTR	Nevada Test and Training Range
27	NVCRS	Nevada Cultural Resources Inventory System
28	NV DOT	Nevada Department of Transportation
29	NWCC	National Wind Coordinating Committee
30	NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
31	NWPP	Northwest Power Pool
32	NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
33	NWSRS	National Scenic River System
34		
35	O&M	operation and maintenance
36	ODFW	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
37	OHV	off-highway vehicle
38	ONA	Outstanding Natural Area
39	ORC	organic Rankine cycle
40	OSE/ISC	Office of the State Engineer/Interstate Stream Commission
41	OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
42	OTA	Office of Technology Assessment
43		
44	PA	Programmatic Agreement
45	PAD	Preliminary Application Document
46	PAH	polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon

1	PAT	peer analysis tool
2	PCB	polychlorinated biphenyl
3	PCM	purchase change material
4	PCS	power conditioning system
5	PCU	power converting unit
6	PEIS	programmatic environmental impact statement
7	PFYC	potential fossil yield classification
8	PIER	Public Interest Energy Research
9	P.L.	Public Law
10	PLSS	Public Land Survey System
11	PM	particulate matter
12	PM _{2.5}	particulate matter with a mean aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 µm or less
13	PM ₁₀	particulate matter with a mean aerodynamic diameter of 10 µm or less
14	POD	plan of development
15	POU	publicly owned utility
16	PPA	Power Purchase Agreement
17	PPE	personal protective equipment
18	PSD	Prevention of Significant Deterioration
19	PURPA	Public Utility Regulatory Policy Act
20	PV	photovoltaic
21	PVID	Palo Verde Irrigation District
22	PWR	public water reserve
23		
24	QRA	qualified resource area
25		
26	R&I	relevance and importance
27	RCI	residential, commercial, and industrial (sector)
28	RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976
29	RD&D	research, development, and demonstration; research, development, and
30		deployment
31	RDBMS	Relational Database Management System
32	RDEP	Restoration Design Energy Project
33	REA	Rapid Ecoregional Assessment
34	REAT	Renewable Energy Action Team
35	REDI	Renewable Energy Development Infrastructure
36	ReEDS	Regional Energy Deployment System
37	REPG	Renewable Energy Policy Group
38	RETA	Renewable Energy Transmission Authority
39	RETAAC	Renewable Energy Transmission Access Advisory Committee
40	RETI	Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative
41	REZ	renewable energy zone
42	RF	radio frequency
43	RFC	Reliability First Corporation
44	RFDS	reasonably foreseeable development scenario
45	RGP	Rio Grande Project
46	RGWCD	Rio Grande Water Conservation District

1	RMP	Resource Management Plan
2	RMPA	Rocky Mountain Power Area
3	RMZ	Resource Management Zone
4	ROD	Record of Decision
5	ROI	region of influence
6	ROS	recreation opportunity spectrum
7	ROW	right-of-way
8	RPG	renewable portfolio goal
9	RPS	Renewable Portfolio Standard
10	RRC	Regional Reliability Council
11	RSEP	Rice Solar Energy Project
12	RSI	Renewable Systems Interconnection
13	RTTF	Renewable Transmission Task Force
14	RV	recreational vehicle
15		
16	SAAQS	State Ambient Air Quality Standards
17	SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
18	SCADA	supervisory control and data acquisition
19	SCE	Southern California Edison
20	SCRMA	Special Cultural Resource Management Area
21	SDRREG	San Diego Regional Renewable Energy Group
22	SDWA	Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974
23	SEGIS	Solar Energy Grid Integration System
24	SEGS	Solar Energy Generating System
25	SEI	Sustainable Energy Ireland
26	SEIA	Solar Energy Industrial Association
27	SES	Stirling Energy Systems
28	SETP	Solar Energy Technologies Program (DOE)
29	SEZ	solar energy zone
30	SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office(r)
31	SIP	State Implementation Plan
32	SLRG	San Luis & Rio Grande
33	SMA	Special Management Area
34	SMP	suggested management practice
35	SNWA	Southern Nevada Water Authority
36	SPP	Southwest Power Pool
37	SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
38	SSA	Socorro Seismic Anomaly
39	SSI	self-supplied industry
40	ST	solar thermal
41	STG	steam turbine generator
42	SUA	special use airspace
43	SWAT	Southwest Area Transmission
44	SWIP	Southwest Intertie Project
45	SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
46	SWReGAP	Southwest Regional Gap Analysis Project
47		

1	TAP	toxic air pollutant
2	TCC	Transmission Corridor Committee
3	TDS	total dissolved solids
4	TEPPC	Transmission Expansion Planning Policy Committee
5	TES	thermal energy storage
6	TSA	Transportation Security Administration
7	TSCA	Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976
8	TSDF	treatment, storage, and disposal facility
9	TSP	total suspended particulates
10		
11	UACD	Utah Association of Conservation Districts
12	UBWR	Utah Board of Water Resources
13	UDA	Utah Department of Agriculture
14	UDEQ	Utah Department of Environmental Quality
15	UDNR	Utah Department of Natural Resources
16	UDOT	Utah Department of Transportation
17	UDWQ	Utah Division of Water Quality
18	UDWR	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
19	UGS	Utah Geological Survey
20	UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
21	UNPS	Utah Native Plant Society
22	UP	Union Pacific
23	UREZ	Utah Renewable Energy Zone
24	USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
25	USC	<i>United States Code</i>
26	USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
27	USFS	U.S. Forest Service
28	USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
29	USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
30	Utah DWR	Utah Division of Water Rights
31	UTTR	Utah Test and Training Range
32	UWS	Underground Water Storage, Savings and Replenishment Act
33		
34	VACAR	Virginia-Carolinas Subregion
35	VCRS	Visual Contrast Rating System
36	VFR	visual flight rule
37	VOC	volatile organic compound
38	VRI	Visual Resource Inventory
39	VRM	Visual Resource Management
40		
41	WA	Wilderness Area
42	WAPA	Western Area Power Administration
43	WECC	Western Electricity Coordinating Council
44	WECC CAN	Western Electricity Coordinating Council – Canada
45	WEG	wind erodibility group
46	WGA	Western Governors’ Association

1	WGFD	Wyoming Game and Fish Department
2	WHA	wildlife habitat area
3	WHO	World Health Organization
4	WRAP	Water Resources Allocation Program; Western Regional Air Partnership
5	WRCC	Western Regional Climate Center
6	WREZ	Western Renewable Energy Zones
7	WRRRI	Water Resources Research Institute
8	WSA	Wilderness Study Area
9	WSC	wildlife species of special concern
10	WSMR	White Sands Missile Range
11	WSR	Wild and Scenic River
12	WSRA	Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968
13	WWII	World War II
14		
15	YPG	Yuma Proving Ground
16		
17	ZITA	zone identification and technical analysis
18	ZLD	zero liquid discharge
19		
20		

21 **CHEMICALS**

23	CH ₄	methane	NO ₂	nitrogen dioxide
24	CO	carbon monoxide	NO _x	nitrogen oxides
25	CO ₂	carbon dioxide		
26	CO _{2e}	carbon dioxide equivalent	O ₃	ozone
27				
28	H ₂ S	hydrogen sulfide	Pb	lead
29	Hg	mercury		
30			SF ₆	sulfur hexafluoride
31	N ₂ O	nitrous oxide	SO ₂	sulfur dioxide
32	NH ₃	ammonia	SO _x	sulfur oxides
33				
34				

35 **UNITS OF MEASURE**

37	ac-ft	acre-foot (feet)	°F	degree(s) Fahrenheit
38	bhp	brake horsepower	ft	foot (feet)
39			ft ²	square foot (feet)
40	°C	degree(s) Celsius	ft ³	cubic foot (feet)
41	cf	cubic foot (feet)		
42	cfs	cubic foot (feet) per second	g	gram(s)
43	cm	centimeter(s)	gal	gallon(s)
44			GJ	gigajoule(s)
45	dB	decibel(s)	gpcd	gallon per capita per day
46	dBA	A-weighted decibel(s)	gpd	gallon(s) per day

1	gpm	gallon(s) per minute	Mgal	million gallons
2	GW	gigawatt(s)	mi	mile(s)
3	GWh	gigawatt hour(s)	mi ²	square mile(s)
4	GWh/yr	gigawatt hour(s) per year	min	minute(s)
5			mm	millimeter(s)
6	h	hour(s)	MMt	million metric ton(s)
7	ha	hectare(s)	MPa	megapascal(s)
8	Hz	hertz	mph	mile(s) per hour
9			MW	megawatt(s)
10	in.	inch(es)	MWe	megawatt(s) electric
11			MWh	megawatt-hour(s)
12	J	joule(s)		
13			ppm	part(s) per million
14	K	degree(s) Kelvin	psi	pound(s) per square inch
15	kcal	kilocalorie(s)	psia	pound(s) per square inch absolute
16	kg	kilogram(s)		
17	kHz	kilohertz	rpm	rotation(s) per minute
18	km	kilometer(s)		
19	km ²	square kilometer(s)	s	second(s)
20	kPa	kilopascal(s)	scf	standard cubic foot (feet)
21	kV	kilovolt(s)		
22	kVA	kilovolt-ampere(s)	TWh	terawatt hours
23	kW	kilowatt(s)		
24	kWh	kilowatt-hour(s)	VdB	vibration velocity decibel(s)
25	kWp	kilowatt peak		
26			W	watt(s)
27	L	liter(s)		
28	lb	pound(s)	yd ²	square yard(s)
29			yd ³	cubic yard(s)
30	m	meter(s)	yr	year(s)
31	m ²	square meter(s)		
32	m ³	cubic meter(s)	µg	microgram(s)
33	mg	milligram(s)	µm	micrometer(s)

ENGLISH/METRIC AND METRIC/ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS

The following table lists the appropriate equivalents for English and metric units.

Multiply	By	To Obtain
<i>English/Metric Equivalents</i>		
acres	0.004047	square kilometers (km ²)
acre-feet (ac-ft)	1.234	cubic meters (m ³)
cubic feet (ft ³)	0.02832	cubic meters (m ³)
cubic yards (yd ³)	0.7646	cubic meters (m ³)
degrees Fahrenheit (°F) -32	0.5555	degrees Celsius (°C)
feet (ft)	0.3048	meters (m)
gallons (gal)	3.785	liters (L)
gallons (gal)	0.003785	cubic meters (m ³)
inches (in.)	2.540	centimeters (cm)
miles (mi)	1.609	kilometers (km)
miles per hour (mph)	1.609	kilometers per hour (kph)
pounds (lb)	0.4536	kilograms (kg)
short tons (tons)	907.2	kilograms (kg)
short tons (tons)	0.9072	metric tons (t)
square feet (ft ²)	0.09290	square meters (m ²)
square yards (yd ²)	0.8361	square meters (m ²)
square miles (mi ²)	2.590	square kilometers (km ²)
yards (yd)	0.9144	meters (m)
<i>Metric/English Equivalents</i>		
centimeters (cm)	0.3937	inches (in.)
cubic meters (m ³)	0.00081	acre-feet (ac-ft)
cubic meters (m ³)	35.31	cubic feet (ft ³)
cubic meters (m ³)	1.308	cubic yards (yd ³)
cubic meters (m ³)	264.2	gallons (gal)
degrees Celsius (°C) +17.78	1.8	degrees Fahrenheit (°F)
hectares (ha)	2.471	acres
kilograms (kg)	2.205	pounds (lb)
kilograms (kg)	0.001102	short tons (tons)
kilometers (km)	0.6214	miles (mi)
kilometers per hour (kph)	0.6214	miles per hour (mph)
liters (L)	0.2642	gallons (gal)
meters (m)	3.281	feet (ft)
meters (m)	1.094	yards (yd)
metric tons (t)	1.102	short tons (tons)
square kilometers (km ²)	247.1	acres
square kilometers (km ²)	0.3861	square miles (mi ²)
square meters (m ²)	10.76	square feet (ft ²)
square meters (m ²)	1.196	square yards (yd ²)

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1 **11.4 DRY LAKE VALLEY NORTH**

2
3
4 **11.4.1 Background and Summary of Impacts**

5
6
7 **11.4.1.1 General Information**

8
9 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located in Lincoln County in southeastern
10 Nevada (Figure 11.4.1.1-1). The SEZ has a total area of 76,874 acres (311 km²). In 2008, the
11 county population was 4,643, while adjacent Clark County to the south had a population
12 of 1,879,093. The closest population centers to the SEZ are Pioche, located about 15 mi (24 km)
13 to the east, and Caliente, located about 15 mi (24 km) to the southeast; both communities have
14 populations of about 1,000. The smaller communities of Caselton and Prince are located about
15 13 mi (21 km) to the east of the SEZ. Las Vegas is located about 110 mi (180 km) to the south.
16

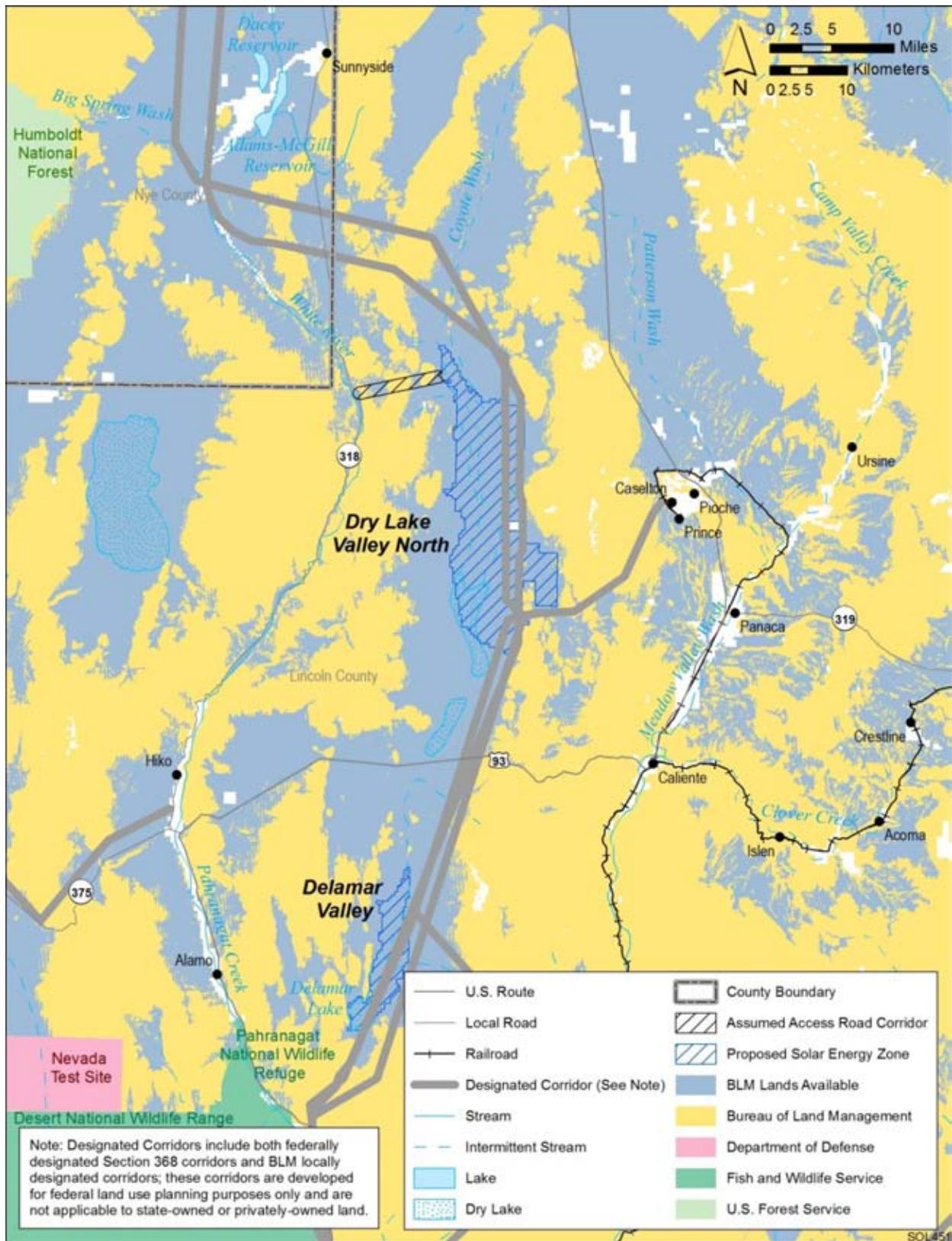
17 The nearest major road to the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is State Route 318, which is
18 about 7 mi (11 km) to the west of the SEZ, while U.S. 93 is about 8 mi (13 km) to the south.
19 Access to the interior of the SEZ is by dirt roads. The nearest railroad access is approximately
20 25 mi (40 km) away, while nearby airports include Lincoln County Airport in Panaca and Alamo
21 Landing Field in Alamo, which are located about 13 mi (21 km) south-southeast of and 35 mi
22 (56 km) southwest of the SEZ, respectively. The proposed Delamar Valley SEZ lies about 23 mi
23 (37 km) to the south of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.
24

25 A 69-kV transmission line intersects the southeast corner of the SEZ. It is assumed that
26 this existing transmission line could potentially provide access from the SEZ to the transmission
27 grid (see Section 11.4.1.1.2).
28

29 There are one pending solar development ROW application, six authorized and one
30 pending wind site testing applications, and one pending wind development application on BLM-
31 administered land within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.
32 There are currently no solar applications within the SEZ. These applications are discussed in
33 Section 11.4.22.2.1.
34

35 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is undeveloped and remote. The overall
36 character of the surrounding land is rural. The SEZ is located in the Dry Lake Valley and is
37 framed by mountain ranges on the east and west. The North Pahroc Range rises about 6 mi
38 (10 km) west of the SEZ, and the West Range, Bristol Range, Highland Range, Ely Springs
39 Range, Black Canyon Range, and Burnt Springs Range occur east of the SEZ. No permanent
40 surface water sources occur in the proposed SEZ. Vegetation is generally sparse, with large
41 areas of low grasses and low-height scrubland.
42

43 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ in Nevada and other relevant information are
44 shown in Figure 11.4.1.1-1. The criteria used to identify the proposed Dry Lake Valley North
45 SEZ in Nevada as an appropriate location for solar energy development included proximity to
46 existing transmission lines or designated corridors, proximity to existing roads, a slope of
47 generally less than 2%, and an area of more than 2,500 acres (10 km²). In addition, the area
48 was identified as being relatively free of other types of conflicts, such as USFWS-designated



1

2 **FIGURE 11.4.1.1-1 Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ**

1 critical habitat for threatened and endangered species, ACECs, SRMAs, and NLCS lands
2 (see Section 2.2.4.1 for the complete list of exclusions). Although these classes of restricted
3 lands were excluded from the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, other restrictions might
4 be appropriate. The analyses in the following sections address the affected environment and
5 potential impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy development in the proposed SEZ
6 for important environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic resources.
7

8 As initially announced in the *Federal Register* on June 30, 2009, the proposed Dry Lake
9 Valley North SEZ encompassed 49,775 acres (201 km²). Subsequent to the study area scoping
10 period, the boundaries of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ were altered substantially
11 after further observations by the BLM District Office indicating that the additional area met all
12 criteria for solar development. The revised SEZ is approximately 27,100 acres (110 km²), or
13 about 54%, larger than the original SEZ as published in June 2009.
14
15

16 **11.4.1.2 Development Assumptions for the Impact Analysis** 17

18 Maximum solar development of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is assumed to
19 be 80% of the SEZ area over a period of 20 years; these values are shown in Table 11.4.1.2-1,
20 along with other development assumptions. Full development of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
21 would allow development of facilities with an estimated total of 6,833 MW of electrical power
22 capacity if power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies were used, assuming 9 acres/MW
23 (0.04 km²/MW) of land required, and an estimated 12,300 MW of power if solar trough
24 technologies were used, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.
25

26 Availability of transmission from SEZs to load centers will be an important consideration
27 for future development in SEZs. The nearest existing transmission line is a 69-kV line that runs
28 through the SEZ. It is possible that this existing line could be used to provide access from the
29 SEZ to the transmission grid, but the 69-kV capacity of that line would be inadequate for 6,833
30 to 12,300 MW of new capacity (note: a 500- kV line can accommodate approximately the load
31 of one 700-MW facility). At full build-out capacity, it is clear that substantial new transmission
32 and/or upgrades of existing transmission lines would be required to bring electricity from the
33 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ to load centers; however, at this time, the location and size
34 of such new transmission facilities are unknown. Generic impacts of transmission and associated
35 infrastructure construction and of line upgrades for various resources are discussed in Chapter 5.
36 Project-specific analyses would need to identify the specific impacts of new transmission
37 construction and line upgrades for any projects proposed within the SEZ.
38

39 For the purposes of analysis in the PEIS, it was assumed that an existing 69-kV
40 transmission line that intersects the SEZ could provide initial access to the transmission grid;
41 thus, no additional acreage disturbance for transmission line access was assessed. Access to the
42 existing 69-kV transmission line was assumed, without additional information on whether this
43 line would be available for connection of future solar facilities. If a connecting transmission line
44 were constructed in the future to connect facilities within the SEZ to a different, off-site, grid
45 location from the one assumed here, site developers would need to determine the impacts from
46 construction and operation of that line. In addition, developers would need to determine the
47 impacts of line upgrades if they are needed.

TABLE 11.4.1.2-1 Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ—Assumed Development Acreages, Maximum Solar MW Output, Access Roads, and Transmission Line ROWs

Total Acreage and Assumed Developed Acreage (80% of Total)	Assumed Maximum SEZ Output for Various Solar Technologies	Distance to Nearest State, U.S., or Interstate Highway	Distance and Capacity of Nearest Existing Transmission Line	Area of Assumed Transmission Line ROW and Road ROW	Distance to Nearest Designated Transmission Corridor ^e
76,874 acres and 61,499 acres ^a	6,833 MW ^b and 12,300 MW ^c	NV 318 7 mi ^d	0 mi and 69 kV	0 acres and 51 acres	0 mi

- ^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.
- ^b Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies, assuming 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required.
- ^c Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using solar trough technologies, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.
- ^d To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.
- ^e BLM-designated corridors are developed for federal land use planning purposes only and are not applicable to state-owned or privately owned land.

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An additional 51 acres (0.2 km²) would be needed for new road access to support solar development in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, as summarized in Table 11.4.1.2-1. This estimate was based on the assumption that a new 7-mi (11-km) access road to the nearest major road, State Route 318, would support construction and operation of solar facilities. While there are dirt/ranch roads within the SEZ, additional internal road construction would likely be required to support solar facility construction.

11.4.1.3 Summary of Major Impacts and SEZ-Specific Design Features

In this section, the impacts and SEZ-specific design features assessed in Sections 11.4.2 through 11.4.21 for the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are summarized in tabular form. Table 11.4.1.3-1 is a comprehensive list of the impacts discussed in these sections; the reader may reference the applicable sections for detailed support of the impact assessment. Section 11.4.22 discusses potential cumulative impacts from solar energy development in the proposed SEZ.

Only those design features specific to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are included in Sections 11.4.2 through 11.4.21 and in the summary table. The detailed programmatic design features for each resource area to be required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program are presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would also be required for development in this and other SEZs.

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 Summary of Impacts of Solar Energy Development within the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ and SEZ-Specific Design Features^a

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Lands and Realty	Full development of the SEZ (80% of the total area) could disturb up to 61,499 acres (102 km ²). Solar development would introduce a new and discordant land use into the area.	None.
	Construction of a new access road from State Route 318 could disturb up to 51 acres (0.2 km ²) of public land.	Priority consideration should be given to utilizing existing county roads to provide construction and operational access to the SEZ.
	Because of the extended length of the SEZ, east–west travel across the valley could be cut off, requiring extensive detours for public land users.	None.
	Solar development would require coordination with existing ROWs for two transmission lines, the pending Southern Nevada Water Authority pipeline ROW, and a short segment of road ROW.	None.
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	There would be a small adverse impact on wilderness characteristics in the Weepah Spring and Big Rocks WAs. Silver State Off-Highway Vehicle Trail/Byway users seeking a scenic drive experience would be adversely affected.	None.
Rangeland Resources: Livestock Grazing	The Simpson allotment would likely be closed, displacing the permittees. Sixty-five % of the Ely Springs Cattle allotment would be lost. All of the winter range for the permittees in the Dry Lake Valley and Thorley areas of use in the Wilson Creek allotment and the Simpson allotment would be lost. A total of 12,163 AUMs would be lost, and operations of six permittees would suffer major impacts.	Within the Ely Springs cattle allotment, solar development should be sited to minimize the number of pastures affected.

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Rangeland Resources: Wild Horses and Burros	Loss of 5.4% of the Silver King HMA.	Installation of fencing and access control, provision for wild horse movement corridors, delineation of open range, traffic management, compensatory habitat restoration, and access to or development of water sources should be coordinated with the BLM.
Recreation	Developed portions of the SEZ would become excluded from recreational use.	If solar development would obstruct the route used for desert racing, alternative locations for that use should be considered at the time specific solar development proposals are analyzed.
Military and Civilian Aviation	Portions of the proposed Dry Valley Lake North SEZ are covered by two MTRs with 200-ft (61-m) AGL operating limits and a major SUA. There could be potentially adverse impacts on military training and testing missions.	None.
Geologic Setting and Soil Resources	Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase. Impacts include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind, soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. These impacts may be impacting factors for other resources (e.g., air quality, water quality, and vegetation). Portions of the dry lake may not be a suitable location for construction.	None.
Minerals (fluids, solids, and geothermal resources)	Existing oil and gas leases represent a prior existing right that could affect solar energy development of the SEZ.	None.

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Water Resources	<p>Ground-disturbance activities (affecting up to 12% of the total area in the peak construction year) could affect surface water quality due to surface runoff, sediment erosion, and contaminant spills.</p> <p>Construction activities may require up to 4,220 ac-ft (5.2 million m³) of water during peak construction year.</p> <p>Construction activities would generate as much as 222 ac-ft (274,000 m³) of sanitary wastewater.</p> <p>Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would use the following amounts of water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For parabolic trough facilities (12,296-MW capacity), 8,779 to 18,616 ac-ft/yr (11 million to 23 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; 61,650 to 184,605 ac-ft/yr (76 million to 228 million m³/yr) for wet-cooled systems. • For power tower facilities (6,831-MW capacity), 4,858 to 10,323 ac-ft/yr (6 million to 13 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; 34,231 to 102,539 ac-ft/yr (42 million to 126 million m³/yr) for wet-cooled systems. • For dish engine facilities (6,831-MW capacity), 3,492 ac-ft/yr (4.3 million m³/yr). • For PV facilities (6,831-MW capacity), 349 ac-ft/yr (430,000 m³/yr). <p>Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would generate up to 172 ac-ft/yr (212,000 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater and up to 3,493 ac-ft/yr (4.3 million m³/yr) of blowdown water.</p>	<p>Water resource analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be feasible for full build-out of the SEZ; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures.</p> <p>Land disturbance activities should avoid impacts to the extent possible in the vicinity of the ephemeral stream washes and the dry lake present on the site.</p> <p>Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid any areas identified as within a 100-year floodplain or jurisdictional waters.</p> <p>Groundwater rights must be obtained from the NDWR.</p> <p>Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.</p> <p>Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in accordance with state standards.</p> <p>Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water quality standards in accordance with the <i>Nevada Administrative Code</i>.</p>

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation ^b	<p>Up to 80% (61,499 acres [249 km²]) of the SEZ would be cleared of vegetation; re-establishment of shrub communities in temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult because of the arid conditions and might require extended periods of time.</p> <p>Noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in widespread habitat degradation.</p> <p>The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition.</p> <p>Playa habitats, such as those on the SEZ and the playas southwest of the SEZ, greasewood flats communities, or other intermittently flooded areas downgradient from solar projects in the SEZ or the assumed access road could be affected by ground disturbing activities.</p>	<p>An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan addressing habitat restoration should be approved and implemented to increase the potential for successful restoration of affected habitats and minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species, such as cheatgrass or halogeton. Invasive species control should focus on biological and mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use of herbicides.</p> <p>Dry washes, playas, and wetlands within the SEZ, and dry washes within the access road corridor, should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated. A buffer area should be maintained around wetlands, playas, and dry washes to reduce the potential for impacts.</p> <p>Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on dry wash, playa, marsh, scrub-shrub wetland, riparian, and greasewood flat habitats, including occurrences downstream of solar projects or assumed access road, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition to these habitats. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be determined through agency consultation.</p>

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation ^b (Cont.)		Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect impacts on habitats dependent on springs associated with the Dry lake Valley basin, Delamar Valley Basin, or other hydrologically connected basins. Potential impacts on springs should be determined through hydrological studies.
Wildlife: Amphibians and Reptiles ^a	Direct impacts from SEZ development would be moderate (i.e., loss of >1 to ≤10% of potentially suitable habitats within the SEZ region) for all representative amphibian species; and several reptile species. Direct impacts on other representative reptile species would be small (i.e., loss of ≤1% of potentially suitable habitats). With implementation of design features, indirect impacts would be expected to be negligible.	The unnamed dry lake and wash habitats should be avoided.
Wildlife: Birds ^b	<p>Direct impacts on about one-third of the representative bird species would be small (i.e., loss of ≤1% of potentially suitable habitats) to moderate (i.e., loss of >1 to ≤10% of potentially suitable habitats within the SEZ region) for the other representative bird species.</p> <p>Other impacts on birds could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., buildings and fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment.</p>	<p>The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds will be followed.</p> <p>Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.</p> <p>The unnamed dry lake and wash habitats should be avoided.</p>

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Wildlife: Mammals ^b	<p>Based on land cover analyses, direct impacts on cougar and mule deer would be moderate (i.e., loss of >1 to ≤10% of potentially suitable habitats within the SEZ region); while direct impacts on elk and pronghorn would be small (i.e., loss of ≤1% of potentially suitable habitats). Direct impacts on all other representative mammal species would be small (6 species) to moderate (24 species). Based on mapped ranges for big game; direct impacts would be small for elk and mule deer and moderate for pronghorn.</p> <p>Other impacts on mammals could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment. These impacts are expected to be negligible with the implementation of design features.</p>	<p>The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free movement of mammals, particularly big game species.</p> <p>Playa and wash habitats should be avoided.</p>
Aquatic Biota ^b	<p>No permanent water bodies or streams are present within the boundaries of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, assumed new access road, or the areas of indirect effects. The nearest perennial surface water (White River) is about 7 mi (11 km) from the SEZ and less than 1 mi (1.6 km) from the area of direct disturbance for the presumed new access road. Also, the intermittent streams in the SEZ do not drain into any permanent surface waters. Therefore, no direct or indirect impacts on perennial surface water features are expected.</p>	<p>Appropriate engineering controls should be implemented to minimize the amount of contaminants and sediment entering Coyote Wash and the unnamed washes and dry lakes within the SEZ.</p>

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Special Status Species ^b	Potentially suitable habitat for 22 special status species occurs in the affected area of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. For special status species, between 0 and 15% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region occurs in the area of direct effects.	<p>Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the area of direct effects to determine the presence and abundance of special status species. Disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing impacts on occupied habitats is not possible for some species, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effect; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy for special status species that used one or more of these options to offset the impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the appropriate federal and state agencies.</p> <p>Consultation with the USFWS and NDOW may be needed to address the potential for impacts on the desert tortoise. Consultation would identify an appropriate survey protocol, avoidance and minimization measures, and, if appropriate, reasonable and prudent alternatives, reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions for incidental take statements.</p> <p>Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to playa habitat on the SEZ could reduce or eliminate impacts on 5 special status species.</p>

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Special Status Species ^b (Cont.)		Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the affected area should be avoided or minimized. This can be accomplished by identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.
Air Quality and Climate	<p><i>Construction:</i> Predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ concentration levels could exceed the AAQS levels at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding areas during the construction of solar facilities. Higher concentrations would be limited to the immediate area surrounding the SEZ boundary and would decrease quickly with distance. Modeling indicates that emissions from construction activities are not anticipated to exceed Class I PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearest federal Class I area. Construction emissions from the engine exhaust of heavy equipment and vehicles could cause some short-term impacts on AQRVs (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at the nearest federal Class I areas.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> Positive impact due to avoided emission of air pollutants from combustion-related power generation: 32 to 57% of total emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ from electric power systems in the state of Nevada avoided (up to 30,404 tons/yr SO₂, 26,078 tons/yr NO_x, 0.17 ton/yr Hg, and 16,737,000 tons/yr CO₂).</p>	None.
Visual Resources	The SEZ is in an area of low scenic quality, with cultural disturbances already present. Residents, workers, and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) as they travel area roads.	None.

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Visual Resources (Cont.)	<p>Solar development could produce large visual impacts on the SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed due to major modification of the character of the existing landscape.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 8.2 mi (13.2 km) from the Big Rocks WA. Because of the open views of the SEZ and elevated viewpoints, weak to strong visual contrasts could be observed by WA visitors.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 8.4 mi (13.5 km) from the Weepah Spring WA. Because of the open views of the SEZ and elevated viewpoints, very weak to strong visual contrasts could be observed by WA visitors.</p> <p>Approximately 9.5 mi (15.3 km) of U.S. 93 (a state-designated scenic byway) is within the SEZ viewshed. Moderate visual contrasts could be observed within the SEZ by travelers on U.S. 93.</p> <p>Approximately 100 mi (160 km) of the Silver State Trail scenic byway is within the SEZ viewshed. Because of the close proximity of the byway to the SEZ and the elevated viewpoints from some locations along the byway, strong visual contrasts could be observed by travelers on the Silver State Trail.</p> <p>The SEZ is adjacent to the Chief Mountain SRMA. Because of the open views of the SEZ and elevated viewpoints, strong visual contrasts could be observed by SRMA visitors.</p>	

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Acoustic Environment	<p><i>Construction.</i> For construction activities occurring near the southeastern SEZ boundary (the boundary closest to the nearest residence), estimated noise levels at the nearest residence (about 10 mi [16 km]) from the SEZ boundary) would be about 16 dBA, which is well below a typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. In addition, an estimated 40-dBA L_{dn} at these residences (i.e., no contribution from construction activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p><i>Operations.</i> Noise levels at the nearest residences from a parabolic trough or power tower facility would be about 22 dBA, which is much lower than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. For 12-hour daytime operation, about 40 dBA L_{dn} (i.e., no contribution from facility operation) would be estimated for the nearest residences, which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. In the case of 6-hour TES, the estimated nighttime noise level at the nearest residences would be 32 dBA, which is a little higher than the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. The day-night average noise level is estimated to be about 41 dBA L_{dn}, which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p>If 80% of the SEZ were developed with dish engine facilities, the estimated noise level at the nearest residences, about 10 mi (16 km) from the SEZ boundary, would be about 39 dBA, which is below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. Assuming 12-hour daytime operation, the estimated 41 dBA L_{dn} at these residences would be well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p>	None.

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Paleontological Resources	Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely to occur in 91% of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of the SEZ is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted. The potential for impacts on significant paleontological resources in the remaining 9% of the SEZ is unknown. A more detailed investigation of the playa deposits is needed prior to project approval.	The need for and the nature of any SEZ-specific design features would depend on the results of future paleontological investigations.
Cultural Resources	<p>The Dry Lake Valley North SEZ has a high potential for containing prehistoric sites, especially in the dry lake and dune areas at the southern end of the SEZ; potential for historic sites also exists in the area but to a lesser degree. Thus, direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur; however, further investigation is needed at the project-specific level. A cultural resource survey of the entire area of potential effect, including consultation with affected Native American Tribes, would first need to be conducted to identify archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and traditional cultural properties, and an evaluation would need to follow to determine if any are eligible for listing in the NRHP as historic properties.</p> <p>Impacts on cultural resources also are possible in areas related to the access ROW, as new areas of potential cultural significance could be directly affected by construction or opened to increased access from road use.</p>	SEZ-specific design features would be determined through consultation with the Nevada SHPO and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations..

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Native American Concerns	<p>While no comments specific to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ have been received from Native American Tribes to date, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah has asked to be kept informed of PEIS developments. In the area, the Southern Paiute have expressed concern over adverse effects of other energy projects on a wide range of resources.</p> <p>As consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it is also possible that Native American concerns will be expressed over potential visual and other effects on specific resources and culturally important landscapes within or adjacent to the SEZ.</p>	The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features would be determined during government-to-government consultation with the affected Tribes.
Socioeconomics	<p><i>Livestock grazing:</i> Construction and operation of solar facilities could decrease the amount of land available for livestock grazing in the SEZ, resulting in the loss of three jobs (total) and \$0.1 million (total) in income in the ROI.</p> <p><i>Construction:</i> 685 to 9,071 total jobs; \$41.9 million to \$554.2 million income in ROI for solar facilities.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> 182 to 4,126 annual total jobs; \$6.3 million to \$155.3 million annual income in the ROI for solar facilities.</p> <p><i>Construction of new access road:</i> 148 total jobs, \$5.8 million income</p>	None.
Environmental Justice	<p>Because low-income populations, as defined by CEQ guidelines, are located within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the SEZ, impacts, although small, could disproportionately affect low-income populations. No minority populations occur within the 50-mi (80-km) radius; thus any adverse impacts of solar projects could not disproportionately affect minority populations.</p>	None.

TABLE 11.4.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Transportation	The primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day, with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum) or possibly 6,000 vehicle trips per day if three larger projects were to be developed at the same time. The volume of traffic on either State Route 318 or U.S. 93 would increase by a factor of about 2, 4, or 6 maximum in the area of the SEZ for one, two, or three projects, respectively. Because higher traffic volumes would be experienced during shift changes, traffic on either highway could experience moderate slowdowns during these time periods in the general area of the SEZ.	None.

Abbreviations: AAQS = ambient air quality standards; AGL = above ground level; AQRV = air quality–related value; AUM = animal unit months; BLM = Bureau of Land Management; CEQ = Council on Environmental Quality; CO₂ = carbon dioxide; dBA = A-weighted decibel; DoD = U.S. Department of Defense; EPA = U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; ESA = Endangered Species Act; Hg = mercury; L_{dn} = day-night average sound level; MTR = military training route; NDOW = Nevada Department of Wildlife; NDWR = Nevada Division of Water Resources; NNHP = Nevada Natural Heritage Program; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; NRHP = *National Register of Historic Places*; PEIS = programmatic environmental impact statement; PFYC = potential fossil yield classification; PM = particulate matter; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 µm or less; PSD = prevention of significant deterioration; PV = photovoltaic; ROI = region of influence; ROW = right-of-way; SEZ = solar energy zone; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; SRMA = Special Recreation Management Area; SUA = special use airspace; TES = thermal energy storage; USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; WA = Wilderness Area.

^a The detailed programmatic design features for each resource area to be required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program are presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would be required for development in the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.

^b The scientific names of all plants, wildlife, aquatic biota, and special status species are provided in Sections 11.4.10 through 11.4.12.

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1 **11.4.2 Lands and Realty**

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4 **11.4.2.1 Affected Environment**

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6 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is a very large and very well blocked area of
7 BLM-administered public land with only one 600-acre (2-km²) parcel of private land on the east
8 side of the SEZ. The private land has a few ranch buildings on it and is completely surrounded
9 by the SEZ. The overall character of the land in and around the SEZ area is isolated and
10 undeveloped. The southwestern portion of the SEZ includes part of a playa lake. State Route 318
11 provides access to the northern end of the SEZ via a 10-mi (16-km) connecting dirt road. U.S. 93
12 provides good access to the southern portion of the SEZ via a dirt road that connects to the
13 highway and provides access to the eastern side of the SEZ from the south. This road on the east
14 side of Dry Lake Valley is about 9 mi (14 km) from U.S. 95 before it enters the SEZ and then
15 passes through most of the east side of the area. Numerous dirt roads cross the SEZ or access
16 livestock facilities in the area.

17
18 There are three designated transmission corridors in the proposed SEZ (see
19 Figure 11.4.1.1-1). The eastern corridor is a designated Section 368 (of the Energy Policy
20 Act of 2005) energy corridor. There are two transmission ROWs in the eastern corridor, but
21 no facilities have yet been constructed. A 69-kV transmission line is located in the most
22 southeasterly designated corridor and crosses the very southeastern end of the SEZ. There is
23 a ROW for a short segment of road located in the southern portion of the SEZ.

24
25 The SNWA has a ROW application for a pipeline that would pass through the middle of
26 the proposed SEZ. The pipeline has been proposed to convey water from northern Nevada to the
27 Las Vegas area.

28
29 As of February 2010, there were no ROW applications for solar energy facility
30 development on the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.

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33 **11.4.2.2 Impacts**

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36 ***11.4.2.2.1 Construction and Operations***

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38
39 Full development of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ could disturb up to
40 61,499 acres (102 km²) (Table 11.4.1.2-1). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy
41 production would establish a large industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential
42 uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity. Since the SEZ is undeveloped and isolated, utility-scale
43 solar energy development would be a new and discordant land use to the area.

44
45 Existing ROW authorizations on the SEZ would not be affected by solar energy
46 development since they are prior rights. Should the proposed SEZ be identified as an SEZ in the

1 ROD for this PEIS, the BLM would still have discretion to authorize additional ROWs in the
2 area until solar energy development was authorized, and then future ROWs would be subject to
3 the rights issued for solar energy development. Because the area currently has so few ROWs
4 present, it is not anticipated that approval of solar energy development would have a significant
5 impact on ROW availability in the area.
6

7 The three designated transmission corridors occupy a portion of the SEZ and could limit
8 future solar development in these corridors. To avoid technical or operational interference
9 between transmission and solar energy facilities, solar energy facilities cannot be constructed
10 under transmission lines or over pipelines. The corridors could be relocated outside the SEZ to
11 allow full solar development within the SEZ. Alternatively, capacity of the corridors could be
12 restricted to allow solar development. Transmission capacity is becoming a more critical
13 factor, and reducing corridor capacity in this SEZ may have future, but currently unknown,
14 consequences. This is an administrative conflict that the BLM can address through its planning
15 process, but there would be implications either for the amount of potential solar energy
16 development or for the amount of transmission capacity that can be accommodated.
17

18 The existing dirt roads located in the SEZ would be closed wherever solar energy
19 facilities are developed. Because of the 25-mi (40-km) length of the SEZ, if east–west travel
20 across the SEZ is prevented by solar energy development, a long detour around the site could
21 be required. This would adversely affect a wide range of public land users.
22
23

24 ***11.4.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***

25

26 Because a 69-kV transmission line crosses the SEZ, no new transmission line
27 construction was assessed, assuming that additional project-specific analysis would be done
28 for new transmission construction or line upgrades.
29

30 Because State Route 318 is the closest highway to the SEZ, it is assumed that a new 7-mi
31 (11-km) road would be constructed to connect the SEZ to that highway. This would result in the
32 surface disturbance of about 51 acres (0.2 km²) of public land. Alternative or additional access to
33 the SEZ could be provided from U.S. 93, which passes near the southern end of the SEZ. In this
34 case, improvement of existing roads could be undertaken. Roads and transmission lines would be
35 constructed within the SEZ as part of the development of the area.
36
37

38 **11.4.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

39

40 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
41 as required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program would provide adequate mitigation for some
42 identified impacts. The exceptions would be the establishment of a large industrial area that
43

1 would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land and would be a new and discordant
2 land use to the area.

3

4 Proposed design features specific to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ include:

5

6 • Priority consideration should be given to utilizing existing roads to provide
7 construction and operational access to the SEZ.

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1 **11.4.3 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**
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4 **11.4.3.1 Affected Environment**
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6 Fourteen specially designated areas occur within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Dry Lake
7 Valley North SEZ that potentially could be affected by solar energy development within the
8 SEZ. These include six designated WAs, the Chief Mountain SRMA, four Utah State Park Units,
9 the Mount Wilson Backcountry Byway, the Silver State Off-Highway Vehicle Trail and
10 Backcountry Byway, and the Highway 93 State-designated Scenic Byway. The boundaries of
11 the Weepah Spring and Big Rocks WAs are within about 8 mi (13 km) of the SEZ, while the
12 boundaries of the South Pahroc Range, Far South Egans, Parsnip Peak, and Clover Mountains
13 WA, and the Mount Wilson Backcountry Byway are between 15 mi (24 km) and 25 mi (40 km)
14 from the SEZ. The Highway 93 Scenic Byway is located within 15 mi (24 km) of the SEZ
15 (see Figure 11.4.3.1-1). Viewshed analysis shows that the Mount Wilson Back Country Byway
16 and the four Utah State Park Units would have no visibility of solar development within the SEZ;
17 thus they are not considered further.
18

19 There are no areas with wilderness characteristics outside of designated wilderness areas
20 within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ.
21

22 **11.4.3.2 Impacts**
23

24 **11.4.3.2.1 Construction and Operations**
25
26

27 The primary potential impact on the nine remaining areas near the SEZ would be from
28 visual impacts of solar energy development that could affect scenic, recreational, or wilderness
29 characteristics of the areas. The visual impact on specially designated areas is difficult to
30 determine and would vary by solar technology employed, the specific area being affected, and
31 the perception of individuals viewing the development. Development of the SEZ, especially full
32 development, would be an important visual component in the viewshed from limited portions of
33 these specially designated areas, as summarized in Table 11.4.3.2-1. The data provided in the
34 table assume the use of the power tower solar energy technology, which because of the potential
35 height of these facilities, could be visible from the largest amount of land of the technologies
36 being considered in the PEIS. Viewshed analysis for this SEZ has shown that the visual impacts
37 of shorter solar energy facilities would be slightly less than for power tower technology (See
38 Section 11.4.14 for more detail on all viewshed analyses discussed in this section). Assessment
39 of the visual impact of solar energy projects must be conducted on a site-specific and
40 technology-specific basis to accurately identify impacts.
41
42

43 In general, the closer a viewer is to solar development, the greater the impact on an
44 individual's perception. From a visual analysis perspective, the most sensitive viewing distances
45 generally are from 0 to 5 mi (0 to 8 km). The viewing height above a solar energy development
46 area, the size of the solar development area, and the purpose for which a person is visiting an

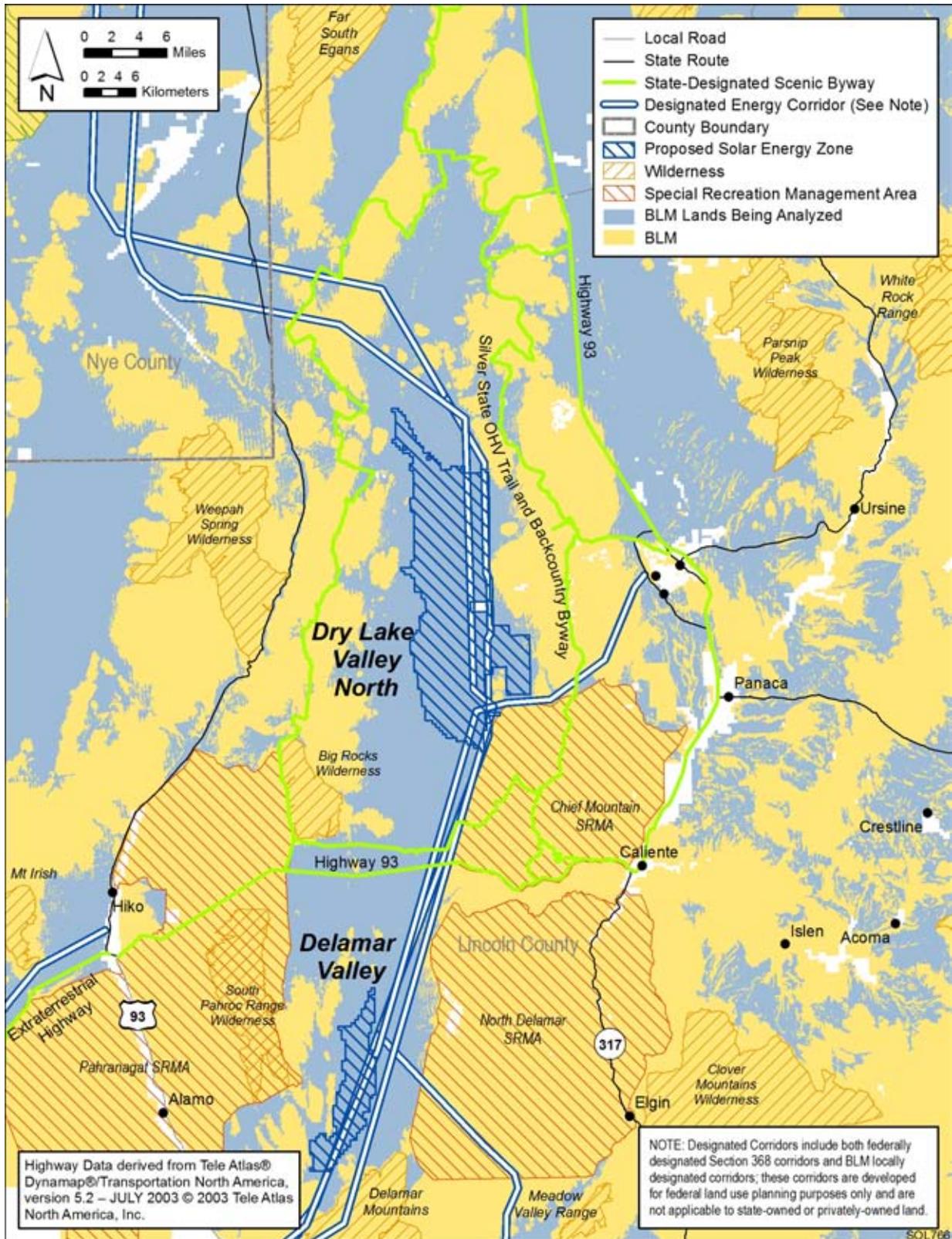


TABLE 11.4.3.2-1 Potentially Affected Specially Designated Areas within a 25-mi (40-km) Viewshed of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ^a

Feature Type	Feature Name (Total Acreage/ Linear Distance)	Feature Area or Linear Distance ^b	
		Visible within 15 mi	Visible within 25 mi
Byway	Highway 93 State Scenic Byway (149 mi)	41 mi (5.6%) ^c	41 mi (5.6%)
	Silver State OHV Trail and Backcountry Byway (240 mi)	– ^d	–
SRMA	Chief Mountain SRMA (111,151 acres)	39,076 (35%)	–
Wilderness Area	Big Rocks (12,929 acres)	1,590 acres (12.3%)	1,590 acres (12.3%)
	Clover Mountains (85,621 acres)		26 acres (0.03%)
	Far South Egans (36,297 acres)		454 acres (1.3%)
	Parsnip Peak (43,485 acres)		1,833 acres (4.2%)
	South Pahroc Range (25,674 acres)		2,391 acres (9.3%)
	Weepah Spring (51,309 acres)	13,468 acres (26.3%)	13,600 acres (26.5%)

^a Assuming power tower technology with a height of 650 ft (198.1 m).

^b To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047. To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

^c Percentage of total feature acreage or road length viewable.

^d A dash indicates data not available.

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area is also important. Individuals seeking a wilderness or scenic experience within these areas could be expected to be more adversely affected than those simply traveling along the highway with another destination in mind. In the case of the Dry Valley Lake North SEZ, the low-lying location of the SEZ in relation to surrounding specially designated areas would highlight the industrial-like development in the SEZ. In addition because of the generally undeveloped nature of the whole area, and the potentially very large area of solar development, impacts on wilderness characteristics may be more significant than in other areas that are less pristine.

The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could potentially cause large though temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities. The visual contrast levels projected for sensitive visual resource areas that were used to assess potential impacts on

1 specially designated areas do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these
2 effects would be incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be
3 conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects.
4
5

6 **Weepah Spring and Big Rocks Wilderness Areas**

7

8 Solar development within the SEZ, especially full development, would be readily
9 visible from portions of these two areas. Because of the topography, essentially all of the area
10 that would be visible from these areas is located within 15 mi (24 km) of the SEZ. The nearest
11 boundaries of both WAs are about 8 mi (13 km) distant from the SEZ, beyond the most sensitive
12 visual zone of 0 to 5 mi (0 to 8 km), and solar development would not likely be a dominating
13 factor in the viewshed of the areas. However, because of the clear line of sight and the potential
14 size of the solar development in the SEZ, there likely would be a small adverse impact on
15 wilderness characteristics in both areas. On the basis of the percentage of the area of each
16 wilderness within the viewshed of the SEZ, Weepah Spring would be affected to a greater
17 extent than would Big Rocks.
18
19

20 **Highway 93 State Scenic Byway**

21

22 Viewshed analysis of the scenic byway shows that the views travelers on Highway 93
23 would have of the SEZ would be from the south and at a distance of about 8 to 10 mi (13 to
24 16 km) distance. The highway is elevated above the level of the SEZ by about 500 ft (152 m),
25 and travelers would have a clear view of development within the SEZ for about 10 mi (16 km).
26 Because of the distance to the SEZ and the nature of highway travel, however, it is not
27 anticipated that there would be any adverse impact on the use of the scenic highway. It is
28 possible that some highway travelers might find the solar energy development a point of interest.
29
30

31 **Silver State OHV Trail and Backcountry Byway**

32

33 The trail/byway encircles the SEZ and is within 1 to 5 mi (0.6 to 3 km) of the SEZ
34 through much of its route. While some portions of the trail are screened by topography, much
35 of it is in clear view of the SEZ. About one-quarter of the trail/byway is north of the SEZ and is
36 completely screened by intervening mountains. While it is difficult to judge the impact of solar
37 development on users of the trail/byway, it is assumed that any visitors seeking a scenic drive
38 would be adversely affected by the presence of solar energy facilities so close to their route of
39 travel. Users of the trail/byway that are more interested in the motorized or OHV experience may
40 be less adversely affected by the presence of solar development.
41
42

43 **Chief Mountain SRMA**

44

45 The SRMA is managed primarily for motorized OHV recreation, and there are more than
46 400 mi (643 km) of trails in the area. Portions of the SRMA are adjacent to the SEZ, and about
47 35% of the SRMA is within the viewshed of the SEZ. While many OHV users have an interest in

1 the visual character of the areas in which they recreate, overall it is anticipated that because of
2 the nature of the activity, distance to the SEZ, and limited visibility of development in the SEZ,
3 there would be no adverse impact on use of the SRMA.
4

5
6 **Clover Mountains, Far South Egans, Parsnip Peak, and South Pahroc Range**
7 **Wilderness Areas**
8

9 The nearest of these units is about 18 mi (29 km) from the SEZ, and although portions
10 of the areas will have views of development in the SEZ, the distance from the SEZ reduces
11 the impact of development on wilderness characteristics. The percentage of these areas that is in
12 the viewshed of the SEZ is also small, and the overall effect on wilderness characteristics in
13 these areas is expected to be minimal.
14

15
16 ***11.4.3.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***
17

18 Because of the availability of an existing transmission line, no additional construction of
19 transmission facilities was assessed. Should additional transmission lines be required outside of
20 the SEZ, there may be additional impacts on specially designated areas. See Section 11.4.1.2 for
21 the development assumptions underlying this analysis.
22

23 Construction of an access road to State Route 318 would add about 51 acres (0.2 km²) of
24 surface disturbance to the impact associated with the SEZ facilities. The disturbance caused by
25 the road construction would not likely cause additional adverse impacts on specially designated
26 areas.
27

28
29 **11.4.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
30

31 No SEZ-specific design features to protect wilderness, recreation, or scenic values of
32 specially designated areas would be required. Implementing the programmatic design features
33 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program would
34 provide adequate mitigation for some identified impacts. The exceptions may be the adverse
35 impacts on wilderness characteristics in two WAs
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1 **11.4.4 Rangeland Resources**
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3 Rangelands resources include livestock grazing and wild horses and burros, both of
4 which are managed by the BLM. These resources and possible impacts on them from solar
5 development within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are discussed in Sections 11.4.4.1
6 and 11.4.4.2.
7

8
9 **11.4.4.1 Livestock Grazing**
10

11
12 ***11.4.4.1.1 Affected Environment***
13

14 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ contains portions of three perennial grazing
15 allotments. Four other allotments have very small amounts of land within the SEZ and because
16 there are no anticipated impacts on these allotments, they are not considered further. The low-
17 lying and flat lands included in the SEZ are used primarily as winter range. There are water
18 developments within the area that support grazing use.
19

20
21 ***11.4.4.1.2 Impacts***
22

23
24 **Construction and Operations**
25

26 Should utility-scale solar development occur in the SEZ, grazing would be excluded
27 from the areas developed as provided for in the BLM grazing regulations (43 CFR Part 4100).
28 This would include reimbursement of permittees for their portion of the value for any range
29 improvements in the area removed from the grazing allotment. The impact of this change in
30 the grazing permits would depend on several factors, including (1) how much of an allotment
31 each permittee might lose to development, (2) how important the specific land lost is to each
32 permittee's overall operation, and (3) the amount of actual forage production that would be lost
33 by each permittee.
34

35 The public lands in this SEZ make up the majority of the lands in the Ely Springs Cattle
36 and Simpson allotments as shown in Table 11.4.4.1-1. If full solar development were to occur in
37 the SEZ, the federal grazing permit for the Simpson allotment likely would be cancelled. This
38 would be a major impact and would result in displacing the four permittees who use the area and
39 the loss of the 747 AUMs.
40

41 In the case of the Ely Springs Cattle allotment, by applying a simplified assumption that
42 the grazing capacity of the allotment would be reduced by the same percentage as the reduction
43 in acreage, grazing capacity would be reduced by 2,761 AUMs, or 65% of the available AUMs.
44 This would be a major impact on the permittee. Depending on the area utilized for solar
45 development, it might be possible to continue to graze on the remaining acreage in the
46 allotment. This also would be dependent upon water availability in the remaining portion of the
47 allotment and/or the ability to relocate water from existing points of use to the remaining area.

TABLE 11.4.4.1-1 Grazing Allotments within the Proposed Dry Valley Lake North SEZ

Allotment	Total Acres ^a	% of Acres in SEZ ^b	Active BLM AUMs	No. of Permittees
Ely Springs Cattle	56,128	65	4,248	1
Wilson Creek	848,000 ^c	3	46,374 ^d	8
Simpson	8,379	91	747	4

^a Included public, private, and state lands included in the allotment based on the Allotment Master Report in BLM's Rangeland Administration System (BLM 2009e).

^b Percentage of the total allotment acreage of public lands located in the SEZ.

^c Four use areas were recently removed from the Wilson Creek allotment, reducing the acreage below that shown in the Rangeland Administration System.

^d This number predates the removal of four areas of use from the allotment. Actual number still to be calculated.

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The Wilson Creek allotment is very large, but it is divided into specific areas of use that are utilized by 11 permittees. Permittees generally operate within their own areas of use, but five permittees (four cattle and one sheep) operate in the Dry Lake Valley Use Area and utilize 10,149 AUMs. One permittee (cattle) operates in the Thorley use area and utilizes 1,267 AUMs. Four of the permittees in the two Wilson Creek use areas also are permittees in the Simpson allotment. The two use areas plus the Simpson allotment compose almost the total winter range available to these six permittees. The total forage in these three areas that would be lost is 12,163 AUMs. This is the only winter range available to these permittees, and its loss would have a major impact on their operations. There is no additional winter range available within the area as a replacement to the lands within the SEZ; thus the winter grazing capacity lost would have to be replaced through feeding of hay and/or reductions in cattle numbers. In addition, the water developments that support grazing in this portion of the allotment are reservoirs that would also be lost. Because the impact falls solely on the winter range portion of the operations, the economic impact of replacing the lost natural winter forage with hay would have a disproportionate and major impact on the six permittees (Johnson 2010).

The loss of 12,163 AUMs would constitute a moderate impact on the total livestock use authorized within the Caliente Field Office. This conclusion was derived from comparing the loss of the 12,163 AUMs with the total of 43,255 BLM-authorized AUMs in the Caliente Field Office in grazing year 2009. The loss would be about 28%.

Defining the impacts on individual grazing permits and permittees requires a specific analysis of each case on the basis of at a minimum, the three factors identified above. The loss of

1 the AUMs from all three affected allotments would have a significant impact on six permittees.
2 The final degree of impact would depend on how important the public lands in these allotments
3 are to their overall livestock operation.
4

5 Although the degree of impact on the permittees in these three allotments would vary
6 with their individual situations, there would be an adverse economic impact on them from the
7 loss of use of all or important portions of their respective use areas. There may also be an
8 adverse social impact, since for many permittees, operating on public lands has been a
9 longstanding tradition, and their operations are important to them. It is possible that solar
10 developers could acquire the preference for BLM grazing permits in the affected allotments
11 through transfer from willing permittees; developers could agree to compensate permittees for
12 their interest through range improvements on public lands used in conjunction with that
13 preference in order to minimize the impact on existing permittees; however, such agreements are
14 not required as part of BLM regulations.
15
16

17 **Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**

18
19 Because of the availability of a transmission line in the SEZ, and assuming that
20 additional project-specific analysis would be done for construction of such infrastructure, no
21 assessment of the impacts of transmission line construction outside of the SEZ was conducted
22 (see Section 11.4.1.2).
23

24 The 51-acre (0.2-km²) disturbance associated with construction of the new access road to
25 the northern end of the SEZ would not have a significant impact on livestock grazing.
26
27

28 ***11.4.4.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

29
30 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
31 as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program would provide mitigation for some identified
32 impacts. The exception would be the adverse impacts on the grazing permittees in the three
33 affected grazing allotments.
34

35 Proposed design features specific to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ include
36 the following:
37

- 38 • Within the Ely Springs Cattle allotment, solar development should be sited to
39 minimize the number of pastures affected.
40
41

42 **11.4.4.2 Wild Horses and Burros**

43 ***11.4.4.2.1 Affected Environment***

44
45
46 Section 4.4.2 discusses wild horses (*Equus caballus*) and burros (*E. asinus*) that occur
47 within the six-state study area. Nearly 100 wild horse and burro herd management areas (HMAs)
48

1 occur within Nevada (BLM 2009g). Two HMAs in Nevada are located within the 50-mi (80-km)
2 SEZ region for the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Five HMAs in Utah also occur wholly
3 or partially within the SEZ region (BLM 2010e) (Figure 11.4.4.2-1). A portion of the Silver King
4 HMA occurs within the SEZ, and within the indirect impact area of the SEZ. The Silver King
5 HMA has an estimated population of 505 wild horses, with an appropriate management level of
6 only 60 to 128 wild horses (BLM 2010b). The BLM conducted a gather from September 26
7 through October 14, 2010, and removed 448 excess wild horses from within and outside the
8 Silver King HMA (BLM 2010i).

9
10 In addition to the HMAs managed by the BLM, the USFS has wild horse and burro
11 territories in Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah and is the lead management
12 agency that administers 37 of the territories (Giffen 2009; USFS 2007). The closest territory to
13 the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is the Quinn Territory, located within a portion of the
14 Humboldt National Forest. The closest portion of this territory is located on the western edge of
15 the 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region (Figure 11.4.4.2-1). Information on the management of this
16 territory for wild horses and burros was not available.

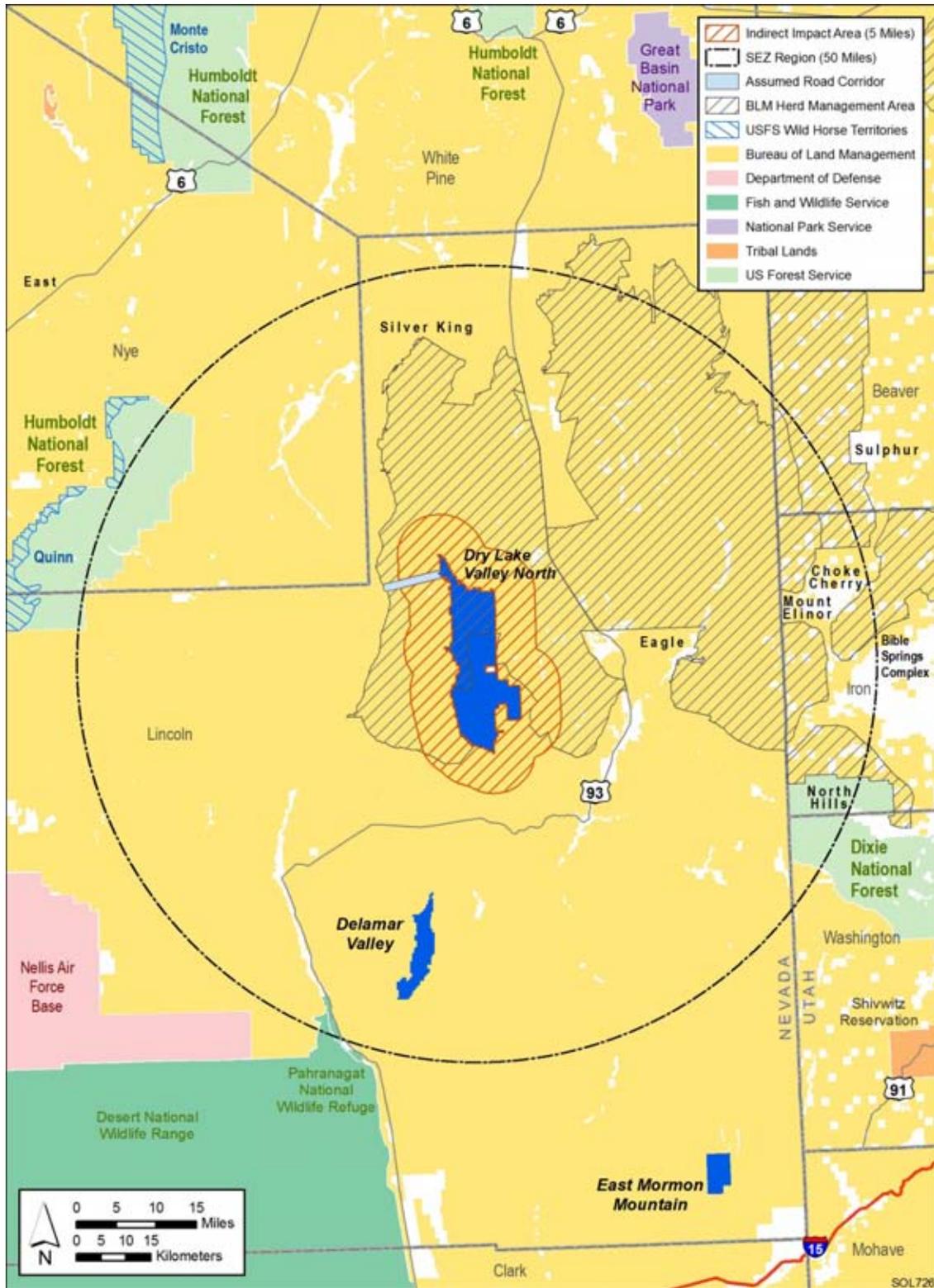
17 18 19 ***11.4.4.2 Impacts***

20
21 The Silver King HMA is 606,000 acres (2,452.4 km²) in size (BLM 2010i). About
22 32,440 acres (131.3 km²) would be in the area of direct impact for the proposed Dry Lake Valley
23 North SEZ. This would result in the loss of about 5.4% of the HMA. The acreage of the HMA
24 within the indirect impact area for the SEZ is 210,266 acres (850.9 km²) or 34.7% of the HMA.

25
26 Construction and operation of solar energy facilities within the proposed Dry Lake Valley
27 North SEZ would stress resources capable of supporting wild horses in the Silver King HMA.
28 Based on criteria used to evaluate direct impacts on wildlife species (see Appendix M), the loss
29 of 5.4% of the Silver King HMA would be considered a moderate impact on the wild horse
30 population within the HMA (i.e., >1 but ≤10% of the population or its habitat would be lost and
31 the activity would result in a measurable but moderate [not destabilizing] change in carrying
32 capacity or population size in the affected area). However, as more than 88% of the wild horse
33 population has been recently gathered (BLM 2010g), the remaining population should not be
34 compromised by the loss of up to 5.4% of the HMA. Because the closest portion of the Quinn
35 Territory is located at the edge of the 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region, no horses or burros in the
36 territory would be affected by construction or operations of a solar facility in the proposed Dry
37 Lake Valley North SEZ.

38 39 40 ***11.4.4.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

41
42 Solar energy development on BLM lands would be subject to the conditions of the Wild
43 Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. The recently completed gather of wild horses
44 from the Silver King HMA (BLM 2010i) would help to minimize impacts on wild horses caused



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FIGURE 11.4.4.2-1 Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas and Territories within the Analysis Area for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (Sources: BLM 2009g; USFS 2007)

1 by construction and operations of solar energy development in the proposed Dry Lake Valley
2 North SEZ. In addition, the following SEZ-specific design feature is recommended:

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- Installation of fencing and access control, provision for movement corridors, delineation of open range, traffic management (e.g., vehicle speeds), compensatory habitat restoration, and access to or development of water sources should be coordinated with the BLM.

1 **11.4.5 Recreation**

2
3
4 **11.4.5.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The site of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is flat with numerous roads and
7 trails that provide access into the area. Backcountry driving and OHV use of the roads and trails
8 are the major recreation activities in the area, although there are also camping and hunting
9 opportunities in and around the area. Wild horses can be seen in the area. Some of the use in the
10 SEZ is related to the 111,181-acre (450-km²) Chief Mountain SRMA, which is located south
11 and east of the SEZ. The SRMA is the focus for OHV use in the area and contains about 400 mi
12 (640 km) of roads, OHV routes, and trails. There are about three motorcycle races and one to
13 two truck and buggy races in the area per year. Three trailheads serve the area; two have
14 bathroom facilities (Boyce 2010). About 31 mi (50 km) of the 260-mi (418-km) congressionally
15 designated Silver State Off-Highway Vehicle Trail¹ is within the SRMA. Designated portions of
16 the OHV trail encircle the SEZ. There are two access points to the trail near the boundary of the
17 SEZ. In recent years, two desert race events have been held annually that use the Silver State
18 Trail in the vicinity of the SEZ. The SEZ area and surrounding area have been designated as
19 limited to travel on existing roads and trails.
20

21
22 **11.4.5.2 Impacts**

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24
25 ***11.4.5.2.1 Construction and Operations***

26
27 Recreational use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ developed for solar
28 energy production. Since the area contains numerous roads and trails, closure of the SEZ to
29 recreational use would have an undetermined impact on the existing OHV use in the area. The
30 Chief Mountain SRMA with more than 400 mi (643 km) of OHV trails and the Silver State Trail
31 and Backcountry Byway would not be directly affected by development of the SEZ. Because of
32 the 25-mi (40-km) length of the SEZ, if east–west travel across the SEZ were prevented by solar
33 energy development, a long detour around the site would be required. This would adversely
34 affect recreation and other public land users. Whether recreational visitors would continue to use
35 any remaining undeveloped portions of the SEZ is unknown. .
36

37 Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes
38 designated open and available for public use. If open OHV routes within the SEZ were identified
39 during project-specific analyses, these routes would be redesignated as closed (see Section 5.5.1
40 for more details on how routes coinciding with proposed solar facilities would be treated).
41
42
43

¹ The trail was initially designated in Section 401(b) of the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2004 (16 U.S.C. 1244; Public Law 108-424).

1 **11.4.5.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**
2

3 Because of the availability of an existing transmission line, no additional construction of
4 transmission facilities was assessed. Should additional transmission lines be required outside of
5 the SEZ, there may be additional recreational impacts. See Section 11.4.1.2 for the development
6 assumptions underlying this analysis.
7

8 Construction of an access road to State Route 318 would add about 51 acres (0.2 km²) of
9 surface disturbance to the impact associated with the SEZ facilities. The disturbance caused by
10 the road construction would not likely cause additional adverse impacts on recreation.
11

12
13 **11.4.5.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
14

15 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
16 as required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program, would provide mitigation for some identified
17 impacts. The exception would be that recreational use of the area developed for solar energy
18 production would be lost and would not be mitigatable.
19

20 A design feature specific to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is:
21

- 22 • Because of the length of the SEZ and the potential for solar development
23 severing current east–west travel, legal vehicular access through the area
24 should be maintained. If the solar development would obstruct the route used
25 for desert racing, alternative locations for that use should be considered at the
26 time specific solar development proposals are analyzed.
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29

1 **11.4.6 Military and Civilian Aviation**

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4 **11.4.6.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 Portions of the proposed Dry Valley Lake North SEZ are covered by two MTRs with
7 200-ft (61-m) AGL operating limits and a major SUA. The area is completely included within
8 the airspace use boundary of the NTTR. Supersonic speeds are authorized at and above 5,000 ft
9 AGL (1,524 m) in the NTTR in this area. The closest military installations to the proposed SEZ
10 are the NTTR, which is located about 60 mi (97 km) southwest of the SEZ, and Nellis Air Force
11 Base, which is located about 100 mi (160 km) south of the area.

12
13 There are no civilian municipal aviation facilities that would be affected by solar
14 facilities located within the SEZ.

15
16
17 **11.4.6.2 Impacts**

18
19 The military has expressed serious concern over solar energy facilities being constructed
20 within the SEZ, and Nellis Air Force Base has indicated that any facilities more than 50 ft (15 m)
21 high may be incompatible with low-level aircraft use of the MTR. Further, the NTTR has
22 indicated that solar technologies requiring structures higher than 50 ft (15 m) AGL may present
23 unacceptable electromagnetic compatibility concerns for its test mission. The NTTR maintains
24 that a pristine testing environment is required for the unique national security missions
25 conducted on the NTTR. The potential electromagnetic interference impacts from solar facilities
26 on testing activities at the NTTR, coupled with potential training route obstructions created by
27 taller structures, make it likely solar facilities exceeding 50 ft (15 m) would significantly affect
28 military operations.

29
30 There would be no impact on civilian municipal aviation facilities.

31
32
33 **11.4.6.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

34
35 No SEZ-specific design features have been proposed. The programmatic design features
36 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, would require early coordination with the DoD to
37 identify and mitigate, if possible, potential impacts on the use of MTRs.

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1 **11.4.7 Geologic Setting and Soil Resources**

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4 **11.4.7.1 Affected Environment**

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7 **11.4.7.1.1 Geologic Setting**

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10 **Regional Setting**

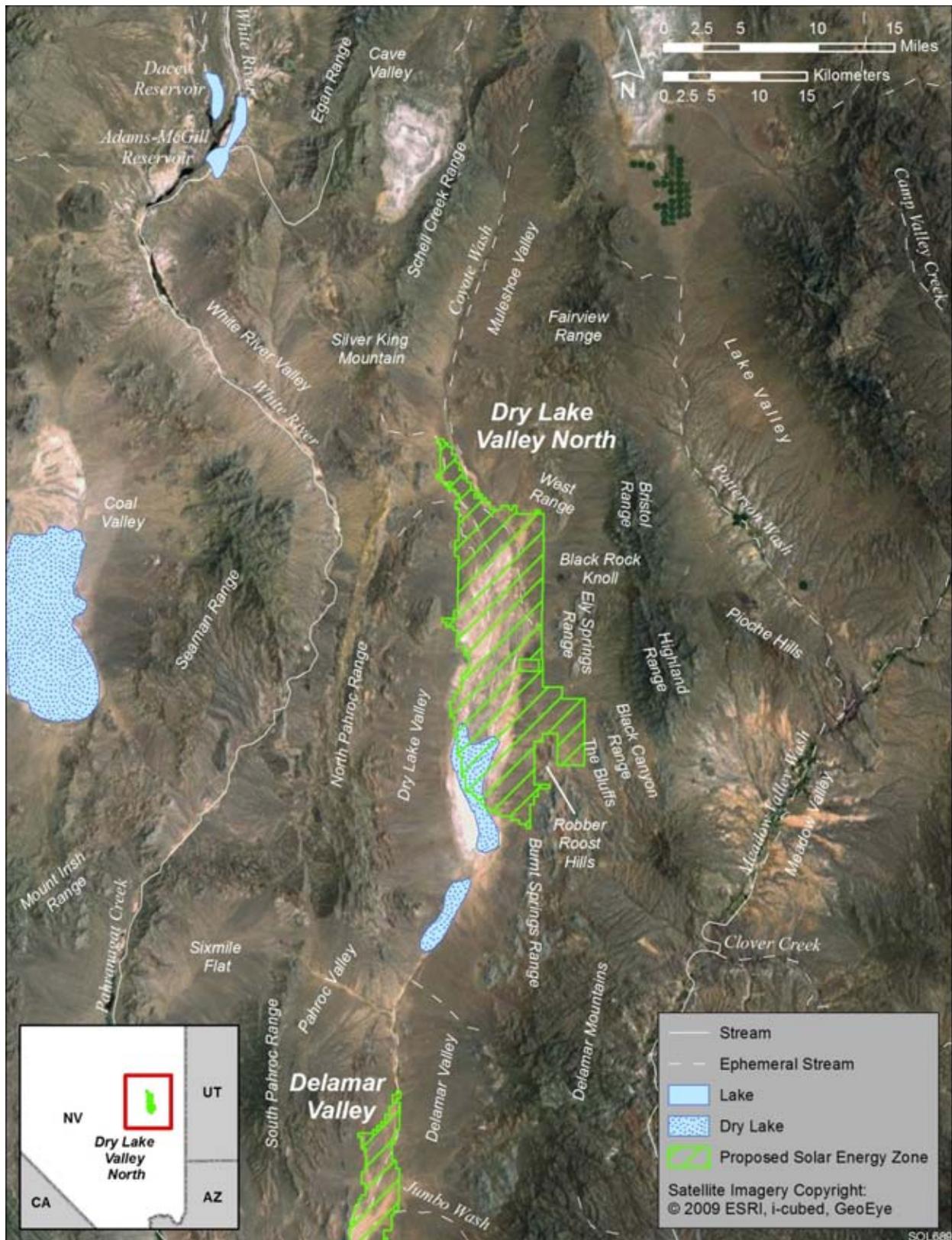
11
12 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located in Dry Lake Valley, a north-
13 trending closed basin within the Basin and Range physiographic province in southern Nevada.
14 The valley lies to the south of Muleshoe Valley, at the southern ends of the Schnell Creek and
15 Fairview Ranges (Figure 11.4.7.1-1). It extends southward about 40 mi (64 km), bounded by the
16 North Pahroc Range to the west and the Bristol, Highland, and Burnt Springs Ranges to the east,
17 and ends at a series of low bedrock hills that also mark the southern end of the North Pahroc
18 Range. Dry Lake Valley is one of many structural basins (grabens) typical of the Basin and
19 Range province.

20
21 Exposed sediments in Dry Lake Valley consist mainly of modern alluvial and eolian
22 deposits (Figure 11.4.7.1-2). Fan deposits along the valley margins are made up of poorly sorted
23 gravel, gravelly sand, and sand. Playa lake sediments (Qp) occur in the valley center to the south
24 and cover about 10% of the SEZ. The surrounding mountains are composed mainly of Late
25 Proterozoic and Cambrian metamorphic rocks overlain by Paleozoic carbonate and shale and
26 capped by late-Tertiary ash-flow tuffs from the Caliente caldera complex, one of a series of
27 Tertiary caldera complexes in the valley. The oldest rocks in the region are the Precambrian
28 metamorphic rocks (CZq) exposed in the Highland Range to the east and the Delamar Mountains
29 to the southeast.

30
31 Semiconsolidated to unconsolidated basin-fill deposits are estimated to be about 3-mi
32 (5-km) thick across most of Dry Lake Valley (Mankinen et al. 2008); estimates of the basin's
33 maximum depth range from 3 to 4 mi (6.5 to 8.2 km) in the valley center, below Dry Lake
34 (Mankinen et al. 2008; Scheirer 2005). Shallow basin-fill aquifers occur in the sand and gravel
35 deposits. Most of these aquifers are hydraulically isolated from similar aquifers in adjacent
36 valleys, but some are connected by flow through the underlying carbonate-rock aquifer
37 (Mankinen et al. 2008).

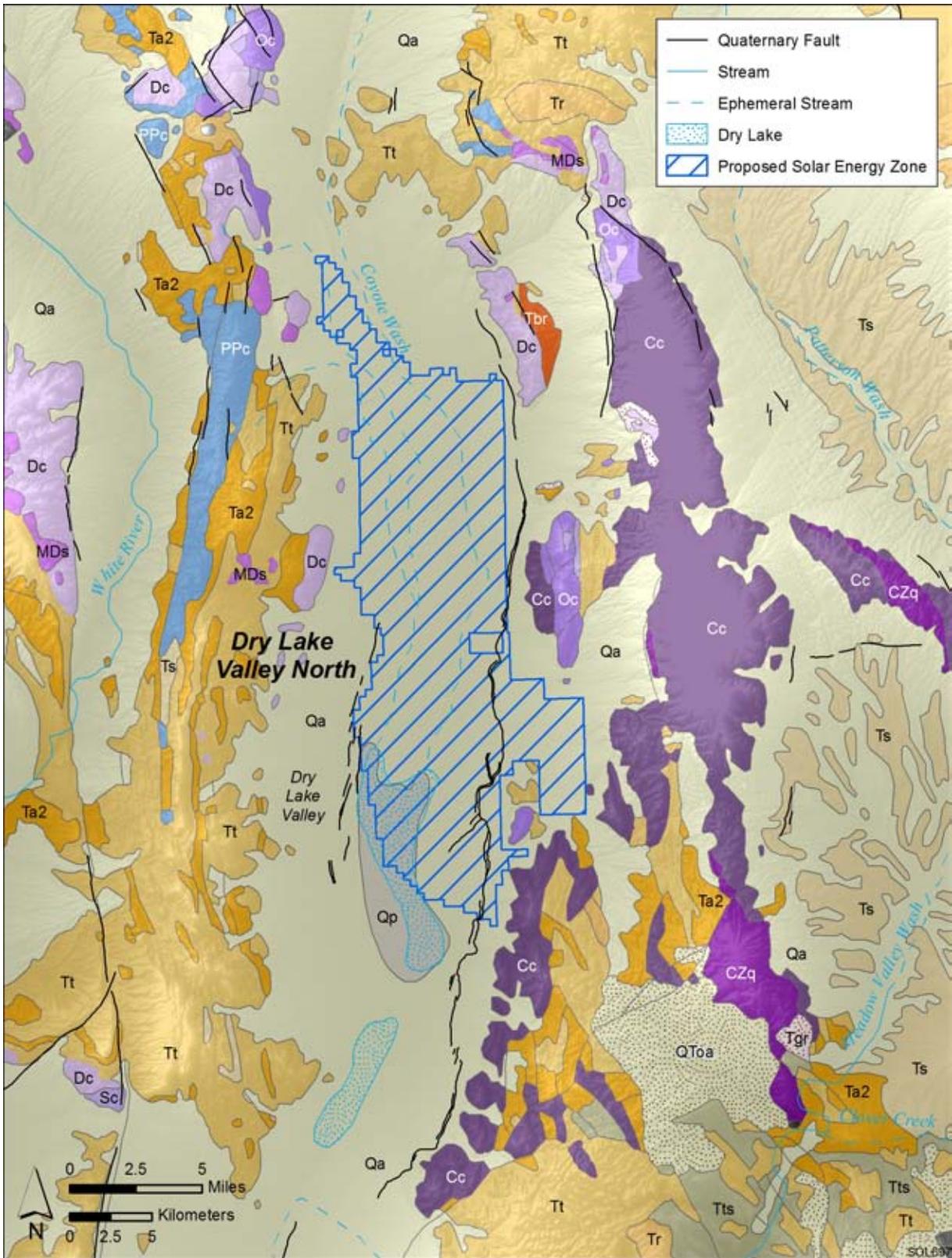
38
39
40 **Topography**

41
42 The Dry Lake Valley is an elongated basin; it is about 40 mi (64 km) long and 8 mi
43 (13 km) wide. It lies to the north of Delamar Valley (Figure 11.4.7.1-1). Elevations along the
44 valley axis range from about 5,100 ft (1,550 m) at its northern end and along the valley sides to
45 about 4,750 ft (1,450 m) at Point of Rock Reservoir at its southern end. Alluvial fan deposits
46 occur along the mountain fronts on both sides of the valley and have coalesced into continuous



1

2 **FIGURE 11.4.7.1-1 Physiographic Features of the Dry Lake Valley North Region**



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.4.7.1-2 Geologic Map of the Dry Lake Valley North Region (Sources: Ludington**
 3 **et al. 2007; Stewart and Carlson 1978)**

Cenozoic (Quaternary, Tertiary)

- Qa Alluvial deposits; locally includes beach and sand dune deposits
- Qp Playa, marsh and alluvial-flat deposits, locally eroded
- QToa Older alluvial deposits
- Tbr Breccia
- Tt Welded and nonwelded silic ash-flow tuffs (Tt2 and Tt3)
- Tr Rhyolitic flows and shallow intrusive rocks (Tr2 and Tr3)
- Ta2 Andesite and related rocks of intermediate composition
- Tts Ash-flow tuffs and tuffaceous sedimentary rocks
- Ts Tuffaceous sedimentary rocks, locally includes minor amounts of tuff (Ts2 and Ts3)
- Tgr Granitic rocks, mostly quartz monzonite and granodiorite

Paleozoic

- PPc Limestone and sparse dolomite, siltstone and sandstone (Permian - Pennsylvanian)
- MDs Shale, siltstone, sandstone, chert-pebble conglomerate and limestone
- Dc Dolomite, limestone and minor amounts of sandstone and quartzite
- Sc Dolomite
- Oc Limestone, dolomite, shale and quartzite
- Cc Limestone and dolomite; locally thick sequences of shale and siltstone
- CZq Quartzite and minor amounts of conglomerate, phyllitic siltstone, limestone and dolomite (Proterozoic - Cambrian)

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2 **FIGURE 11.4.7.1-2 (Cont.)**

1 fan aprons with widths of about 1 to 4 mi (2 to 6 km) (Swadley et al. 1992). Fan aprons on the
2 east side of the valley are steeper and more deeply dissected than those along the west side. The
3 valley is drained by the Coyote Wash, an ephemeral stream that originates in the Muleshoe
4 Valley to the north and terminates at Dry Lake, a playa in the central part of the valley. The
5 valley floor is broad and flat; its main topographic features are the range front alluvial fans.
6

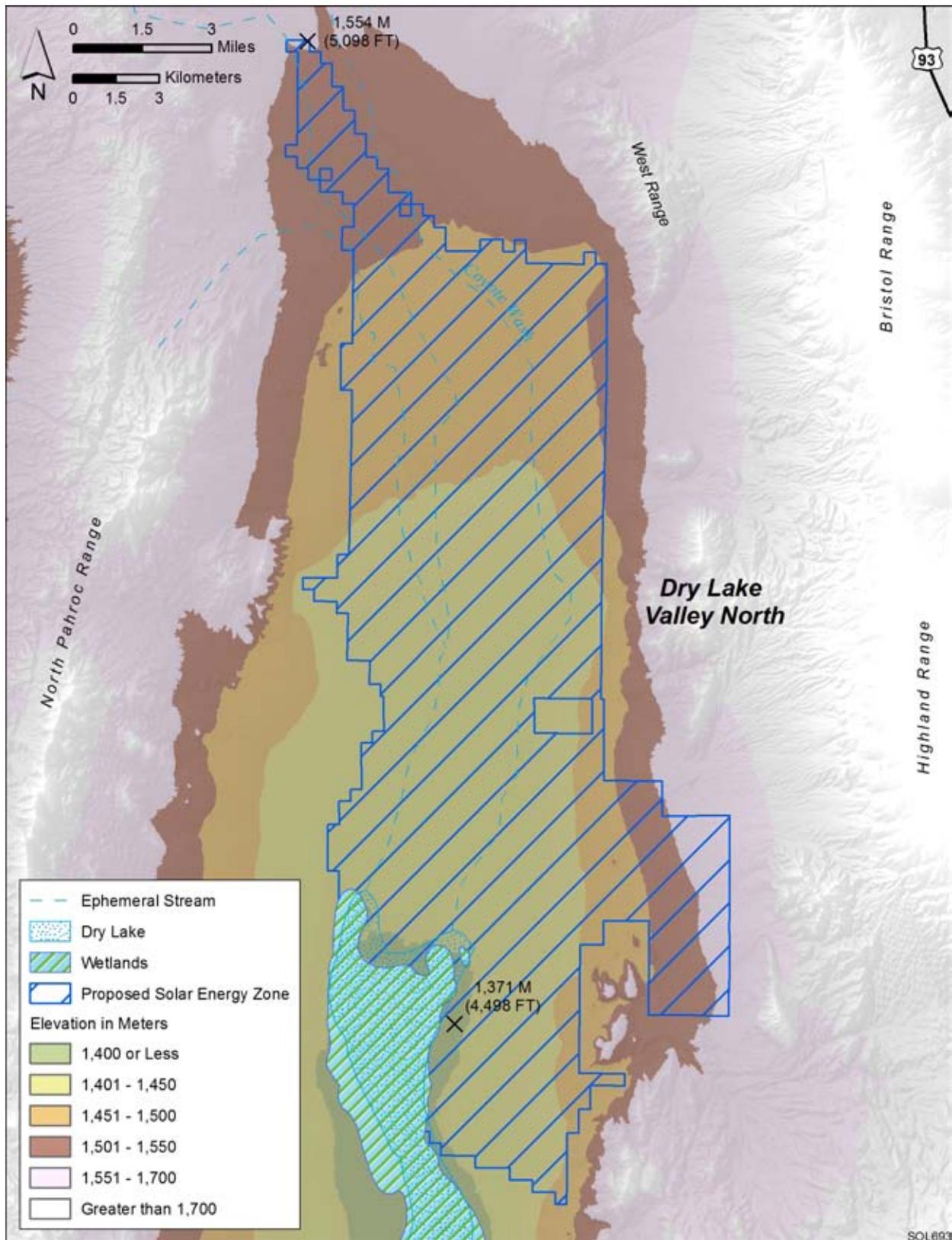
7 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located in the northern part of Dry Lake
8 Valley, between the North Pahroc Range to the west and the Bristol and Highland Ranges to the
9 east. Its terrain slopes gently to the southwest and south. Elevations range from about 5,080 ft
10 (1,550 m) in the northwest corner to 4,580 ft (1,400 m) near the SEZ's southwest corner at Dry
11 Lake (Figure 11.4.7.1-3).
12

13 **Geologic Hazards**

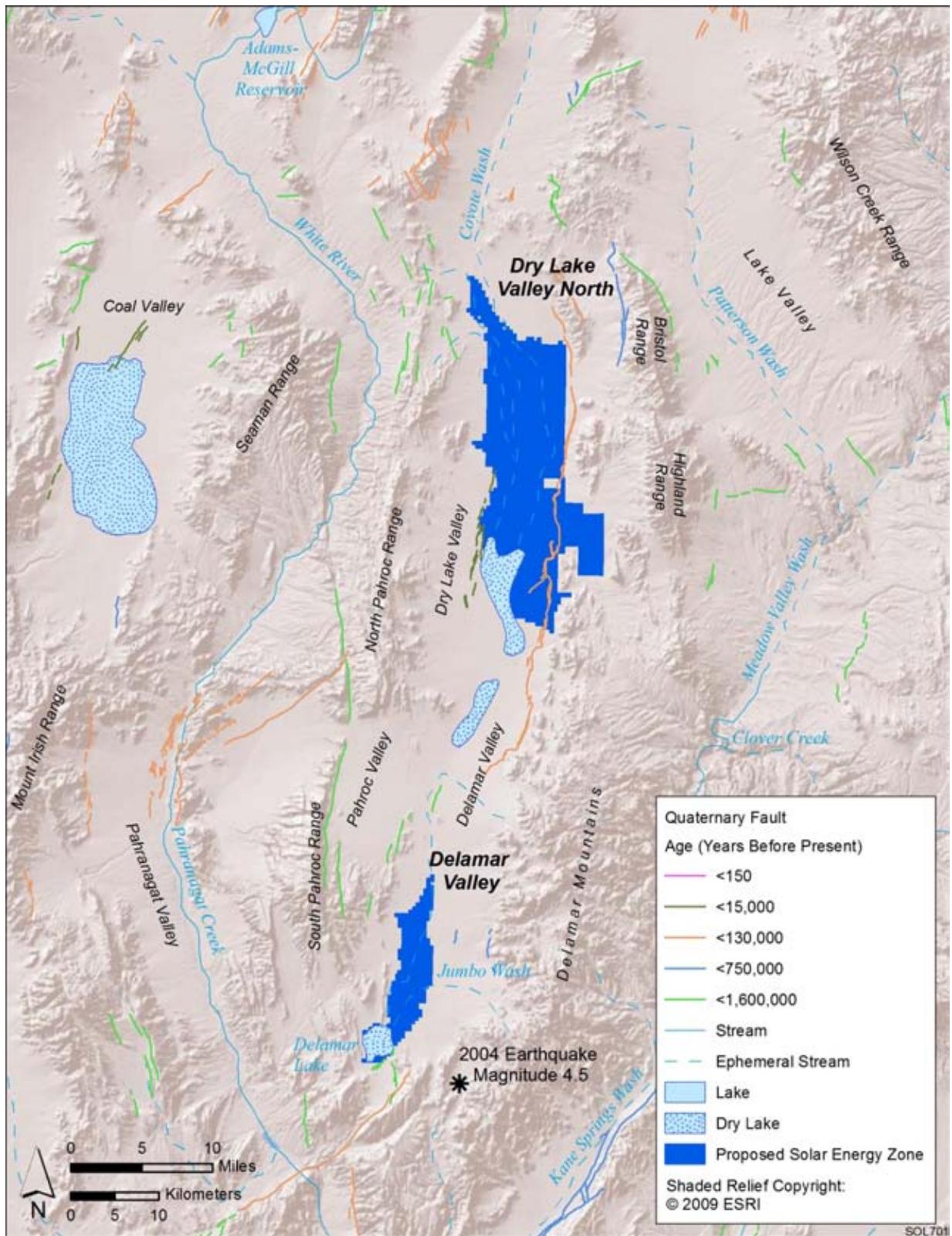
14
15
16 The types of geologic hazards that could potentially affect solar project sites and
17 their mitigation are discussed in Sections 5.7.3 and 5.7.4. The following sections provide a
18 preliminary assessment of these hazards at the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Solar
19 project developers may need to conduct a geotechnical investigation to identify and assess
20 geologic hazards locally to better identify facility design criteria and site-specific design features
21 to minimize their risk.
22

23
24 **Seismicity.** Dry Lake Valley is located within the Southern Nevada Seismic Belt
25 (also called the Pahranaagat Shear Zone), a south-southwest trending zone of seismic activity
26 characterized mainly by background earthquakes (i.e., earthquakes not associated with surface
27 expression) (DePolo and DePolo 1999). The seismic zone is not well understood because it does
28 not follow the dominant strike (north–south) of faulting in southern Nevada, but is thought to
29 accommodate strain between an area of extension to the south (Mojave Desert) and the much
30 more rigid area of the central Great Basin to the north (Kreemer et al. 2010). Faults within the
31 Pahranaagat Shear Zone are estimated to exhibit as much as 10 to 12 mi (16 to 19 km) of left-
32 lateral movement (Tschanz and Pampeyan 1970). The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ lies
33 between two north-trending extensional (normal) faults: the Dry Lake fault to the east, and the
34 West Dry Lake and White River Faults to the west (Figure 11.4.7.1-4).
35

36 The Dry Lake fault extends about 30 mi (50 km) along the eastern edge of Dry Lake
37 Valley, from the western flank of the Burnt Springs Range northward to the West Range, and
38 crossing portions of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (Figure 11.4.7.1-4). The fault is not well
39 studied, and displacement is largely inferred from mapped scarps and lineaments. Displacement
40 along its northern length is down to the west; its length forms the eastern boundary of the
41 structural basin (graben) occupied by Dry Lake Valley. Scarp morphology and the estimated age
42 of offset sediments (Late Pleistocene) place the most recent movement along the fault at less
43 than 130,000 years ago. The slip rate along this fault is estimated to be less than 0.2 mm/yr.
44 Recurrence intervals have not been estimated (Sawyer and Anderson 1999).
45



2 **FIGURE 11.4.7.1-3 General Terrain of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ**



1

2 **FIGURE 11.4.7.1-4 Quaternary Faults in the Dry Lake Valley North Region (Sources: USGS and**

3 **NBMG 2010; USGS 2010c)**

1 West Dry Lake fault is composed of a group of discontinuous faults extending north-
2 northeast along the western edge of Dry Lake in the central part of Dry Lake Valley. Fault traces
3 are marked by east-facing, low scarps (less than 3 ft [1 m]). The faults either mark the western
4 boundary of the structural basin underlying Dry Lake Valley or a mid-basin structure. Offsets of
5 late Holocene alluvium place the most recent activity at less than 15,000 years ago. The slip rates
6 along these faults are estimated to be less than 0.2 mm/yr. Recurrence intervals have not been
7 estimated (Anderson 1999).
8

9 The discontinuous group of normal faults making up the White River fault bound the
10 North Pahroc Range and low hills dividing the White River Valley and Dry Lake Valley, just to
11 the northwest of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Photogeologic interpretation places the most
12 recent activity along these faults as Late Tertiary to Early Quaternary (about 1.6 million years
13 ago). The slip rates along these faults are estimated to be less than 0.2 mm/yr. Recurrence
14 intervals have not been estimated (Sawyer 1998).
15

16 From June 1, 2000, to May 31, 2010, 44 earthquakes were recorded within a 61-mi
17 (100-km) radius of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. The largest earthquake during
18 that period occurred on May 16, 2004. It was located about 40 mi (64 km) south of the SEZ in
19 the Gregerson Basin (near the Delamar Mountains) and registered a Richter scale magnitude
20 (ML^2) of 4.5 (Figure 11.4.7.1-4). During this period, 28 (64%) of the recorded earthquakes
21 within a 61-mi (100-km) radius of the SEZ had magnitudes greater than 3.0; none were greater
22 than 4.5 (USGS 2010c).
23
24

25 **Liquefaction.** The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ lies within an area where the
26 peak horizontal acceleration with a 10% probability of exceedance in 50 years is between 0.08
27 and 0.10 g. Shaking associated with this level of acceleration is generally perceived as strong;
28 however, potential damage to structures is light (USGS 2008). Given the deep water table (from
29 200 to 600 ft [61 and 201 m] below the surface [USGS 2010b]) and the low intensity of ground
30 shaking estimated for Dry Lake Valley, the potential for liquefaction in valley sediments is also
31 likely to be low.
32
33

34 **Volcanic Hazards.** Several calderas in southern Nevada are the sources of voluminous
35 and widespread Tertiary volcanic deposits throughout the region. These include the Indian Peak
36 caldera complex to the east of Dry Lake Valley, between the Highland Range and the Nevada-
37 Utah border; the Caliente caldera complex, also to the east, in the northern Delamar and Clover
38 Mountains and extending into western Utah; the smaller Kane Springs Wash caldera in the
39 southern Delamar Mountains; and the Central Nevada caldera complex to the northwest of Dry
40 Lake Valley (Scott et al. 1992). Tertiary volcanism overlaps periods of extension in southern

² Richter scale magnitude (ML) was the original magnitude defined by Richter and Gutenberg for local earthquakes in 1935. It was based on the maximum amplitude recorded on a Wood-Anderson torsion seismograph but is currently calculated for earthquakes with magnitudes ranging from 2 to 6, using modern instruments with adjustments (USGS 2010d).

1 Nevada and occurred as recently as 2.6 million years ago (late Pliocene) (Noble 1972); however,
2 there is no evidence of more recent volcanic activity associated with these complexes.
3

4 Dry Lake Valley is located about 100 mi (161 km) to the northeast of the southwestern
5 Nevada volcanic field, which consists of volcanic rocks (tuffs and lavas) of the Timber
6 Mountain–Oasis Valley caldera complex and Silent Canyon and Black Mountain calderas
7 (Section 11.1.7.1; Figure 11.1.7.1-4). The area has been studied extensively because of its
8 proximity to the Nevada Test Site and Yucca Mountain repository. Two types of fields are
9 present in the region: (1) large-volume, long-lived fields with a range of basalt types associated
10 with more silicic volcanic rocks produced by melting of the lower crust, and (2) small-volume
11 fields formed by scattered basaltic scoria cones during brief cycles of activity, called rift basalts
12 because of their association with extensional structural features. The basalts of the region
13 typically belong to the second group; examples include the basalts of Silent Canyon and Sleeping
14 Butte (Byers et al. 1989; Crowe et al. 1983).
15

16 The oldest basalts in the region were erupted during the waning stages of silicic
17 volcanism in the southern Great Basin in the Late Miocene and are associated with silicic
18 volcanic centers like Dome Mountain (the first group). Rates of basaltic volcanic activity in
19 the region have been relatively constant but generally low. Basaltic eruptions occurred from
20 1.7 million to 700,000 years ago, creating the cinder cones within Crater Flat (Stuckless and
21 O’Leary 2007). The most recent episode of basaltic eruptions occurred at the Lathrop Wells
22 Cone complex about 80,000 years ago (Stuckless and O’Leary 2007). There has been no silicic
23 volcanism in the region in the past 5 million years. Current silicic volcanic activity occurs
24 entirely along the margins of the Great Basin (Crowe et al. 1983).
25

26 Crowe et al. (1983) determined that the annual probability of a volcanic event for the
27 region is very low (3.3×10^{-10} to 4.7×10^{-8}), similar to the probability of 1.7×10^{-8} calculated
28 for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository (Cline et al. 2005). The volcanic risk in the region is
29 associated only with basaltic eruptions; the risk of silicic volcanism is negligible. Perry (2002)
30 cites geologic data that could increase the recurrence rate (and thus the probability of disruption).
31 These include hypothesized episodes of an anomalously high strain rate, the hypothesized
32 presence of a regional mantle hot spot, and new aeromagnetic data that suggest that previously
33 unrecognized volcanoes may be buried in the alluvial-filled basins in the region.
34
35

36 ***Slope Stability and Land Subsidence.*** The incidence of rock falls and slope failures can
37 be moderate to high along mountain fronts and can present a hazard to facilities on the relatively
38 flat terrain of valley floors such as the Dry Lake Valley if they are located at the base of steep
39 slopes. The risk of rock falls and slope failures decreases toward the flat valley center.
40

41 There has been no land subsidence monitoring within Dry Lake Valley to date; the
42 potential for subsidence is not currently known.
43
44

45 ***Other Hazards.*** Other potential hazards at the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
46 include those associated with soil compaction (restricted infiltration and increased runoff),

1 expanding clay soils (destabilization of structures), and hydro-compactable or collapsible soil
2 (settlement). Disturbance of soil crusts and desert pavement on soil surfaces may increase the
3 likelihood of soil erosion by wind.
4

5 Alluvial fan surfaces, such as those found in the Dry Lake Valley, can be the sites
6 of damaging high-velocity flash floods and debris flows during periods of intense and
7 prolonged rainfall. The nature of the flooding and sedimentation processes (e.g., stream
8 flow versus debris flow) will depend on specific morphology of the fan (National Research
9 Council 1996). Section 11.4.9.1.1 provides further discussion of flood risks within the
10 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.
11

12 13 **11.4.7.1.2 Soil Resources** 14

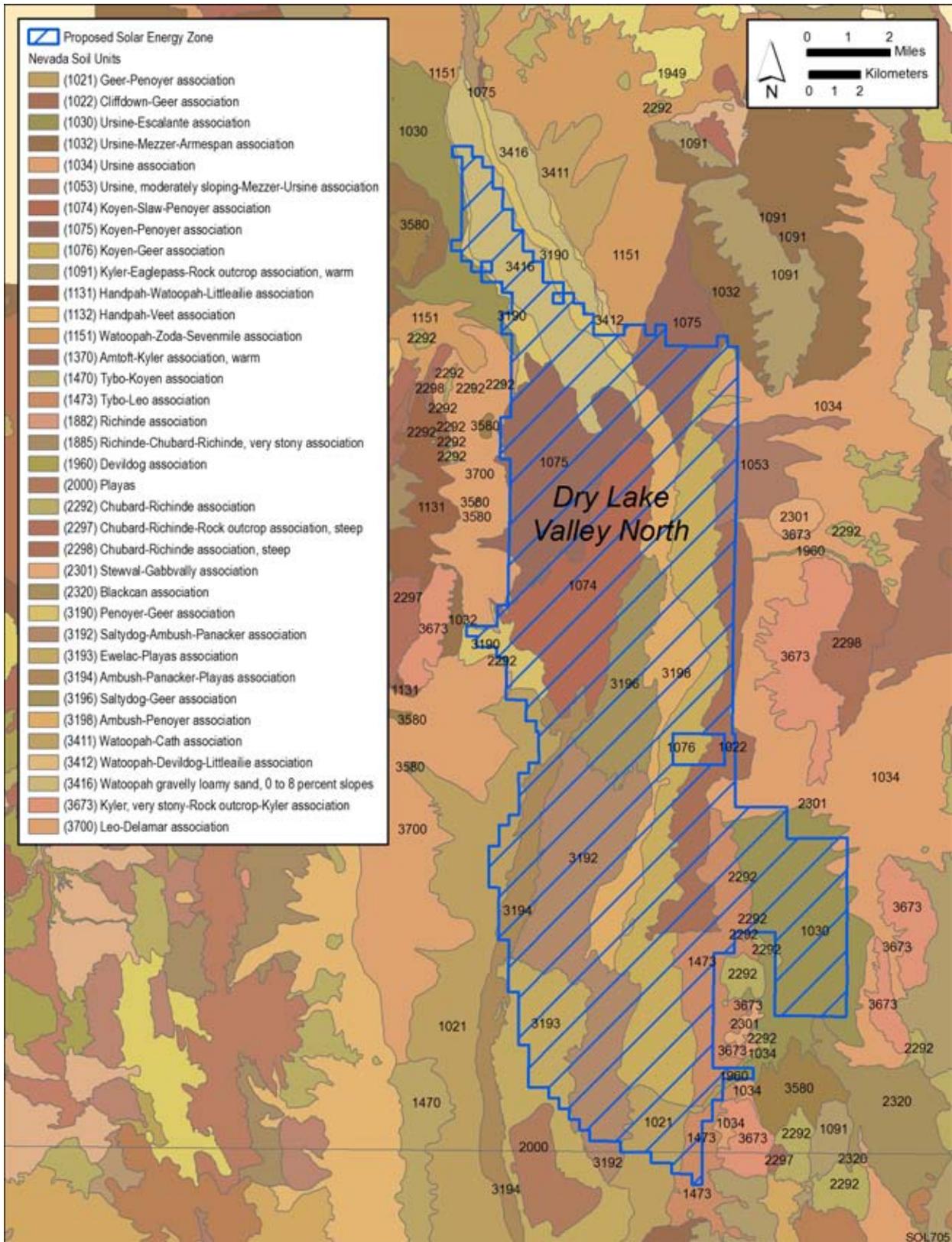
15 Soils within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are predominantly a mix of sandy
16 loams, silt loams, loamy sands, and loams (Figure 11.4.7.1-5). Soil map units within the Dry
17 Lake Valley North SEZ are described in Table 11.4.7.1-1. These level to nearly level soils are
18 derived from alluvium and eolian deposits from mixed sources, typical of soils on alluvial fans
19 and basin floors. They are characterized as very deep (though a few have are shallow to a
20 duripan) and well drained. Most soils on the site have moderate surface runoff potential and
21 moderately rapid permeability. The natural soil surface is moderately well suitable for roads with
22 a slight to moderate erosion hazard when used as roads or trails. The Penoyer-Geer soils along
23 Coyote wash in the north part of the site and some of the dry lake soils (Ewelac-Playas and
24 Saltydog-Geer associations) are not suitable for roads because of a severe rutting hazard. The
25 water erosion potential is low to moderate for most soils (except for the Penoyer-Geer soils along
26 Coyote wash). Except for the Koyan-Slaw-Penoyer soils near the center of the site which are
27 highly susceptible to wind erosion, most of the soils have a moderate susceptibility to wind
28 erosion, with as much as 86 tons (78 metric tons) of soil eroded by wind per acre (4,000 m²)
29 each year (NRCS 2010). Biological soil crusts and desert pavement have not been documented
30 within the SEZ, but may be present.
31

32 Only the playa soils (Ewelac-Playas and Ambush-Panacker-Playas associations) within
33 the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are rated as partially hydric.³ Flooding is rare for
34 most soils at the site. Soils throughout the SEZ, covering a total of about 37,000 ac (150 km²)
35 or 49% are classified as prime farmland, if irrigated and reclaimed of excess salts and sodium
36 (NRCS 2010).
37

38 39 **11.4.7.2 Impacts** 40

41 Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities
42 (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase of a solar

³ A hydric soil is a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding (NRCS 2010).



1

2 **FIGURE 11.4.7.1-5 Soil Map for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (Source: NRCS 2008)**

TABLE 11.4.7.1-1 Summary of Soil Map Units within the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
1076	Koyen-Geer association	Low	Moderate (WEG 4) ^d	Consists of about 60% Koyen loamy sand and 30% Geer sandy loam. Level to nearly level soils on alluvial fan skirts, alluvial flats, and drainageways. Parent material is alluvium from volcanic rocks with a high component of loess (Koyen) and welded tuff and limestone with a minor component of volcanic ash (Geer). Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate to moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is moderate. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and cultivated crops of alfalfa and small grains (Geer). Prime farmland ^e if irrigated and reclaimed of excess salts and sodium.	10,396 (14)
3192	Saltydog-Ambush-Panacker association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 3)	Consists of 40% Saltydog loam, 30% Ambush fine sandy loam, and 20% Panacker fine sandy loam. Level to nearly level soils on alluvial flats. Parent material is alluvium and lacustrine deposits from limestone and welded tuff (Saltydog) and eolian deposits over lacustrine deposits. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate to moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is moderate to high. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat. Prime farmland if irrigated and reclaimed of excess salts and sodium.	9,627 (13)
1075	Koyen-Penoyer association	Low	Moderate (WEG 4)	Consists of 50% Koyan gravelly sandy loam and 35% Penoyer silt loam. Level to nearly level soils on basin floors and inset fans. Parent material is alluvium from volcanic rocks with a high loess component and alluvium over lacustrine deposits. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate to moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is moderate to high. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing; some irrigated cropland (alfalfa, small grains, potatoes, and sugar beets). Prime farmland if irrigated and reclaimed of excess salts and sodium.	8,793 (11)

TABLE 11.4.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
1074	Koyan-Slaw-Penoyer association	Low	High (WEG 1)	Consists of 55% Kenoyan loamy fine sand, 20% Slaw silt loam, and 15% Penoyer very fine sandy loam. Level to nearly level soils on basin floors, basin floor remnants, and fan skirts. Parent material is alluvium from volcanic rocks with a high loess component. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and slow (Slaw) to moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is moderate to high. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and limited irrigated cropland.	7,016 (9)
1030	Ursine-Escalante association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 5)	Consists of 55% Ursine gravelly loam and 30% Escalante fine sandy loam. Nearly level to gently sloping soils formed on inset fans, fan remnants, and drainageways. Parent material is alluvium from rhyolite and some limestone. Shallow to a duripan (Ursine) to very deep and well drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and moderate to moderately rapid permeability. Moderately to strongly saline. Available water capacity is very low to low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and limited irrigated cropland.	6,370 (8)
3198	Ambush-Penoyer association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 3)	Consists of 50% Ambush fine sandy loam and 40% Penoyer very fine sandy loam. Level to nearly level soils on alluvial flats. Parent material is eolian deposits over lacustrine deposits. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate to moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is moderate to high. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	5,435 (7)
3416	Watoopah gravelly loamy sand (0 to 8% slopes)	Low	Moderate (WEG 3)	Nearly level to gently sloping soils on alluvial fan remnants. Parent material is alluvium from volcanic ash, welded tuff, and rhyolite. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	4,634 (6)

TABLE 11.4.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
1473	Tybo-Leo association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 4)	Consists of 60% Tybo gravelly coarse sandy loam and 25% Leo very gravelly sandy loam. Nearly level soils on inset fans and fan remnants. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources, including volcanic rocks. Shallow to a duripan (Tybo) to very deep and well to excessively drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and moderately rapid to rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low to low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and irrigated cropland.	4,015 (5)
3196	Saltydog-Geer association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 4L)	Consists of about 60% Saltydog loam and 30% Geer fine sandy loam. Level to nearly level soils on alluvial flats. Parent material is alluvium from welded tuff and limestone with a minor component of volcanic ash. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate to moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is moderate to high. Severe rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat. Prime farmland if irrigated and reclaimed of excess salts and sodium.	3,990 (5)
1022	Cliffdown-Geer association	Low	Moderate (WEG 5)	Consists of about 60% Cliffdown very gravelly sandy loam and 30% Geer fine sandy loam. Nearly level to gently sloping soils on fan remnants and fan skirts. Parent material is alluvium from welded tuff and limestone with a minor component of volcanic ash. Very deep and well to somewhat excessively drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is low to moderate. Slight rutting hazard. Used mainly for grazing and wildlife habitat.	3,755 (5)

TABLE 11.4.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
3193	Ewelac-Playas association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 4)	Consists of 50% Ewelac silt loam and 40% Playas (silty clay loam). Level to nearly level soils on basin floors and alluvial flats. Parent material is lacustrine deposits from mixed sources. Very deep and somewhat poorly (playas) to moderately well drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration) and moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low (playas) to high. Severe rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	2,821 (4)
1021	Geer-Penoyer association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 3)	Consists of about 65% Geer fine sandy loam and 30% Penoyer silt loam. Level to nearly level soils on alluvial fan skirts and alluvial flats. Parent material is alluvium from welded tuff and limestone with a minor component of volcanic ash. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate permeability. Available water capacity is high. Severe rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	2,679 (4)
3194	Ambush-Panacker-Playas association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 3)	Consists of about 45% Ambush fine sandy loam, 30% Panacker fine sandy loam, and 15% Playas (silty clay loam). Level to nearly level soils on alluvial flats and basin floors. Parent material is eolian deposits and alluvium from mixed sources over lacustrine deposits. Very deep and somewhat poorly (playas) to well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate to moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low (playas) to high. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat. Prime farmland if irrigated and reclaimed of excess salts and sodium.	2,288 (3)

TABLE 11.4.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
3190	Penoyer-Geer association	High	Moderate (WEG 4L)	Consists of 45% Penoyer silt loam and 40% Geer fine sandy loam. Level to nearly level soils formed on inset fans and drainageways. Parent material is alluvium from welded tuff and limestone (with a minor component of volcanic ash). Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate rapid permeability. Moderately to strongly saline. Available water capacity is high. Severe rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	2,267 (3)
1034	Ursine association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 6)	Moderately sloping very gravelly loam on fan remnants. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources. Shallow to a duripan and well drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	1,271 (2)
1053	Ursine, moderately sloping-Mezzer-Ursine association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 6)	Consists of about 60% Ursine very gravelly loam and 25% Mezzar very gravelly fine sandy loam. Moderately sloping soils on inset fans, fan remnants, and drainageways. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources. Shallow to a durian (Ursine) to very deep and well drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low to low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	797 (1)

TABLE 11.4.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
3700	Leo-Delamar association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 3)	Consists of about 55% Leo gravelly sandy loam and 30% Delamar gravelly sandy loam. Level to nearly level soils on alluvial fan remnants and drainageways. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources, including welded tuff and minor amounts of limestone. Moderately to very deep and well to excessively drained, with low surface runoff potential (high infiltration rate) and moderately slow to rapid permeability. Available water capacity is low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	327 (<1)

- ^a Water erosion potential rates based on soil erosion factor K, which indicates the susceptibility of soil to sheet and rill erosion by water. Values range from 0.02 to 0.69 and are provided in parentheses under the general rating; a higher value indicates a higher susceptibility to erosion. Estimates based on the percentage of silt, sand, and organic matter and on soil structure and saturated hydraulic conductivity.
- ^b Wind erosion potential here is based on the wind erodibility group (WEG) designation: groups 1 and 2, high; groups 3 through 6, moderate; and groups 7 and 8 low (see footnote d for further explanation).
- ^c To convert from acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.
- ^d WEG = wind erodibility group. WEGs are based on soil texture, content of organic matter, effervescence of carbonates, content of rock fragments, and mineralogy, and also take into account soil moisture, surface cover, soil surface roughness, wind velocity and direction, and the length of unsheltered distance (USDA 2004). Groups range in value from 1 (most susceptible to wind erosion) to 8 (least susceptible to wind erosion). The NRCS provides a wind erodibility index, expressed as an erosion rate in tons per acre per year, for each of the wind erodibility groups: WEGs 3 and 4, 86 tons (78 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year; and WEG 5, 56 tons (51 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year.
- ^e Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and that is available for these uses.

Source: NRCS (2010).

1 project. These include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind,
2 soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. Such impacts are
3 common to all utility-scale solar energy developments in varying degrees and are described in
4 more detail for the four phases of development in Section 5.7 1.
5

6 Because impacts on soil resources result from ground-disturbing activities in the project
7 area, soil impacts would be roughly proportional to the size of a given solar facility, with larger
8 areas of disturbed soil having a greater potential for impacts than smaller areas (Section 5.7.2).
9 The magnitude of impacts would also depend on the types of components built for a given
10 facility since some components would involve greater disturbance and would take place over a
11 longer timeframe.
12

13 Portions of the dry lake may not be a suitable location for construction, because lakebed
14 sediments are often saturated with shallow groundwater and likely collapsible. The lake sits
15 within the lowest elevation area of Dry Lake Valley and serves as a sump for drainage in the
16 valley.
17

18 **11.4.7.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

19
20
21 No SEZ-specific design features were identified for soil resources at the proposed Dry
22 Valley North SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features described under both Soils
23 and Air Quality in Appendix A, Section A.2.2., as required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program,
24 would reduce the potential for soil impacts during all project phases.
25
26

1 **11.4.8 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)**
2
3

4 **11.4.8.1 Affected Environment**
5

6 There were no locatable mining claims within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
7 as of June 14, 2010 (BLM and USFS 2010a), and the public land within the SEZ was closed to
8 locatable mineral entry in June 2009, pending the outcome of this solar energy PEIS. All of the
9 area has been previously leased for oil and gas development, and there are currently six existing
10 leases within the SEZ that are classified as nonproducing (BLM and USFS 2010b). The area
11 remains open for discretionary mineral leasing for oil and gas and other leasable minerals, and
12 for disposal of salable minerals. There is no geothermal leasing or development in or near the
13 SEZ (BLM and USFS 2010b).
14

15
16 **11.4.8.2 Impacts**
17

18 The existing, nonproducing oil and gas leases within the SEZ are prior existing rights
19 and represent a potential conflict with future solar development. As long as these leases remain
20 in effect, solar development would require the cooperation of the oil and gas lessees. Such
21 cooperation might be possible, since oil and gas development generally requires fewer than
22 5 acres (0.02 km²) per well, but it would depend on accommodating the oil and gas lease
23 holders' need for continued access to develop, maintain, and service any wells developed on
24 the leases.
25

26 If the area were identified as a solar energy zone, it would continue to be closed to all
27 incompatible forms of mineral development. For the purpose of this analysis, it was assumed
28 that future development of oil and gas resources would continue to be possible, since such
29 development could occur under the existing leases or from directional drilling from new leases.
30 Since the SEZ does not contain existing mining claims, it was also assumed that there would be
31 no future loss of locatable mineral production. The production of common minerals, such as sand
32 and gravel and mineral materials used for road construction or other purposes, might take place
33 in areas not directly developed for solar energy production.
34

35 The SEZ has had no history of development of geothermal resources or of leasing
36 interest. For that reason, it is not anticipated that solar development would adversely affect the
37 development of geothermal resources.
38

39
40 **11.4.8.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
41

42 No SEZ specific design features have been proposed. Implementing the programmatic
43 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
44 Program would provide adequate mitigation for mineral resources.
45
46

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1 **11.4.9 Water Resources**

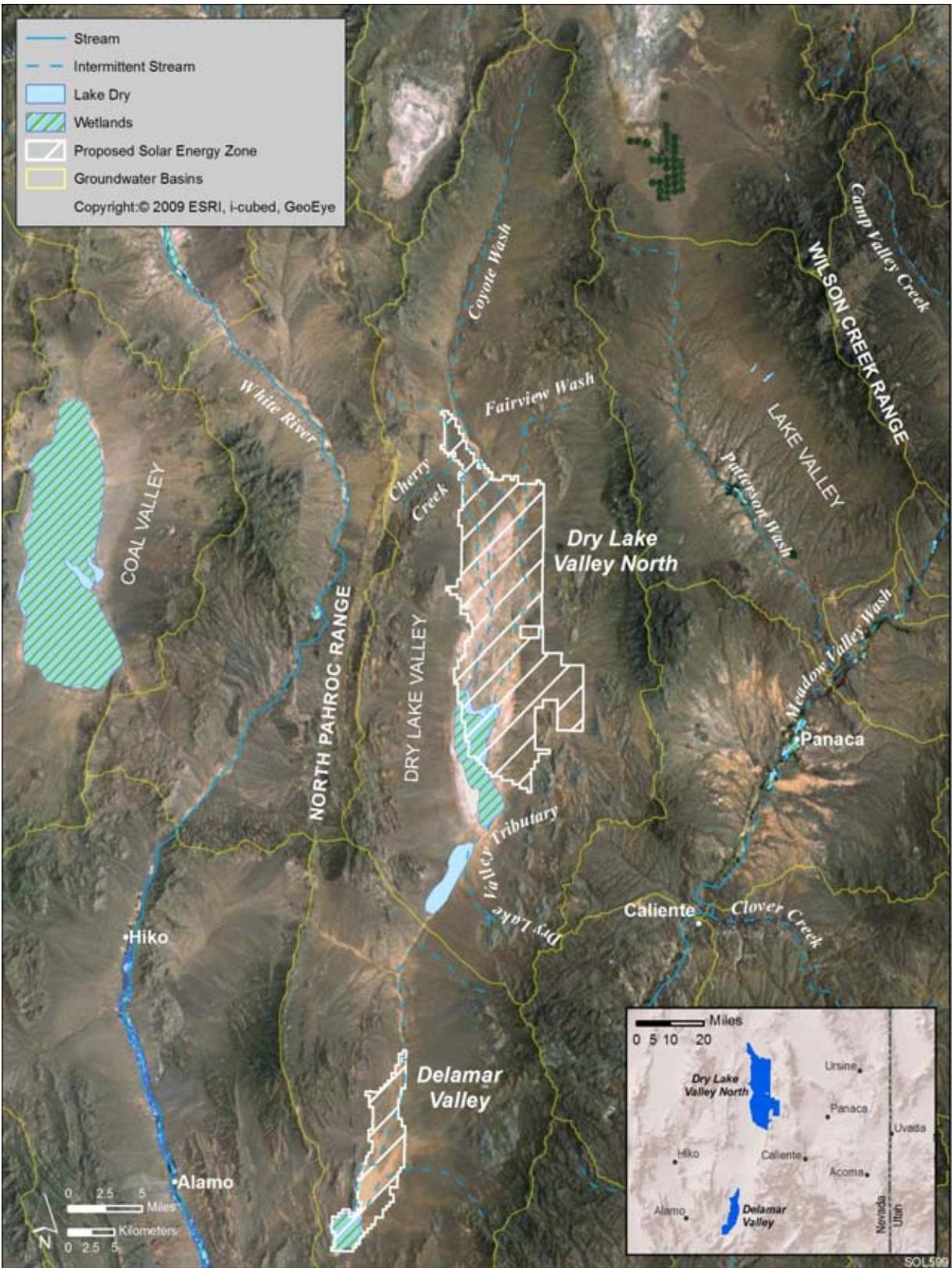
2
3
4 **11.4.9.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located within the Central Nevada
7 Desert Basins subbasin of the Great Basin Region (USGS 2010a) and the Basin and Range
8 physiographic province, which is characterized by intermittent mountain ranges and desert
9 valleys (Planert and Williams 1995). The proposed SEZ has surface elevations ranging between
10 4,580 and 5,080 ft (1,400 and 1,550 m). The Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located within Dry
11 Lake Valley, a basin characterized by a flat valley floor surrounded by uplifted volcanic and
12 carbonate rock mountain ranges (Figure 11.4.9.1-1). Annual precipitation is estimated to be
13 between 7 and 16 in./yr (18 and 41 cm/yr) depending on the elevation, with the lower rainfall
14 expected on the valley floor and higher rainfall at higher elevations (WRCC 2010a). Pan
15 evaporation rates are estimated to be 80 in./yr (203 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010b).
16 Reference crop evapotranspiration has been estimated at 59 in./yr (150 cm/yr) in nearby Caliente
17 (Huntington and Allen 2010).
18
19

20 ***11.4.9.1.1 Surface Waters (Including Drainages, Floodplains, and Wetlands)***

21
22 There are no perennial surface water features within Dry Lake Valley. The primary
23 surface water features within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ include several
24 ephemeral washes and a dry lake (Figure 11.4.9.1-1; the area shown as wetland is the
25 approximate location of the dry lake). The area encompassed by the dry lake is approximately
26 12.6 mi² (33 km²). Coyote Wash and Cherry Creek flow from north to south into the dry lake
27 through the central part of the Dry Lake Valley basin. Fairview Wash is a tributary to Coyote
28 Wash that flows from the adjacent West Range. Evidence of braided streams and alluvial
29 outwash plains (fans) are present throughout the SEZ, specifically in the area north of the dry
30 lake and in the eastern part of the SEZ, likely caused by spring runoff from the hills to the east.
31 The Dry Lake Valley Tributary is an ephemeral wash in the southern part of the Dry Lake Valley
32 basin that flows north toward the dry lake, peak flows of which have been measured by the
33 USGS to be up to 150 ft³/s (4.2 m³/s) (USGS 2010b; gauge 10245270). A shallow drainage
34 divide separates Dry Lake Valley and Delamar Valley to the south. Surface water runoff from
35 the surrounding mountains is estimated to be 9,000 ac-ft/yr (11 million m³/yr) between both Dry
36 Lake Valley and the adjacent Delamar Valley (NDWR 1971). Surface water evaporation is
37 estimated to be minor and there are no surface water inflows to or outflows from the basin
38 (NDWR 1971).
39

40 Flood hazards have not been identified (Zone D) for the region surrounding the proposed
41 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (FEMA 2009). Intermittent flooding may occur with temporary
42 ponding and erosion along the ephemeral washes, from the hills on the sides of the basin, and
43 within the lake area. Two wetlands have been identified by the NWI in the vicinity of the dry
44 lake (USFWS 2009a). Within this area, 9,341 acres (38 km²) have been identified as “lake”
45 and 44 acres (0.18 km²) have been identified as “freshwater forested/shrub wetland” area
46 (USFWS 2009a). Further information regarding the small wetlands within the SEZ can be
47 found in Section 11.4.10.1.



1

2 **FIGURE 11.4.9.1-1 Surface Water Features near the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ**

1 **11.4.9.1.2 Groundwater**
2

3 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located within the Dry Lake Valley
4 groundwater basin (NDWR 2010b). Basin-fill deposits are estimated to be up to 4 mi (6.5 km)
5 thick in the center of the basin, with an average thickness of 3 mi (5 km), and are underlain by
6 and hydraulically connected to thick sequences of Paleozoic carbonate rocks (Dettinger 1989;
7 Mankinen et al. 2008). Carbonate rocks have been found to be closer to the surface in the
8 northern part of Dry Lake Valley (SNWA and BLM 2008). Volcanic rocks occur at the margins
9 of the basin, underneath basin-fill in some areas of the basin, and are also underlain by the
10 Paleozoic carbonate rock sequences (Dettinger 1989; Mankinen et al. 2008). No occurrence of
11 evapotranspiration of groundwater is estimated to occur in Dry Lake Valley (NDWR 2008). The
12 Paleozoic carbonate rocks that underlay the Dry Lake Valley basin are thought to be a part of the
13 White River Groundwater Flow System, a regional-scale carbonate-rock aquifer that flows
14 generally toward the south and terminates at Muddy River Springs and the Virgin River
15 (Eakin 1966). The White River Groundwater Flow System is a part of a large carbonate-rock
16 province that occurs within approximately one-third of Nevada, a large portion of Utah, and parts
17 of Arizona and California (Harrill and Prudic 1998). Connectivity of the carbonate rocks that
18 underlay Dry Lake Valley to the White River Groundwater Flow System is not well understood,
19 and has yet to be studied in detail in this area (Harrill and Prudic 1998; NDWR 2008).
20

21 Estimates of recharge in the basin have varied significantly, depending up on the study.
22 Recharge to the basin-fill aquifer was estimated to be 5,000 ac-ft/yr (6.2 million m³/yr) by the
23 Maxie-Eakin method (i.e., recharge is a percentage of precipitation), with 5,000 ac-ft/yr (6.2
24 million m³/yr) estimated to flow out of the groundwater basin and into Delamar Valley
25 groundwater basin to the south (NDWR 1971). The NDWR (1971) also estimated that there were
26 no inflows to the Dry Lake Valley groundwater basin. Using a recharge model specifically
27 designed to estimate recharge in the Great Basin Aquifer system, Flint et al. (2004) estimated
28 average recharge in the basin to be between 10,600 ac-ft/yr and 11,300 ac-ft/yr (13 million and
29 14 million m³/yr) using a 30-year climate record, geologic information, soil types, and other data
30 input into a model. The study by Flint et al. (2004) also indicated that Dry Lake Valley is
31 dominated by in-place recharge processes instead of by runoff processes. Other estimates of
32 basin-scale recharge range from 13,000 ac-ft/year (16 million m³/yr) to 15,667 ac-ft/year
33 (19 million m³/yr) (NDWR 2008).
34

35 Groundwater flows from the basin margins, where infiltration occurs along mountain
36 front areas, south to Delamar Valley. Water levels in wells located within or adjacent to the
37 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are generally between 200 and 660 ft (61 and 201 m)
38 below ground surface, with the majority of the measurements of groundwater at deeper
39 than 400 ft (122 m) below ground surface (USGS 2010b; wells 375624114444501,
40 380336114473501, and 374536114443001; SNWA and BLM 2008). The hydraulic gradient
41 has been estimated to be 13 ft/mi (0.0025 ft/ft) (2.5 m/km [0.0025 m/m]) between Dry Lake
42 Valley and Delamar Valley to the south (SNWA and BLM 2008). Unconfined conditions are
43 thought to occur in the northern part of the Dry Lake Valley basin, and semiconfined to
44 confined conditions are thought to occur in the southern part of the basin (SNWA and
45 BLM 2008). An aquifer test performed within the valley fill in the basin indicated a

1 transmissivity of 5,200 ft²/day (483 m²/day) for a shallow aquifer and 6,500 ft²/day
2 (604 m²/day) for a deep aquifer (STINET 2010).

3
4 The SNWA and BLM (2008) identified a total of 98 springs within the basin. Four of the
5 springs, all occurring in the northern portion of the basin, were monitored by the SNWA and
6 BLM (2008) and the following flow rates were measured: two had flow rates of between 1 and
7 10 gpm (3.8 and 38 L/min) and two had flow rates of between 10 and 100 gpm (38 and 380
8 L/min). The NDWR (2008) has found that the springs of environmental concern within the basin
9 (listed as Meloy Spring, Fence Spring, Bailey Spring, and Coyote Spring) are not directly
10 connected to the principal groundwater aquifer in the basin.

11
12 The chemical quality of water in the Dry Lake Valley basin is varied. Groundwater
13 sampling in the basin has indicated that some constituents exceed water quality standards
14 (SNWA and BLM 2008). In some samples, concentrations of arsenic have been found to exceed
15 the EPA MCL for arsenic and thallium, three of four samples exceeded secondary MCL for iron,
16 and a high pH has been measured in waters within the basin (SNWA and BLM 2008; EPA
17 2009d). TDS concentrations have been found to range between 210 and 400 mg/L (SNWA and
18 BLM 2008).

19 20 21 ***11.4.9.1.3 Water Use and Water Rights Management***

22
23 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Lincoln County were
24 57,100 ac-ft/yr (70 million m³/yr), of which 11% came from surface waters and 89% came from
25 groundwater. The largest water use category was irrigation, at 55,100 ac-ft/yr (68 million m³/yr).
26 Public supply/domestic water uses accounted for 1,300 ac-ft/yr (1.6 million m³/yr), with
27 livestock and mining water uses on the order of 230 ac-ft/yr (280,000 m³/yr) and 450 ac-ft/yr
28 (560,000 m³/yr), respectively (Kenny et al. 2009).

29
30 All waters in Nevada are the property of the public in the State of Nevada and subject
31 to the laws described in Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapters 532 through 538 (available at
32 <http://leg.state.nv.us/nrs>). The NDWR, led by the State Engineer, is the agency responsible for
33 managing both the surface water and groundwater resources, which includes overseeing water
34 right applications, appropriations, and interbasin transfers (NDWR 2010c). The two principle
35 ideas behind water rights in Nevada are the prior appropriations doctrine and the concept of
36 beneficial use. A water right establishes an appropriation amount and date such that more senior
37 water rights have priority over newer water rights. In addition, water rights are treated as both
38 real and personal property, such that water rights can be transferred without affecting the land
39 ownership (NDWR 2010c). Water rights applications (new or transfer of existing) are approved
40 if the water is available to be appropriated, if existing water rights will not be affected, and if the
41 proposed use is not deemed to be harmful to the public interest. If these conditions are satisfied
42 according to the State Engineer, a proof of beneficial use of the approved water must be
43 provided within a certain time period, and following that a certificate of appropriation is issued
44 (BLM 2001).

1 Dry Lake Valley is not a designated groundwater basin, meaning that there are no
2 specifically designated beneficial uses for the water within the basin (NDWR 2010a). The
3 NDWR estimates the perennial yield for each groundwater basin as the amount of water that can
4 be economically withdrawn for an indefinite period without depleting the source (NDWR 1999).
5 The NDWR (2010b) states that the perennial yield of the Dry Lake Valley basin is equal to
6 12,700 ac-ft/yr (15.7 million m³/yr). Approximately 1,009 ac-ft/yr (1.2 million m³/yr) (for
7 irrigation) of water rights are permitted in the basin, and an additional 57 ac-ft/yr (70,000 m³/yr)
8 (18 ac-ft/yr [22,000 m³/yr] for mining, rest for stock watering) of water rights are certified.
9 Through Ruling 5875 in July 2008, the NDWR (2008) granted 11,584 ac-ft/yr (14 million m³/yr)
10 of water rights in the Dry Lake Valley groundwater basin to the SNWA for use in a project that
11 would convey water to Las Vegas (SNWA 2008). This amount of water represents the remaining
12 amount of unappropriated water within the Dry Lake Valley Basin, less 50 ac-ft/yr that would be
13 reserved for future use within the basin (NDWR 2008). The SNWA would commit 1,500 ac-ft/yr
14 (1.9 million m³/yr) of those water rights to Lincoln County for use, but the rest would be
15 transferred to Las Vegas (SNWA 2008). While the water rights were initially granted by the
16 NDWR, the Seventh Judicial District Court of Nevada (Lincoln County) ordered that NDWR
17 Ruling 5875 be remanded in October 2009 (BLM 2010c). In November 2009, the SNWA filed
18 an appeal to the Nevada Supreme Court to fight this decision (BLM 2010c). In June 2010, the
19 Nevada Supreme Court issued a ruling related to SNWA water rights applications in Dry Lake
20 Valley: the NDWR was ordered to reconsider the SNWA water rights applications and
21 reopen the protest period related to the applications (*Great Basin Water Network v. State*
22 *Engineer* 2010).

23 24 25 **11.4.9.2 Impacts**

26
27 Potential impacts on water resources related to utility-scale solar energy development
28 include direct and indirect impacts on surface waters and groundwater. Direct impacts occur at
29 the place of origin and at the time of the proposed activity, while indirect impacts occur away
30 from the place of origin or later in time. Impacts on water resources considered in this analysis
31 are the result of land-disturbance activities (construction, final developed site plan, and off-site
32 activities such as road and transmission line construction) and water use requirements for solar
33 energy technologies that take place during the four project phases: site characterization,
34 construction, operations, and decommissioning/reclamation. Both land disturbance and
35 consumptive water use activities can affect groundwater and surface water flows, cause
36 drawdown of groundwater surface elevations, modify natural drainage pathways, obstruct
37 natural recharge zones, and alter surface water–wetland–groundwater connectivity. Water
38 quality can also be degraded through the generation of wastewater, chemical spills, increased
39 erosion and sedimentation, and increased salinity (e.g., by the excessive withdrawal from
40 aquifers).

41 42 43 **11.4.9.2.1 Land-Disturbance Impacts on Water Resources**

44
45 Impacts related to land-disturbance activities are common to all utility-scale solar energy
46 developments, which are described in more detail for the four phases of development in

1 Section 5.9.1; these impacts will be minimized through the implementation of programmatic
2 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Land-disturbance activities should be
3 avoided to the extent possible in the vicinity of the ephemeral stream washes and the dry lake
4 present on the site. Alterations to these systems could enhance erosion processes, disrupt
5 groundwater recharge, and negatively affect plant and animal habitats associated with the
6 ephemeral channels.
7
8

9 ***11.4.9.2.2 Water Use Requirements for Solar Energy Technologies***

10 **Analysis Assumptions**

11
12
13
14 A detailed description of the water use assumptions for the four utility-scale solar energy
15 technologies (parabolic trough, power tower, dish engine, and PV systems) is presented in
16 Appendix M. Assumptions regarding water use calculations specific to the proposed Dry Lake
17 Valley North SEZ include the following:
18

- 19 • On the basis of a total area of 76,874 acres (311 km²), it is assumed that
20 three solar projects would be constructed during the peak construction year;
21
- 22 • Water needed for making concrete would come from an off-site source;
23
- 24 • The maximum land disturbance for an individual solar facility during the peak
25 construction year is 3,000 acres (12 km²);
26
- 27 • Assumptions on individual facility size and land requirements (Appendix M)
28 along with the assumed number of projects and maximum allowable land
29 disturbance, results in the potential to disturb up to 12% of the SEZ total area
30 during the peak construction year; and
31
- 32 • Water use requirements for hybrid cooling systems are assumed to be on the
33 same order of magnitude as those using dry cooling (see Section 5.9.2.1).
34
35

36 **Site Characterization**

37
38 During site characterization, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust and
39 for providing the workforce potable water supply. Impacts on water resources during this phase
40 of development are expected to be negligible since activities would be limited in area, extent,
41 and duration; water needs could be met by trucking water in from an off-site source.
42
43

44 **Construction**

45
46 During construction, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust and for
47 providing the workforce potable water supply. Because there are no significant surface water

bodies on the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, the water requirements for construction activities could be met by either trucking water to the sites or by using on-site groundwater resources. The variable quality of water in the Dry Lake Valley basin could be an issue for potable water supply. Some groundwater samples taken in the basin have been found to have high arsenic, thallium, iron, and pH. If the groundwater supply used for a project does not meet drinking water quality standards, potable water would need to be brought in from off-site.

Water requirements for dust suppression and potable water supply during construction are shown in Table 11.4.9.2-1 and could be as high as 4,220 ac-ft (5.2 million m³). The assumptions underlying these estimates for each solar energy technology are described in Appendix M. Groundwater wells would have to yield an estimated 1,700 to 2,600 gpm (6,400 to 9,800 L/min) to meet the estimated construction water requirements. These yields are on the order of a small to medium farm in Nevada (USDA 2009c), so multiple wells may be needed in order to obtain the water requirements. In addition, up to 222 ac-ft (274,000 m³) of sanitary wastewater generated on-site would need to be either treated on-site or sent to an off-site facility. The availability of groundwater and the impacts of groundwater withdrawal would need to be assessed during the site characterization phase of a solar development project. Obtaining water from an offsite source could be necessary for solar development projects.

Operations

During operations, water would be required for mirror/panel washing, the workforce potable water supply, and cooling (parabolic trough and power tower only) (Table 11.4.9.2-2). Water needs for cooling are a function of the type of cooling used (dry, hybrid, wet). Further

TABLE 11.4.9.2-1 Estimated Water Requirements during the Peak Construction Year for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Water use requirements ^a				
Fugitive dust control (ac-ft) ^{b,c}	2,724	4,086	4,086	4,086
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft)	222	135	56	28
Total water use requirements (ac-ft)	2,946	4,220	4,142	4,114
Wastewater generated				
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft)	222	135	56	28

^a Assumptions of water use for fugitive dust control, potable supply for workforce, and wastewater generation are presented in Table M.9-1 (Appendix M).

^b Fugitive dust control estimation assumes a local pan evaporation rate of 80 in./yr (203 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010b).

^c To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

TABLE 11.4.9.2-2 Estimated Water Requirements during Operations at the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Full build-out capacity (MW) ^{a,b}	12,296	6,831	6,831	6,831
Water use requirements				
Mirror/panel washing (ac-ft/yr) ^{c,d}	6,148	3,415	3,415	342
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft/yr)	172	77	77	7.7
Dry cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	2,459–12,296	1,366–6,831	NA ^f	NA
Wet cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	55,330–178,285	30,739–99,047	NA	NA
Total water use requirements				
Non-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	NA	NA	3,492	349
Dry-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	8,779–18,616	4,858–10,323	NA	NA
Wet-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	61,650–184,605	34,231–102,539	NA	NA
Wastewater generated				
Blowdown (ac-ft/yr) ^g	3,493	1,940	NA	NA
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft/yr)	172	77	77	7.7

^a Land area for the parabolic trough technology was estimated at 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW); land area for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies was estimated at 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW).

^b Water needs are linearly related to power. Water usage for any other size project can be estimated by using the multipliers provided in Table M.9-2 (Appendix M).

^c Value assumes a usage rate of 0.5 ac-ft/yr/MW for mirror washing for parabolic trough, power tower, and dish engine technologies and a rate of 0.05 ac-ft/yr/MW for panel washing for PV systems.

^d To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

^e Dry-cooling value assumes 0.2 to 1.0 ac-ft/yr per MW and wet-cooling value assumes 4.5 to 14.5 ac-ft/yr per MW (range in these values represents 30 and 60% operating times) (DOE 2009).

^f NA = not applicable.

^g Value scaled from 250-MW Beacon Solar project with an annual discharge of 44 gpm (167 L/min) (AECOM 2009). Blowdown estimates are relevant to wet cooling only.

1
2
3 refinements to water requirements for cooling would result from the percentage of time the
4 option was employed (30 to 60% range assumed) and the power of the system. The differences
5 between the water requirements reported in Table 11.4.9.2-2 for the parabolic trough and power
6 tower technologies are attributable to the assumptions of acreage per MW. As a result, the water
7 usage for the more energy-dense parabolic trough technology is estimated to be almost twice as
8 large as that for the power tower technology.
9

10 At full build-out capacity, water needs for mirror/panel washing are estimated to range
11 from 342 to 6,148 ac-ft/yr (422,000 to 7.6 million m³/yr), and the workforce potable water
12 supply is estimated to range from 7.7 to 172 ac-ft/yr (9,500 to 212,000 m³/yr). The maximum
13 total water usage during normal operation at full build-out capacity would be greatest for those

1 technologies using the wet-cooling option and is estimated to be as high as 184,605 ac-ft/yr
2 (228 million m³/yr). Water usage for dry-cooling systems would be as high as 18,616 ac-ft/yr
3 (23 million m³/yr), approximately a factor of 10 times less than the wet-cooling option.
4 Non-cooled technologies, dish engine and PV systems, require substantially less water at full
5 build-out capacity at 3,492 ac-ft/yr (4.3 million m³/yr) for dish engine and 349 ac-ft/yr
6 (430,000 m³/yr) for PV (Table 11.4.9.2-2). Operations would produce up to 172 ac-ft/yr
7 (212,000 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater; in addition, for wet-cooled technologies, 1,940 to
8 3.493 ac-ft/yr (2.4 million to 4.3 million m³/yr) of cooling system blowdown water would need
9 to be treated either on- or off-site. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure
10 that treatment ponds are effectively lined in order to prevent any groundwater contamination.
11

12 Groundwater is the primary water resource available for solar energy development at
13 the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. However, obtaining water from an off-site source
14 could be necessary for solar development projects. Perennial yield in the basin has been
15 estimated to be 12,700 ac-ft/yr (16 million m³) (NDWR 2008). At the level of full build-out,
16 technologies that use wet cooling would exceed the estimated basin yield, so wet cooling would
17 not be feasible for full build-out of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. To the extent possible,
18 facilities using dry cooling should implement water conservation practices to limit water needs.
19

20 If groundwater withdrawals exceeded the sustainable yield of the basin, then groundwater
21 levels would decline in the basin and potentially lead to declines in the adjacent Delamar Valley,
22 which receives outflow from the Dry Lake Valley groundwater basin. These indirect impacts can
23 disturb regional groundwater flow patterns and recharge patterns, which have implications for
24 ecological habitats (discussed in Section 11.4.10.1).
25
26

27 **Decommissioning/Reclamation**

28
29 During decommissioning/reclamation, all surface structures associated with the solar
30 project would be dismantled and the site reclaimed to its pre-construction state. Activities and
31 water needs during this phase would be similar to those during the construction phase (dust
32 suppression and potable supply for workers) and may also include water to establish vegetation
33 in some areas. However, the total volume of water needed is expected to be less. Because
34 quantities of water needed during the decommissioning/reclamation phase would be less than
35 those for construction, impacts on surface and groundwater resources also would be less.
36
37

38 ***11.4.9.2.3 Off-Site Impacts: Roads and Transmission Lines***

39
40 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located approximately 7 mi (11 km) east
41 of State Route 318, and an existing 69-kv transmission line runs through the proposed SEZ, as
42 described in Section 11.4.1.2. Impacts associated with the construction of roads and transmission
43 lines primarily deal with water use demands for construction, water quality concerns relating to
44 potential chemical spills, and land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology. Water needed
45 for road modification and transmission line construction activities (e.g., for soil compaction,
46 dust suppression, and potable supply for workers) could be trucked to the construction area

1 from an off-site source. As a result, water use impacts would be negligible. Impacts on surface
2 water and groundwater quality resulting from spills would be minimized by implementing the
3 mitigation measures described in Section 5.9.3 (e.g., cleaning up spills as soon as they occur).
4 Ground-disturbing activities that have the potential to increase sediment and dissolved solid
5 loads in downstream waters would be conducted following the mitigation measures outlined in
6 Section 5.9.3 to minimize impacts associated with alterations to natural drainage pathways and
7 hydrologic processes.

8 9 10 **11.4.9.2.4 Summary of Impacts on Water Resources**

11
12 The impacts on water resources from solar energy development at the proposed Dry Lake
13 Valley North SEZ are associated with land-disturbance effects on the natural hydrology, water
14 quality concerns, and water use requirements for the various solar energy technologies. Land-
15 disturbance activities can cause localized erosion and sedimentation issues, as well as altering
16 groundwater recharge and discharge processes. Land-disturbance activities should be avoided to
17 the extent possible in the vicinity of the ephemeral stream washes and the dry lake present on the
18 site. Alterations to these systems could enhance erosion processes, disrupt groundwater recharge,
19 and negatively affect plant and animal habitats associated with the ephemeral channels.

20
21 Impacts relating to water use requirements vary depending on the type of solar
22 technology built and, for technologies using cooling systems, the type of cooling (wet, dry, or
23 hybrid) used. Groundwater is the primary water resource available to solar energy facilities in the
24 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ; however, aquifer characteristics and the region's
25 sustainable yield are not fully quantified. The estimates of groundwater recharge, discharge, and
26 underflow from adjacent basins suggest that there may not be available groundwater available to
27 support water-intensive technologies, such as those using wet cooling.

28
29 The NDWR (2008) has declared that there are 11,584 ac-ft (14 million m³/yr) of water
30 available annually in the basin for beneficial uses. However, the allocations are under review by
31 the Nevada Supreme Court and the water rights applications have been opened up by the NDWR
32 to public comment. Concerned parties could present new information about the groundwater
33 basin, and thus the NDWR could alter its previous assessment of water availability in the basin.
34 Based on the information presented here, wet cooling would not be feasible for full build-out of
35 the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. To the extent possible, facilities using dry cooling should
36 implement water conservation practices to limit water needs.

37
38 For the purpose of evaluating a more realistic build-out scenario reflecting the available
39 water supplies, an estimate of the maximum power capacity for each technology was made
40 assuming that groundwater extractions were limited to 11,584 ac-ft/yr (14 million m³/yr). For
41 solar trough technologies, this quantity of water would allow approximately 2,310 and
42 12,296 MW to be produced using wet- and dry-cooling options, respectively. For power tower
43 technologies, this quantity of water would allow approximately 2,312 and 6,833 MW to be
44 produced using wet- and dry-cooling options, respectively. This water-limited power capacity
45 represents 19 to 100% of the area-based full build-out capacity for parabolic trough facilities and
46 34 to 100% of the area-based full build-out capacity for power tower facilities. This analysis of

1 the potential power production capacity based on limited water resources should serve as an
2 estimate only. Dish engine facilities and PV facilities would not be limited by water availability
3 and could generate full area-based build-out capacity, and thus are the preferred technologies for
4 large-scale solar energy production at the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.
5
6

7 **11.4.9.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

8

9 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
10 as required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program, would mitigate some impacts on water
11 resources. Programmatic design features would focus on coordinating with federal, state, and
12 local agencies that regulate the use of water resources to meet the requirements of permits and
13 approvals needed to obtain water for development, and conducting hydrological studies to
14 characterize the aquifer from which groundwater would be obtained (including drawdown
15 effects, if a new point of diversion is created). The greatest consideration for mitigating water
16 impacts would be in the selection of solar technologies. The mitigation of impacts would be best
17 achieved by selecting technologies with low water demands.
18

19 Proposed design features specific to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ include
20 the following:

- 21 • Water resource analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be
22 feasible; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures;
23
- 24 • Land-disturbance activities should avoid impacts to the extent possible in the
25 vicinity of the ephemeral stream washes and the dry lake present on the site;
26
- 27 • Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid any areas
28 identified as within a 100-year floodplain or jurisdictional waters;
29
- 30 • Groundwater rights must be obtained from the NDWR;
31
- 32 • Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards
33 developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
34 (NDEP 2010);
35
- 36 • Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in
37 accordance with state standards (NDWR 2006); and
38
- 39 • Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water quality
40 standards in according to *Nevada Administrative Code* (445A.453-445A.455).
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1 **11.4.10 Vegetation**
2

3 This section addresses vegetation that could occur or is known to occur within the
4 potentially affected area of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. The affected area
5 considered in this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect effects. The area of direct
6 effects is defined as the area that would be physically modified during project development
7 (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur) and included the SEZ and a 60-ft (18-m)
8 wide portion of an assumed access road corridor. No new transmission developments are
9 expected to be needed to serve development on the SEZ due to the proximity of existing
10 infrastructure (see Section 11.4.1.2 for development assumptions). The area of indirect effects
11 was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within the 1-mi (1.6-km)
12 wide assumed access road corridor, where ground-disturbing activities would not occur but that
13 could be indirectly affected by activities in the area of direct effect.
14

15 Indirect effects considered in the assessment included effects from surface runoff, dust,
16 and accidental spills from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential
17 degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the area of direct
18 effects. This area of indirect effect was identified on the basis of professional judgment and was
19 considered sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be subject to indirect
20 effects. The affected area is the area bounded by the areas of direct and indirect effects. These
21 areas are defined and the impact assessment approach is described in Appendix M.
22

23
24 **11.4.10.1 Affected Environment**
25

26 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located primarily within the Shadscale-
27 Dominated Saline Basins Level IV ecoregion, which supports shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*)
28 and black greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*) low scrub communities in valley bottoms, and
29 also includes remnant lake terraces and scattered sand dunes (Bryce et al. 2003). This internally
30 drained nearly flat to gently sloping ecoregion includes soils with high salt and alkali content,
31 which are dry for extended periods. Additional commonly occurring species include bud
32 sagebrush (*Picrothamnus desertorum*), fourwing saltbrush (*Atriplex canescens*), rubber
33 rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa*), alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*), bottlebrush squirreltail
34 (*Elymus elymoides*), inland saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum*
35 *hymenoides*), Great Basin wildrye (*Leymus cinereus*), and galleta (*Pleuraphis jamesii*). The
36 southwestern portion of the SEZ is located within the Salt Deserts Level IV ecoregion, which
37 contains nearly level playas, salt flats, mud flats, and saline lakes (Bryce et al. 2003). These
38 habitats are mostly barren and may be salt encrusted in dry periods. Scattered plants are salt
39 tolerant and include pickleweed (*Salicornia* sp.), seepweed (*Suaeda fruticosa*), iodine bush
40 (*Allenrolfea occidentalis*), black greasewood, alkali sacaton, and inland saltgrass. Scattered sand
41 dunes also occur in this ecoregion and perennial and intermittent springs are common. The
42 southeastern portion is located within the Carbonate Sagebrush Valleys Level IV ecoregion,
43 which supports sparse Great Basin sagebrush shrub communities of black sagebrush (*Artemisia*
44 *nova*) and winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), with grasses such as blue grama (*Bouteloua*
45 *gracilis*) (Bryce et al. 2003). Additional species include Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia*
46 *tridentata* ssp. *wyomingensis*), rabbitbrush (*Ericameria* sp./*Chrysothamnus* sp.), bottlebrush

1 squirreltail, Indian ricegrass, and cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*). Annual precipitation in
2 the vicinity of the SEZ is very low, averaging 8.7 in. (22.2 cm) at Caliente, Nevada
3 (see Section 11.4.13).
4

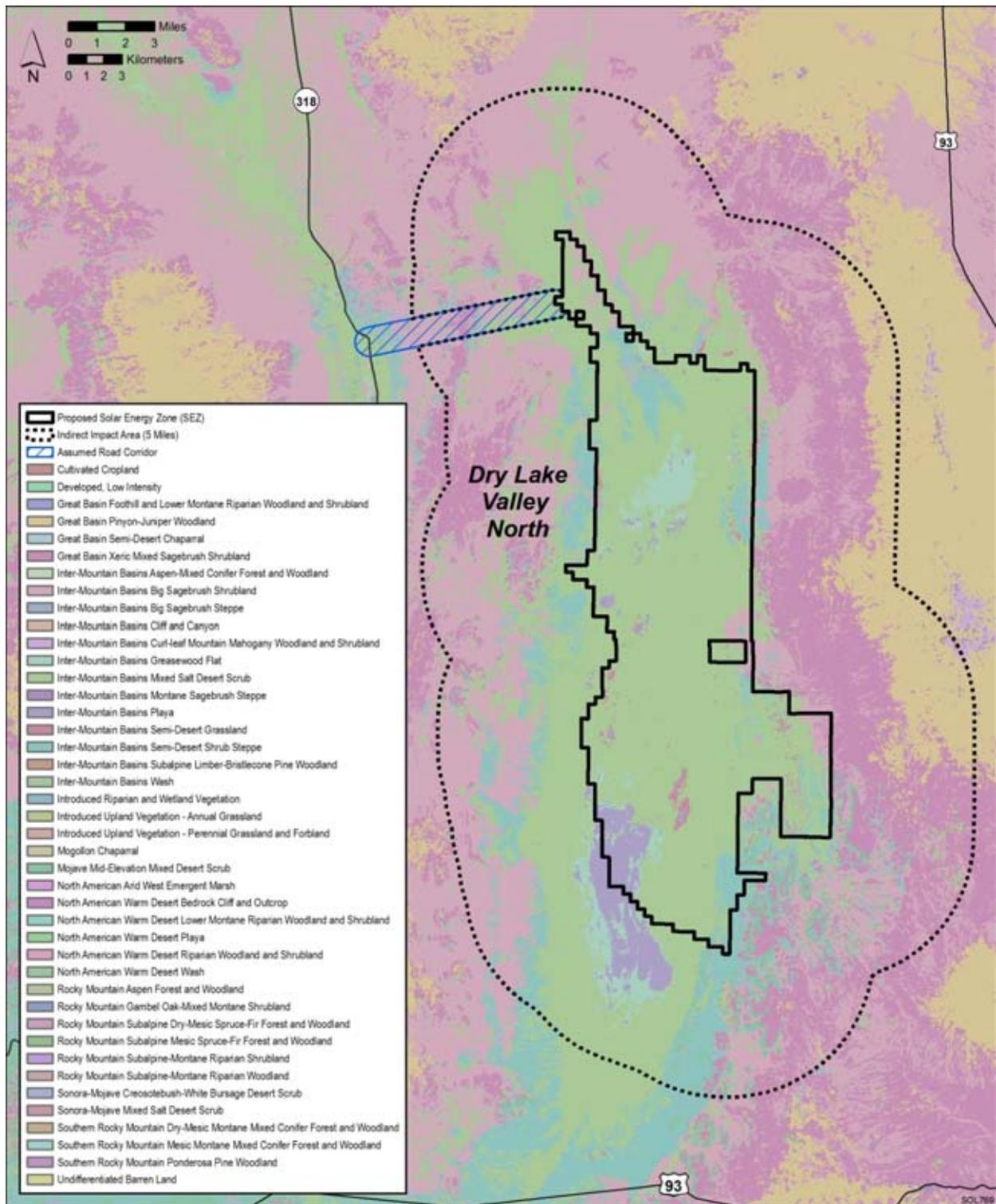
5 The area surrounding the SEZ consists of a mosaic of these ecoregions, as well as the
6 Carbonate Woodland Zone Level IV ecoregion, which contains communities with a pinyon
7 (*Pinus monophylla*)-juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) canopy over a sagebrush and
8 mountainbrush shrub layer. These ecoregions lie within the Central Basin and Range Level III
9 ecoregion, described in Appendix I, and are part of the Great Basin desertscrub biome.
10

11 Land cover types described and mapped under SWReGAP (USGS 2005a) were used to
12 evaluate plant communities in and near the SEZ. Each cover type encompasses a range of
13 similar plant communities. Land cover types occurring within the potentially affected area of
14 the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are shown in Figure 11.4.10.1-1. Table 11.4.10.1-1
15 provides the surface area of each cover type within the potentially affected area.
16

17 Lands within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are classified primarily as
18 Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. Additional cover types within the SEZ are
19 given in Table 11.4.10.1-1. Winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex*
20 *canescens*), rabbitbrush, shadscale, ephedra (*Ephedra* sp.), spiny hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*),
21 buckwheat (*Eriogonum* sp.), globemallow (*Sphaeralcea* sp.), wire lettuce (*Stephanomeria* sp.),
22 cholla (*Cylindropuntia* sp.), Indian rice grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), sand dropseed
23 (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*), big galleta (*Pleuraphis rigida*), James' galleta (*Pleuraphis jamesii*),
24 and purple threeawn (*Aristida purpurea*) were observed to be dominant species in various
25 portions of the low scrub communities present in the SEZ in August 2009; the grasses are more
26 common in the northern portion of the SEZ. Sensitive habitats on the SEZ include desert dry
27 washes, playas, and wetlands. The area has had a long history of livestock grazing, and the plant
28 communities present within the SEZ have likely been affected by grazing.
29

30 The indirect impact area, including the area surrounding the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km)
31 includes 24 cover types, which are listed in Table 11.4.10.1-1. The predominant cover types are
32 Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland, Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert
33 Scrub, and Great Basin Xeric Mixed Sagebrush Shrubland.
34

35 Two wetlands mapped by the NWI are located within the southwestern portion of the
36 SEZ (USFWS 2009a) (Figure 11.4.10.1-2). A palustrine wetland with a scrub-shrub plant
37 community, approximately 44.0 acres (0.2 km²) in size, is mapped by SWReGAP as Inter-
38 Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. A large lacustrine wetland is mapped primarily as
39 Inter-Mountain Basins Playa, with Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat occurring primarily
40 along the margin and small areas of Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub.
41 Approximately 3,691 acres (14.9 km²) of this 9,341.0-acre (37.8-km²) wetland are located
42 within the SEZ. The remaining portion is located entirely within the indirect impact area.
43 Numerous smaller playa areas that are not mapped by the NWI are scattered throughout much
44 of the SEZ, as well as southwest of the SEZ. A small wetland area in the southeast portion of
45 the SEZ, approximately 2 acres (0.1 km²) in size, is mapped as North American Arid West
46 Emergent Marsh. This area is likely a water development for livestock use. Numerous dry



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.4.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (Source:**
 3 **USGS 2004)**
 4
 5

TABLE 11.4.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Potentially Affected Area of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ and Potential Impacts

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub: Generally consists of open shrublands that include at least one species of <i>Atriplex</i> , along with other shrubs. Perennial grasses dominate a sparse to moderately dense herbaceous layer.	60,489 acres ^g (10.6%, 10.9%)	19 acres (<0.1%)	60,613 acres (10.6%)	Large
Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe: Generally consists of perennial grasses with an open shrub and dwarf shrub layer.	5,776 acres (2.2%, 2.2%)	5 acres (<0.1%)	19,839 acres (7.5%)	Moderate
Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat: Dominated or co-dominated by greasewood (<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>) and generally occurring in areas with saline soils, a shallow water table, and intermittent flooding, although remaining dry for most growing seasons. This community type generally occurs near drainages or around playas. These areas may include, or may be co-dominated by, other shrubs, and may include a graminoid herbaceous layer.	3,430 acres (7.1%, 8.3%)	0 acres	3,235 acres (6.7%)	Moderate
Inter-Mountain Basins Playa: Playa habitats are intermittently flooded and generally barren or sparsely vegetated. Depressions may contain small patches of grass, and sparse shrubs may occur around playa margins.	3,011 acres (16.8%, 16.9%)	0 acres	3,895 acres (21.7%)	Large
Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland: Dominated by basin big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata tridentata</i>), Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis</i>), or both. Other shrubs may be present. Perennial herbaceous plants are present but not abundant.	2,504 acres (0.2%, 0.2%)	23 acres (<0.1%)	85,592 acres (6.2%)	Small

TABLE 11.4.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Grassland: Consists of perennial bunchgrasses as dominants or co-dominants. Scattered shrubs or dwarf shrubs may also be present.	898 acres (10.5%, 15.6%)	0 acres	240 acres (2.8%)	Large
Great Basin Xeric Mixed Sagebrush Shrubland: Generally occurs on level plains, slopes, and ridges. The dominant shrub species are black sagebrush (<i>Artemisia nova</i>) or, at higher elevations, little sagebrush (<i>Artemisia arbuscula</i>), and co-dominants may be Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata</i> ssp. <i>wyomingensis</i>) or yellow rabbitbrush (<i>Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus</i>). Other shrub species may also be present as well as sparse perennial bunchgrasses.	479 acres (0.1%, 0.1%)	5 acres (<0.1%)	59,067 acres (11.2%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Steppe: Dominated by basin big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata tridentata</i>), Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis</i>), big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata xericensis</i>), threetip sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tripartita tripartita</i>), or antelope bitterbrush (<i>Purshia tridentata</i>), or a combination of these species. Other shrubs may be present. Perennial grasses are often abundant. The distribution of shrubs may be patchy, with grassland predominating.	130 acres (19.3%, 19.9%)	<1 acre (<0.1%)	103 acres (15.3%)	Large
Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub: The vegetation composition is quite variable. Dominant species include shrubs forbs, and grasses and may include <i>Yucca</i> spp.	95 acres (<0.1%, <0.1%)	<1 acre (<0.1%)	4,527 acres (1.5%)	Small
Undifferentiated Barren Land: Occurs on dry foothills and lower mountain slopes. Gambel oak (<i>Quercus gambelii</i>) may be the only dominant species or share dominance with other shrubs.	25 acres (14.8%, 16.0%)	0 acres	12 acres (7.1%)	Large

TABLE 11.4.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Introduced Upland Vegetation—Annual Grassland: Dominated by non-native annual grass species.	9 acres (0.3%, 0.4%)	<1 acre (<0.1%)	123 acres (4.1%)	Small
Sonora–Mojave Creosotebush–White Bursage Desert Scrub: Occurs in broad valleys, lower bajadas, plains, and low hills in the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts. Shrubs form a sparse to moderately dense cover (2 to 50%), although the ground surface may be mostly barren. The dominant species are typically creosotebush (<i>Larrea tridentata</i>) and white bursage (<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>). Other shrubs, dwarf-shrubs, and cacti may also be dominant or form sparse understories. Herbaceous species are typically sparse, but may be seasonally abundant.	5 acres (<0.1%, <0.1%)	0 acres	278 acres (0.4%)	Small
North American Arid West Emergent Marsh: Occurs in natural depressions, such as ponds, or bordering lakes or slow-moving streams or rivers. Alkalinity is highly variable. The plant community is characterized by herbaceous emergent, submergent, and floating leaved species.	2 acres (<0.1%, 0.2%)	0 acres	2 acres (<0.1 %)	Small
Great Basin Pinyon-Juniper Woodland: Occurs on low-elevation slopes and ridges. Singleleaf pinyon (<i>Pinus monophylla</i>), Utah juniper (<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i>), or both are the dominant species, generally associating with curl-leaf mountain mahogany (<i>Cercocarpus ledifolius</i>). Understory species include shrubs and grasses.	0 acres	0 acres	19,141 acres (1.3%)	Small

TABLE 11.4.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Inter-Mountain Basins Cliff and Canyon: Includes barren and sparsely vegetated (generally <10% plant cover) steep cliff faces, narrow canyons, small rock outcrops, and scree and talus slopes. Composed of widely scattered coniferous trees and a variety of shrubs.	0 acres	0 acres	386 acres (1.6%)	Small
Introduced Upland Vegetation–Perennial Grassland and Forbland: Dominated by non-native perennial grass and forb species.	0 acres	0 acres	155 acres (1.5%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Curl-leaf Mountain Mahogany Woodland and Shrubland: Occurs on rocky outcrops and south-facing hill slopes ranging from canyons and foothills to ridgetops. Curl-leaf mountain mahogany is the dominant species. Trees or other shrubs may be present and scattered. Bunchgrasses are usually present.	0 acres	0 acres	114 acres (0.4%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Montane Sagebrush Steppe: Occurs on flats, ridges, level ridgetops, and mountain slopes. Mountain big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata vaseyana</i>) and related taxa such as big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata spiciformis</i>) are typically the dominant species. Perennial herbaceous species, especially grasses, are usually abundant, although shrublands are also present.	0 acres	0 acres	108 acres (0.2%)	Small

TABLE 11.4.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
<p>Inter-Mountain Basins Subalpine Limber-Bristlecone Pine Woodland: Occurs on dry, rocky, exposed ridges and slopes. Dominants in the open tree canopy include limber pine (<i>Pinus flexilis</i>) or Great Basin bristlecone pine (<i>Pinus longaeva</i>), or both. Additional tree species are occasionally present. In some stands, an open shrub layer may be present. Sparse grasses may also be present.</p>	0 acres	0 acres	79 acres (2.8%)	Small
<p>Great Basin Foothill and Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland: Composed of a mosaic of multiple tree-dominated communities with diverse shrubs. Sedges, rushes, perennial grasses, and mesic forbs are the dominant herbaceous species. Disturbed areas often include non-native grasses.</p>	0 acres	0 acres	13 acres (0.1%)	Small
<p>Southern Rocky Mountain Mesic Montane Mixed Conifer Forest and Woodland: Occurs in cool, moist areas of ravine slopes, stream terraces, and north- or east-facing slopes. A dense layer of diverse deciduous shrubs is often present. A high diversity of herbaceous species, including grasses, sedges, and forbs are present.</p>	0 acres	0 acres	7 acres (0.4%)	Small
<p>Inter-Mountain Basins Aspen-Mixed Conifer Forest and Woodland: Occurs on montane slopes and plateaus. The tree canopy co-dominants are quaking aspen (<i>Populus tremuloides</i>) and conifers. Quaking aspen loses dominance in older stands. Shrubs and herbaceous species are often present.</p>	0 acres	0 acres	2 acres (0.1%)	Small
<p>Southern Rocky Mountain Dry-Mesic Montane Mixed Conifer Forest and Woodland: Occurs on all aspects of mountain slopes, ridges, canyon slopes, and plateaus. Consists of a mix of trees, as well as shrubs and grasses on dry to mesic soils.</p>	0 acres	0 acres	2 acres (0.5%)	Small

TABLE 11.4.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
North American Warm Desert Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland: Occurs along perennial and seasonally intermittent streams in mountain canyons and valleys. Consists of a mix of woodlands and shrublands.	0 acres	0 acres	1 acre (<0.1%)	Small

- ^a Land cover descriptions are from USGS (2005a). Full descriptions of land cover types, including plant species, can be found in Appendix I.
- ^b Area in acres, determined from USGS (2004).
- ^c Includes the area of the cover type within the SEZ, the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region (i.e., a 50-mi [80-km] radius from the center of the SEZ), and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type on BLM lands within the SEZ region.
- ^d For access road development, direct effects were estimated within a 7-mi (11-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest state highway. Direct impacts within this area were determined from the proportion of the cover type within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide road corridor. Impacts are for the area of the cover type within the assumed ROW, and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region.
- ^e Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide assumed access road corridor, where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, and other factors from project developments. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ. Includes the area of the cover type within the indirect effects area and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and include (1) *small*: a relatively small proportion ($\leq 1\%$) of the cover type within the SEZ region would be lost; (2) *moderate*: an intermediate proportion (> 1 but $\leq 10\%$) of a cover type would be lost; (3) *large*: $> 10\%$ of a cover type would be lost.
- ^g To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

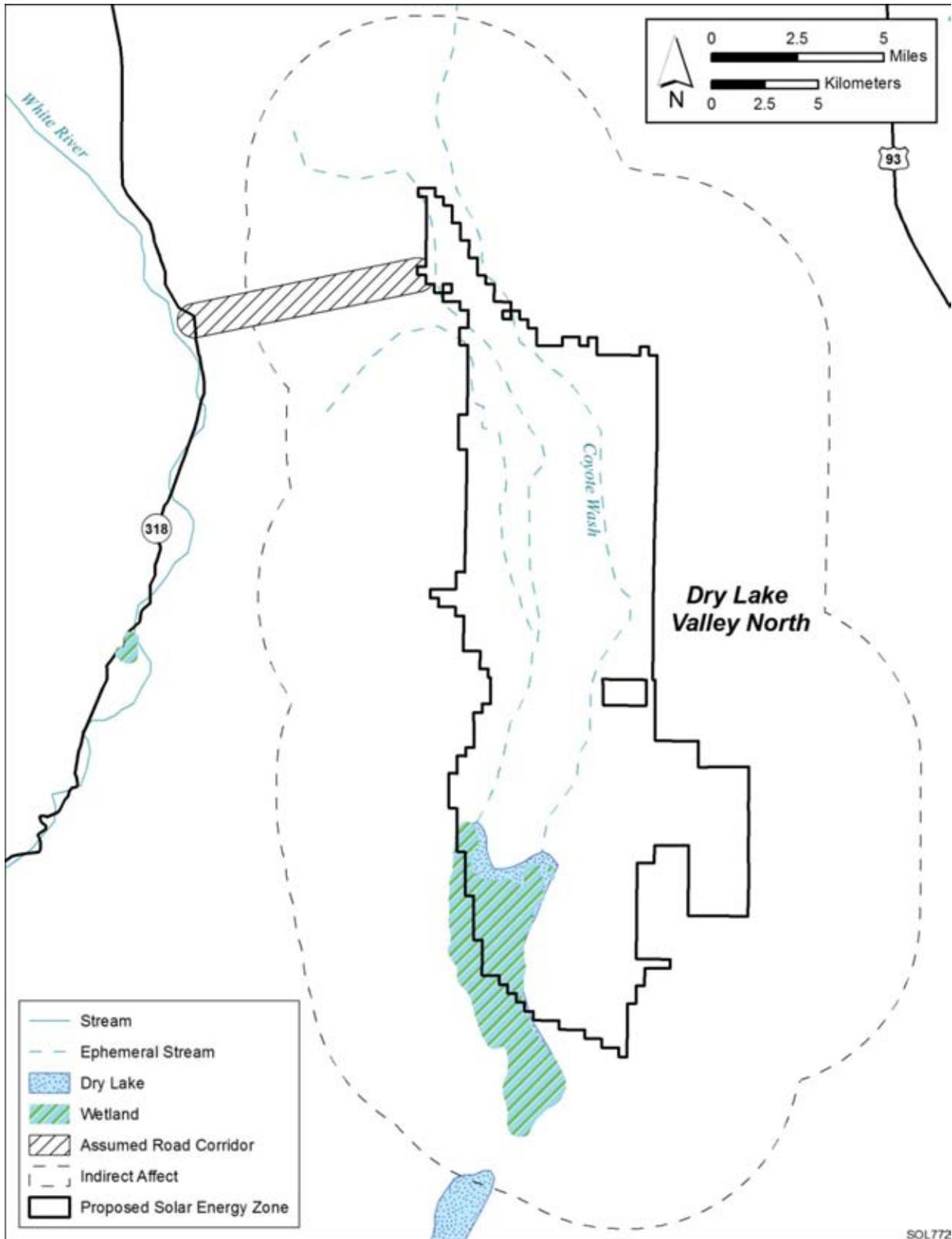


FIGURE 11.4.10.1-2 Wetlands within the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (Source: USFWS 2009a)

washes occur within the SEZ, generally flowing to the south and terminating in the large playa. These washes typically do not support wetland or riparian habitats. Coyote Wash is a principal surface drainage on the SEZ. The dry washes and playas typically contain water for short periods during or following precipitation events.

Numerous springs occur in the vicinity of the SEZ, a number of which may support plant communities dependent on discharge from the Dry Lake Valley groundwater basin. Additional springs to the south of the SEZ may be associated with discharge from the Delamar Valley basin or other basins that receive groundwater flows from the Dry Lake Valley basin (see Section 11.4.9 for further discussion of groundwater basins).

The State of Nevada maintains an official list of weed species that are designated noxious species. Table 11.4.10.1-2 summarizes the noxious weed species regulated in Nevada that are known to occur in Lincoln County (USDA 2010; Creech et al. 2010), which includes the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. No species included in Table 11.4.10.1-2 were observed on the SEZ in August 2009. Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*), invasive species not regulated by Nevada, were observed on the SEZ in August 2009.

The Nevada Department of Agriculture classifies noxious weeds into one of three categories (NDA 2005):

- “Category A: Weeds not found or limited in distribution throughout the state; actively excluded from the state and actively eradicated wherever found;

TABLE 11.4.10.1-2 Designated Noxious Weeds of Nevada Occurring in Lincoln County

Common Name	Scientific Name	Category
Black henbane ^a	<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i>	A
Dalmatian Toadflax ^{a,b}	<i>Linaria dalmatica</i>	A
Diffuse knapweed ^a	<i>Centaurea diffusa</i>	B
Hoary cress ^b	<i>Cardaria draba</i>	C
Johnsongrass ^a	<i>Sorghum halepense</i>	C
Mayweed chamomile ^b	<i>Anthemis cotula</i>	A
Malta star thistle ^a	<i>Centaurea melitensis</i>	A
Puncture vine ^b	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	C
Sahara/African mustard ^a	<i>Brassica tournefortii</i>	B
Saltcedar ^b	<i>Tamarix</i> spp.	C
Spotted knapweed ^{a,b}	<i>Centaurea maculosa</i>	A
Water hemlock ^a	<i>Cicuta maculata</i>	C

^a Creech et al. (2010).

^b USDA (2010).

Source: NDA (2005).

actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; control required by the state in all infestations.”

- “Category B: Weeds established in scattered populations in some counties of the state; actively excluded where possible, actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; control required by the state in areas where populations are not well established or previously unknown to occur.”
- “Category C: Weeds currently established and generally widespread in many counties of the state; actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; abatement at the discretion of the state quarantine officer.”

11.4.10.2 Impacts

The construction of solar energy facilities within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ would result in direct impacts on plant communities due to the removal of vegetation within the facility footprint during land-clearing and land-grading operations. Approximately 80% of the SEZ (61,499 acres [248.9 km²]) would be expected to be cleared with full development of the SEZ. The plant communities affected would depend on facility locations and could include any of the communities occurring on the SEZ. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, all the area of each cover type within the SEZ is considered to be directly affected by removal with full development of the SEZ.

Indirect effects (caused, for example, by surface runoff or dust from the SEZ) have the potential to degrade affected plant communities and may reduce biodiversity by promoting the decline or elimination of species sensitive to disturbance. Indirect effects can also cause an increase in disturbance-tolerant species or invasive species. High impact levels could result in the elimination of a community or the replacement of one community type by another. The proper implementation of programmatic design features, however, would reduce indirect effects to a minor or small level of impact.

Possible impacts from solar energy facilities on vegetation within the SEZ are described in more detail in Section 5.10.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2 and from any additional mitigation applied. Section 11.4.10.2.3, below, identifies design features of particular relevance to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.

11.4.10.2.1 Impacts on Native Species

The impacts of construction, operation, and decommissioning were considered small if the impact affected a relatively small proportion (<1%) of the cover type in the SEZ region (within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ); a moderate impact (>1 but <10%) could affect an intermediate proportion of cover type; a large impact could affect greater than 10% of a cover type.

1 Solar facility construction and operation in the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
2 would primarily affect communities of the Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub cover
3 type. Additional cover types that would be affected within the SEZ include Inter-Mountain
4 Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe, Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat, Inter-Mountain
5 Basins Playa, Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland, Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-
6 Desert Grassland, Great Basin Xeric Mixed Sagebrush Shrubland, Inter-Mountain Basins Big
7 Sagebrush Steppe, Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub, Undifferentiated Barren Land,
8 Introduced Upland Vegetation–Annual Grassland, Sonora–Mojave Creosotebush–White Bursage
9 Desert Scrub, and North American Arid West Emergent Marsh. Many of these also occur within
10 the assumed access road corridor. The Undifferentiated Barren Land and Introduced Upland
11 Vegetation–Annual Grassland cover types would likely have relatively minor populations of
12 native species. Table 11.4.10.1-1 summarizes the potential impacts on land cover types resulting
13 from solar energy facilities in the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Most of these cover
14 types are relatively common in the SEZ region; however, several cover types are relatively
15 uncommon, representing 1% or less of the land area within the SEZ region: Inter-Mountain
16 Basins Greasewood Flat (1.0%), Inter-Mountain Basins Playa (0.4%), Inter-Mountain Basins
17 Semi-Desert Grassland (0.2%), North American Arid West Emergent Marsh (0.1%), Introduced
18 Upland Vegetation–Annual Grassland (0.06 %), Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Steppe
19 (0.01%), and Undifferentiated Barren Land (0.003%). Desert dry washes, playas, and wetlands
20 are important sensitive habitats.

21
22 The construction, operation, and decommissioning of solar projects within the proposed
23 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ would result in large impacts on Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt
24 Desert Scrub, Inter-Mountain Basins Playa, Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Grassland, Inter-
25 Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Steppe, and Undifferentiated Barren Land cover types. Solar
26 project development within the SEZ would result in moderate impacts on Inter-Mountain Basins
27 Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe and Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat cover types, and small
28 impacts on the remaining cover types in the affected area.

29
30 Because of the arid conditions, reestablishment of shrub, shrub steppe, or grassland
31 communities in temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult and might require
32 extended periods of time. In addition, noxious weeds could become established in disturbed
33 areas and colonize adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and
34 potentially resulting in widespread habitat degradation. Cryptogamic soil crusts occur in many
35 of the shrubland communities in the region. Damage to these crusts, as by the operation of
36 heavy equipment or other vehicles, can alter important soil characteristics, such as nutrient
37 cycling and availability, and affect plant community characteristics (Lovich and
38 Bainbridge 1999).

39
40 The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside
41 a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community
42 composition. Fugitive dust deposition could affect plant communities of each of the cover
43 types occurring within the indirect impact area identified in Table 11.4.10.1-1.

44
45 Communities associated with playa habitats, greasewood flats communities, riparian
46 habitats, marshes, or other intermittently flooded areas downgradient from solar projects in the

1 SEZ or assumed access road could be affected by ground-disturbing activities. Approximately
2 44 acres (0.2 km²) of a scrub-shrub wetland and 3,691 acres (15 km²) of lacustrine wetland
3 occur within the SEZ and could be directly affected during project construction. In addition, a
4 2-acre (0.1-km²) area mapped as Northern American Arid West Emergent Marsh could be
5 affected in the southeast portion of the SEZ. Site clearing and grading could disrupt
6 surface water flow patterns, resulting in changes in the frequency, duration, depth, or extent
7 of inundation or soil saturation, and could potentially alter playa or greasewood flats plant
8 communities, including occurrences outside the SEZ, and affect community function. Increases
9 in surface runoff from a solar energy project site could also affect hydrologic characteristics of
10 these communities. The introduction of contaminants into these habitats could result from spills
11 of fuels or other materials used on a project site. Soil disturbance could result in sedimentation in
12 these areas, which could degrade or eliminate sensitive plant communities. Grading could also
13 affect dry washes within the SEZ or access road footprint. Alteration of surface drainage patterns
14 or hydrology could adversely affect downstream dry wash communities. Vegetation within these
15 communities could be lost by erosion or desiccation.

16
17 Although the use of groundwater within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ for technologies
18 with high water requirements, such as wet-cooling systems, may be unlikely, groundwater
19 withdrawals for such systems could reduce groundwater elevations in the Dry Lake Valley
20 groundwater basin, Delamar Valley basin, or other hydrologically connected basins.
21 Communities that depend on accessible groundwater, such as habitats associated with springs,
22 could become degraded or lost as a result of lowered groundwater levels. The potential for
23 impacts on springs would need to be evaluated by project-specific hydrological studies.

24 25 26 ***11.4.10.2.2 Impacts from Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plant Species***

27
28 E.O. 13112, “Invasive Species,” directs federal agencies to prevent the introduction of
29 invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic, ecological, and
30 human health impacts of invasive species (*Federal Register*, Volume 64, page 61836, Feb. 8,
31 1999). Potential effects of noxious weeds and invasive plant species that could result from solar
32 energy facilities are described in Section 5.10.1. Noxious weeds and invasive species could
33 inadvertently be brought to a project site by equipment previously used in infested areas, or they
34 may be present on or near a project site. Despite required programmatic design features to
35 prevent the spread of noxious weeds, project disturbance could potentially increase the
36 prevalence of noxious weeds and invasive species in the affected area of the proposed Dry Lake
37 Valley North SEZ, and increase the probability that weeds could be transported into areas that
38 were previously relatively weed free. This could result in reduced restoration success and
39 possible widespread habitat degradation.

40
41 Invasive species, including cheatgrass and halogeton, occur on the SEZ. Additional
42 species designated as noxious weeds in Nevada and those known to occur in Lincoln County are
43 given in Table 11.4.10.1-2. Approximately 9 acres (0.04 km²) of Introduced Upland Vegetation–
44 Annual Grassland occur within the SEZ and 121 acres (0.5 km²) in the indirect impact area;
45 155 acres (0.6 km²) of Introduced Upland Vegetation–Perennial Grassland and Forbland occur
46 in the indirect impact area. Disturbance associated with solar project development may promote

1 the establishment and spread of invasive species that are associated with these cover types.
2 Past or present land uses, such as grazing or OHV use, may affect the susceptibility of plant
3 communities to the establishment of noxious weeds and invasive species. Disturbance associated
4 with existing roads and transmission lines within the SEZ area of potential impacts also likely
5 contributes to the susceptibility of plant communities to the establishment and spread of noxious
6 weeds and invasive species.

9 **11.4.10.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

10
11 In addition to the programmatic design features, SEZ-specific design features would
12 reduce the potential for impacts on plant communities. While the specifics of some of these
13 practices are best established when considering specific project details, some SEZ-specific
14 design features can be identified at this time:

- 15
16 • An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species
17 control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
18 addressing habitat restoration should be approved and implemented to
19 increase the potential for successful restoration of affected habitats and
20 minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species, such as cheatgrass or
21 halogeton. Invasive species control should focus on biological and mechanical
22 methods where possible to reduce the use of herbicides.
- 23
24 • Dry washes, playas, and wetlands within the SEZ, and dry washes within the
25 access road corridor, should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any
26 impacts minimized and mitigated. A buffer area should be maintained around
27 wetlands, playas, and dry washes to reduce the potential for impacts.
- 28
29 • Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on dry
30 wash, playa, marsh, scrub-shrub wetland, riparian, and greasewood flat
31 habitats, including occurrences downstream of solar projects or assumed
32 access road, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation,
33 altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition to these
34 habitats. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be determined
35 through agency consultation.
- 36
37 • Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect
38 impacts on habitats dependent on springs associated with the Dry lake Valley
39 basin, Delamar Valley Basin, or other hydrologically connected basins.
40 Potential impacts on springs should be determined through hydrological
41 studies.

42
43 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to other program
44 design features, it is anticipated that a high potential for impacts from invasive species and
45 impacts on dry washes, playas, springs, riparian habitats, and wetlands would be reduced to a
46 minimal potential for impact.

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1 **11.4.11 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota**
2

3 This section addresses wildlife (amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals) and aquatic
4 biota that could occur within the potentially affected area of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North
5 SEZ. Wildlife known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were
6 determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were
7 determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). The amount of aquatic habitat within
8 the SEZ region was determined by estimating the length of linear perennial stream and canal
9 features and the area of standing water body features (i.e., ponds, lakes, and reservoirs) within
10 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ using available GIS surface water datasets.
11

12 The affected area considered in this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect
13 effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified
14 during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur) and included
15 the SEZ and a 60-ft (18-m) wide portion of an assumed 7.0-mi (11.3-km) long access road
16 corridor. The maximum developed area within the SEZ would be 61,499 acres (248.9 km²).
17

18 The area of indirect effects was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ
19 boundary and within a 1.0-mi (1.6-km) access road corridor where ground-disturbing activities
20 would not occur, but that could be indirectly affected by activities in the area of direct effect
21 (e.g., surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and accidental spills in the SEZ or road construction
22 area). Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 61,499 acres
23 (248.9 km²) of direct effect was also included as part of the area of indirect effects. The potential
24 degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ. The area
25 of indirect effect was identified on the basis of professional judgment and was considered
26 sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be subject to indirect effects. These
27 areas of direct and indirect effect are defined and the impact assessment approach is described in
28 Appendix M.
29

30 The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is Inter-Mountain Basins
31 Mixed Salt Desert Scrub (see Section 11.4.10). Several ephemeral washes, wetlands, and a dry
32 lake occur within the SEZ (see Figure 11.4.9.1-1).
33
34

35 **11.4.11.1 Amphibians and Reptiles**
36

37 **11.4.11.1.1 Affected Environment**
38

39 This section addresses amphibian and reptile species that are known to occur, or for
40 which potentially suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the
41 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. The list of amphibian and reptile species potentially
42 present in the SEZ area was determined from species lists available from the NNHP
43 (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available from SWReGAP
44 (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from SWReGAP
45 (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See Appendix M for additional information on the approach used.
46

1 On the basis of species distributions within the area of the SEZ and habitat preferences
2 of the amphibian species, the Great Basin spadefoot (*Spea intermontana*) and red-spotted toad
3 (*Bufo punctatus*) would be expected to occur within the SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). They
4 would most likely occur in the portion of the SEZ that overlaps the dry lake and washes.
5

6 More than 25 reptile species occur within the area that encompasses the proposed Dry
7 Lake Valley North SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*)
8 is a federal and state listed threatened species. This species is discussed in Section 11.4.12.
9 Lizard species expected to occur within the SEZ include the desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma*
10 *platyrhinos*), Great Basin collared lizard (*Crotaphytus bicinctores*), long-nosed leopard lizard
11 (*Gambelia wislizenii*), side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus*
12 *occidentalis*), western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris*), and zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus*
13 *draconoides*). Snake species expected to occur within the SEZ are the coachwhip (*Masticophis*
14 *flagellum*), glossy snake (*Arizona elegans*), gophersnake (*Pituophis catenifer*), groundsnake
15 (*Sonora semiannulata*), and nightsnake (*Hypsiglena torquata*). The sidewinder (*Crotalus*
16 *cerastes*) would be the most common poisonous snake species expected to occur on the SEZ.
17

18 Table 11.4.11.1-1 provides habitat information for representative amphibian and reptile
19 species that could occur within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Special status
20 amphibian and reptile species are addressed in Section 11.4.12.
21

22 **11.4.11.1.2 Impacts**

23
24
25 The types of impacts that amphibians and reptiles could incur from construction,
26 operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in
27 Section 5.10.2.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
28 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any
29 additional mitigation applied. Section 11.4.11.1.3 identifies SEZ-specific design features of
30 particular relevance to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.
31

32 The assessment of impacts on amphibian and reptile species is based on available
33 information on the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.4.11.1.1,
34 following the analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and
35 coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific
36 impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional
37 required actions to avoid or mitigate impacts on amphibians and reptiles
38 (see Section 11.4.11.1.3).
39

40 In general, impacts on amphibians and reptiles would result from habitat disturbance
41 (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration) and from disturbance, injury, or mortality
42 to individual amphibians and reptiles. On the basis of the impacts on amphibians and reptiles
43 summarized in Table 11.4.11.1-1, direct impacts on amphibian and reptile species would be
44 moderate for the three amphibian species and for the desert horned lizard, Great Basin collared
45 lizard, long-nosed leopard lizard, western fence lizard, zebra-tailed lizard, and nightsnake. Direct
46

TABLE 11.4.11.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Amphibian and Reptile Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Amphibians					
Great Basin spadefoot (<i>Spea intermontana</i>)	Sagebrush flats, semidesert shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and spruce-fir forests. Breeds in temporary and permanent waters, including rain pools, pools in intermittent streams, and flooded areas along streams. About 4,110,700 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	222,567 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	46 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,041 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. Avoid wash and playa habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Red-spotted toad (<i>Bufo punctatus</i>)	Dry, rocky areas at lower elevations near desert springs and persistent pools along rocky arroyos; desert streams and oases; open grassland; scrubland oaks; and dry woodlands. About 2,491,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,496 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	83,391 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	19 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 1,688 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. Avoid wash and playa habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Lizards					
Desert horned lizard (<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>)	Deserts dominated by sagebrush, creosotebush, greasewood, or cactus. Occurs on sandy flats, alluvial fans, washes, and edge of dunes. Burrows in soil during periods of inactivity. About 3,204,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	246,792 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,546 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Great Basin collared lizard (<i>Crotaphytus bicinctores</i>)	Usually inhabits alluvia, lava flows, mountain slopes, canyons, buttes, rock outcrops, washes, and rocky plains. Limiting factors are presence of large boulders and open/sparse vegetation. About 1,775,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	147,471 acres of potentially suitable habitat (8.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	30 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,585 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Lizards (Cont.)					
Long-nosed leopard lizard (<i>Gambelia wislizenii</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas with scattered shrubs. Prefers sandy or gravelly flats and plains. Also prefer areas with abundant rodent burrows that they occupy when inactive. About 2,060,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	208,067 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,083 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Side-blotched lizard (<i>Uta stansburiana</i>)	Low to moderate elevations in washes, arroyos, boulder-strewn ravines, rocky cliff bases, and flat shrubby areas in canyon bottoms. Often along sandy washes. Usually in areas with a lot of bare ground. About 1,933,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	998 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.05% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	24,530 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0.5 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.0001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 42.5 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Wash habitats should be avoided.

TABLE 11.4.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Lizards (Cont.)					
Western fence lizard (<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>)	Disturbed areas, roadsides, gravel beds, rock quarries, lava flows, outcrops, talus slopes, shrublands, riparian areas, and coniferous woodlands. About 4,609,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	248,635 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,506 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western whiptail (<i>Cnemidophorus tigris</i>)	Arid and semiarid habitats with sparse plant cover. About 2,889,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	114,922 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	25 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,147 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Lizards (Cont.)					
Zebra-tailed lizard (<i>Callisaurus draconoides</i>)	Open, warm-desert habitats, especially dry washes and canyons with fine gravel and sand. About 1,480,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,068 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (4.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	122,363 acres of potentially suitable habitat (8.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	24 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,123 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Snakes					
Coachwhip (<i>Masticophis flagellum</i>)	Creosotebush desert, shortgrass prairie, shrub-covered flats and hills. Sandy to rocky substrates. Avoids dense vegetation. About 3,910,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,092 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	185,025 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	33 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,861 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.4.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Snakes (Cont.)					
Glossy snake (<i>Arizona elegans</i>)	Light shrubby to barren deserts, sagebrush flats, grasslands, and chaparral-covered slopes and woodlands. Prefers sandy grasslands, shrublands and woodlands. About 1,827,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,194 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	107,529 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	28 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,423 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.
Gophersnake (<i>Pituophis catenifer</i>)	Plains grasslands, sandhills, riparian areas, marshes, edges of ponds and lakes, rocky canyons, semidesert and mountain shrublands, montane woodlands, rural and suburban areas, and agricultural areas. Likely inhabits pocket gopher burrows in winter. About 4,006,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	6,992 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	170,416 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	28 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,441 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.4.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Snakes (Cont.)					
Groundsnake (<i>Sonora semiannulata</i>)	Arid and semiarid regions with rocky to sandy soils. River bottoms, desert flats, sand hummocks, and rocky hillsides. About 4,076,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	9,887 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	185,882 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	33 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,907 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.
Nightsnake (<i>Hypsiglena torquata</i>)	Arid and semiarid desert flats, plains, and woodlands; areas with rocky and sandy soils are preferred. During cold periods of the year, it seeks refuge underground, in crevices, or under rocks. About 2,584,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	110,968 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	24 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,105 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Snakes (Cont.)					
Sidewinder (<i>Crotalus cerastes</i>)	Windblown sand habitats near rodent burrows. Most common in areas of sand hummocks topped with creosote, mesquite, or other desert plants. About 376,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	100 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	4,764 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0.5 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.0001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 42.5 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.

- ^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimated the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 61,499 acres of direct effect within the SEZ was assumed.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 61,499 acres of direct effect was also added to the area of indirect effect. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.4.11.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within a 7-mi (11-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide access road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest existing highway. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide access road corridor to the existing highway, less the assumed area of direct effects.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 impacts on these species, based on loss of potentially suitable habitats, would range from 1.3%
2 for the western fence lizard to 4.1% for the zebra-tailed lizard (Table 11.4.11.1-1). Direct
3 impacts on all other representative reptile species would be small, ranging from 0.05% for the
4 side-blotched lizard to 0.7% for the glossy snake (Table 11.4.11.1-1). Larger areas of potentially
5 suitable habitats for the amphibian and reptile species occur within the area of potential indirect
6 effects (e.g., up to 8.3% of available habitat for the Great Basin collared lizard and zebra-tailed
7 lizard). Indirect impacts on amphibians and reptiles could result from surface water and sediment
8 runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, collection, and
9 harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with implementation of
10 programmatic design features.

11
12 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts
13 on individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
14 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
15 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
16 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
17 particular importance for amphibian and reptile species would be the restoration of original
18 ground surface contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with desert scrub, playa,
19 and wash habitats.

20 21 22 ***11.4.11.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

23
24 The successful implementation of programmatic design features presented in
25 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on amphibians and reptiles,
26 especially for those species that utilize habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., washes and
27 playas). Indirect impacts could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic
28 design features, especially those engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation,
29 spills, and fugitive dust. While SEZ-specific design features are best established when
30 considering specific project details, one design feature can be identified at this time:

- 31
32 • The dry lake and wash habitats should be avoided.

33
34 If this SEZ-specific design feature is implemented in addition to the programmatic design
35 features, impacts on amphibian and reptile species could be reduced. However, as potentially
36 suitable habitats for a number of the amphibian and reptile species occur throughout much of the
37 SEZ, additional species-specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult
38 or infeasible.

39 40 41 **11.4.11.2 Birds**

42 43 44 ***11.4.11.2.1 Affected Environment***

45
46 This section addresses bird species that are known to occur, or for which potentially
47 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Dry Lake

1 Valley North SEZ. The list of bird species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined
2 from the NNHP (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available from the
3 CWHRS (CDFG 2008) and SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each
4 species were determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See Appendix M for
5 additional information on the approach used.

6
7 At least eight bird species that could
8 occur on or in the affected area of the SEZ are
9 considered focal species in the *Desert Bird*
10 *Conservation Plan* (CalPIF 2009): ash-throated
11 flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), black-
12 throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*),
13 burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), common
14 raven (*Corvus corax*), Costa’s hummingbird (*Calypte costae*), ladder-backed woodpecker
15 (*Picoides scalaris*), Le Conte’s thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*), and verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*).
16 Habitats for most of these species are described in Table 11.4.11.2-1. Because of its special
17 species status, the burrowing owl is discussed in Section 11.4.12.

Desert Focal Bird Species

Bird species whose requirements define spatial attributes, habitat characteristics, and management regimes representative of a healthy desert system (Chase and Geupel 2005).

Waterfowl, Wading Birds, and Shorebirds

18
19
20
21
22 As discussed in Section 4.6.2.2.2, waterfowl (ducks, geese, and swans), wading birds
23 (herons and cranes), and shorebirds (avocets, gulls, plovers, rails, sandpipers, stilts, and terns) are
24 among the most abundant groups of birds in the six-state solar study area. However, within the
25 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebird species would be
26 mostly absent to uncommon. Playa and wash habitats within the SEZ may attract shorebird
27 species, but the perennial stream and reservoir habitats within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ would
28 provide more viable habitat for this group of birds. The killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) is the
29 shorebird species most likely to occur within the SEZ.

Neotropical Migrants

30
31
32
33
34 As discussed in Section 4.6.2.2.3, neotropical migrants represent the most diverse
35 category of birds within the six-state solar energy study area. Species expected to occur within
36 the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ include the ash-throated flycatcher, Bewick’s wren
37 (*Thryomanes bewickii*), black-throated sparrow, cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus*
38 *brunneicapillus*), common poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), common raven, Costa’s
39 hummingbird, greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*),
40 ladder-backed woodpecker, Le Conte’s thrasher, lesser nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*),
41 loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*),
42 phainopepla, rock wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*), Say’s phoebe
43 (*Sayornis saya*), verdin, and western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) (USGS 2007).

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Bird Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Shorebirds</i>					
Killdeer (<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>)	Open areas such as fields, meadows, lawns, mudflats, and shores. Nests on ground in open dry or gravelly locations. About 35,800 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,013 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (8.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	3,897 acres of potentially suitable habitat (10.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	None	Moderate overall impact. Avoid dry lake and wash habitats. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants					
Ash-throated flycatcher (<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>)	Common in scrub and woodland habitats below 4,500 ft, including desert riparian and desert washes. Requires hole/cavity for nesting. Uses shrubs or small trees for foraging perches. About 4,577,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	233,887 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,083 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i> Bewick's wren (<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>)	Generally associated with dense, brushy habitats. It is a permanent resident of lowland deserts and pinyon-juniper forests of southern Utah. Breeding occurs in brushy areas of open woodlands and other open habitats. It is a cavity nester with nests constructed in small enclosed areas such as tree cavities, nesting boxes, rock crevices, or the center of a brush pile. About 4.086,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	15,205 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	188,782 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	39 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,855 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>					
Black-throated sparrow (<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>)	Chaparral and desert scrub habitats with sparse to open stands of shrubs. Often in areas with scattered Joshua trees. Nests in thorny shrubs or cactus. About 1,922,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	95 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	23,633 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0.5 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.0001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 42.5 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Mojave mid-elevation mixed desert scrub habitat should be avoided. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Cactus wren (<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>)	Desert (especially areas with cholla cactus or yucca), mesquite, arid scrub, coastal sage scrub, and trees in towns in arid regions. Nests in <i>Opuntia</i> spp.; twiggy, thorny trees and shrubs; and sometimes in buildings. Nests may be used as winter roost. About 414,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	95 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	4,486 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0.5 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.0001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 42.5 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Mojave mid-elevation mixed desert scrub habitat should be avoided. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.) Common poorwill (<i>Phalaenoptilus nuttallii</i>)	Scrubby and brushy areas, prairie, desert, rocky canyons, open woodlands, and broken forests. Mostly in arid and semiarid habitats. Nests in open areas on a bare site. About 4,323,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	229,631 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	46 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,044 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>					
Common raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	Occurs in most habitats. Trees and cliffs provide cover. Roosts primarily in trees. Nests on cliffs, bluffs, tall trees, or human-made structures. Forages in sparse, open terrain. About 4,994,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	261,395 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,552 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i> Costa's hummingbird (<i>Calypte costae</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas, arid brushy foothills, and chaparral. Main habitats are desert washes, edges of desert riparian and valley foothill riparian areas, coastal shrub, desert scrub, desert succulent shrub, lower-elevation chaparral, and palm oases. Also in mountains, meadows, and gardens during migration and winter. Most common in canyons and washes when nesting. Nests are located in trees, shrubs, vines, or cacti. About 389,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	100 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.03% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	4,773 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0.5 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.0001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 42.5 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Avoid wash and Mojave mid-elevation mixed desert scrub and creosotebush-white bursage desert scrub habitats should be avoided. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Greater roadrunner (<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>)	Desert scrub, chaparral, edges of cultivated lands, and arid open areas with scattered brush. Requires thickets, large bushes, or small trees for shade, refuge, and roosting. Usually nests low in trees, shrubs, or clumps of cactus. Rarely nests on ground. About 4,549,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	227,594 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,083 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Horned lark (<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>)	Common to abundant resident in a variety of open habitats. Breeds in grasslands, sagebrush, semidesert shrublands, and alpine tundra. During migration and winter, inhabits the same habitats other than tundra, and occurs in agricultural areas. Usually occurs where plant density is low and there are exposed soils. About 3,265,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	248,304 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Ladder-backed woodpecker (<i>Picoides scalaris</i>)	Fairly common in Mojave and Colorado Deserts. Variety of habitats, including deserts, arid scrub, riparian woodlands, mesquite, scrub oak, pinyon-juniper woodlands. Digs nest hole in rotted stub or dead or dying branches of various trees. Also nests in saguaro, agave, yucca, fence posts, and utility poles. Nests on ledges; branches of trees, shrubs, and cactus; and holes in trees or walls. About 2,644,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	60,589 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	83,275 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	19 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 1,685 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>					
Le Conte's thrasher (<i>Toxostoma lecontei</i>)	Open desert wash, alkali desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats. Prefers to nest and forage in arroyos and washes lined with dense stands of creosotebush and salt bush. About 942,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	60,589 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (6.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	63,734 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	19 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 1,685 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Lesser nighthawk (<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>)	Open country, desert regions, scrub, savanna, and cultivated areas. Usually near water, including open marshes, salt ponds, large rivers, rice paddies, and beaches. Roosts on low perches or the ground. Nests in the open on bare sites. About 2,968,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	208,067 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,083 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Loggerhead shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	Open country with scattered trees and shrubs, savanna, desert scrub, desert riparian, Joshua tree, and occasionally, open woodland habitats. Perches on poles, wires, or fence posts (suitable hunting perches are important aspect of habitat). Nests in shrubs and small trees. About 4,941,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	260,672 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,546 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Northern mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	Parkland, cultivated lands, second-growth habitats, desert scrub, and riparian areas at low elevations. Forages on ground in short, grassy to nearly barren substrates. About 4,967,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	267,812 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>					
Rock wren (<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>)	Arid and semiarid habitats. It breeds in areas with talus slopes, scrublands, or dry washes. Nests, constructed of plant materials, are located in rock crevices and the nest entrance is paved with small rocks and stones. About 4,958,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	267,933 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Sage sparrow (<i>Amphispiza belli</i>)	Prefers shrubland, grassland, and desert habitats. The nest, constructed of twigs and grasses, is located either low in a shrub or on the ground. About 4,564,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	256,139 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,506 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Say's phoebe (<i>Sayornis saya</i>)	Arid open country, deserts, sagebrush plains, dry barren foothills, canyons, cliffs, ranches, and rural homes. Nests in cliff crevices, holes in banks, sheltered ledges, tree cavities, under bridges and roofs, and in mines. About 2,437,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	6,643 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	150,852 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	28 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,444 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>					
Verdin (<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>)	Desert riparian, desert wash, desert scrub, and alkali desert scrub areas with large shrubs and small trees. Nests in shrubs, small trees, or cactus. About 386,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	100 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.03% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	4,764 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0.5 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.0001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 42.5 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Mojave mid-elevation mixed desert scrub and creosotebush-white bursage desert scrub habitats should be avoided. Dry lake and wash habitats should also be avoided. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Western kingbird (<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>)	Occurs in a variety of habitats, including riparian forests and woodlands, savannahs, shrublands, agricultural lands, deserts, and urban areas. Nesting occurs in trees, bushes, and other raised areas, such as buildings. It migrates to Central America or the southeastern United States for the winter. About 3,346,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	233,958 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Birds of Prey					
American kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius</i>)	Occurs in most open habitats, in various shrub and early successional forest habitats, forest openings, and various ecotones. Perches on trees, snags, rocks, utility poles and wires, and fence posts. Uses cavities in trees, snags, rock areas, banks, and buildings for nesting and cover. About 4,782,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	260,707 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)					
Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)	Grasslands, shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine forests. Occasionally in most other habitats, especially during migration and winter. Nests on cliffs and sometimes trees in rugged areas, with breeding birds ranging widely over surrounding areas. About 4,956,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	260,913 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)					
Great horned owl (<i>Bubo virginianus</i>)	Needs large abandoned bird nest or large cavity for nesting. Usually lives on forest edges and hunts in open areas. In desert areas, requires wooded cliff areas for nesting. About 5,024,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	268,338 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,552 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Long-eared owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)	Nests and roosts in dense vegetation and hunts in open areas (e.g., creosotebush-bursage flats, desert scrub, grasslands, and agricultural fields). About 4,868,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	260,514 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)					
Red-tailed hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	Wide variety of habitats from deserts, mountains, and populated valleys. Open areas with scattered, elevated perch sites such as scrub desert, plains and montane grassland, agricultural fields, pastures urban parklands, broken coniferous forests, and deciduous woodland. Nests on cliff ledges or in tall trees. About 2,571,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	175,594 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,111 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Turkey vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>)	Occurs in open stages of most habitats that provide adequate cliffs or large trees for nesting, roosting, and resting. Migrates and forages over most open habitats. Will roost communally in trees, exposed boulders, and occasionally transmission line support towers. About 2,534,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	60,589 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	83,275 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	19 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 1,685 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Upland Game Birds					
Chukar (<i>Alectoris chukar</i>)	Steep, semiarid slopes with rocky outcrops and shrubs with a grass and forb understory. Sources of water are required during hot, dry periods, with most birds during the brooding period found within 0.25 mi (0.4 km) of water. About 4,886,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	254,095 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,552 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. Avoid dry lake and wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Gambel's quail (<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>)	Deserts, especially in areas with brushy or thorny growth, and adjacent cultivated areas. Usually occurs near water. Nests on the ground under cover of small trees, shrubs, and grass tufts. About 2,791,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,187 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	170,275 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	33 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,904 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Avoid Dry lake and wash habitats.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Upland Game Birds</i> (Cont.)					
Mourning dove (<i>Zenaida macroura</i>)	Habitat generalist, occurring in grasslands, shrublands, croplands, lowland and foothill riparian forests, ponderosa pine forests, deserts, and urban and suburban areas. Rarely in aspen and other forests, coniferous woodlands, and alpine tundra. Nests on ground or in trees. Winters mostly in lowland riparian forests adjacent to cropland. About 4,409,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	208,214 acres of 4.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,111 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
White-winged dove (<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>)	Nests in low to medium height trees with dense foliage and fairly open ground cover. Feeds on wild seeds, grains, and fruit. About 380,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	100 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.03% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	4,763 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0.5 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.0001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 42.5 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Mojave mid-elevation mixed desert scrub and creosotebush-white bursage desert scrub habitats should be avoided.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Upland Game Birds</i> (Cont.)					
Wild turkey (<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>)	Lowland riparian forests, foothill shrubs, pinyon-juniper woodlands, foothill riparian forests, and agricultural areas. About 3,954,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,668 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	185,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	33 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.0013% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,861 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.

- ^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimated the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 61,499 acres of direct effect within the SEZ was assumed.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 61,499 acres of direct effect was also added to the area of indirect effect. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.4.11.2-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within a 7-mi (11-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide access road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest existing highway. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide access road corridor to the existing highway, less the assumed area of direct effects.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 **Birds of Prey**

2
3 Section 4.6.2.2.4 provides an overview of the birds of prey (raptors, owls, and vultures)
4 within the six-state solar study area. Raptor species that could occur within the proposed Dry
5 Lake Valley North SEZ include the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), golden eagle (*Aquila*
6 *chrysaetos*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), red-tailed hawk
7 (*Buteo jamaicensis*), and turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*) (USGS 2007). Several other special
8 status birds of prey are discussed in Section 11.4.12. These include the ferruginous hawk
9 (*Buteo regalis*), northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), and
10 burrowing owl.

11
12
13 **Upland Game Birds**

14
15 Section 4.6.2.2.5 provides an overview of the upland game birds (primarily pheasants,
16 grouse, quail, and doves) that occur within the six-state solar study area. Upland game species
17 that could occur within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ include the chukar (*Alectoris*
18 *chukar*), Gambel's quail (*Callipepla gambelii*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), white-
19 winged dove (*Zenaida asiatica*), and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) (USGS 2007).

20
21 Table 11.4.11.2-1 provides habitat information for representative bird species that could
22 occur within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Special status bird species are discussed
23 in Section 11.4.12.

24
25
26 **11.4.11.2.2 Impacts**

27
28 The types of impacts that birds could incur from construction, operation, and
29 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
30 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
31 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any additional mitigation applied.
32 Section 11.4.11.2.3 identifies design features of particular relevance to the proposed Dry Lake
33 Valley North SEZ.

34
35 The assessment of impacts on bird species is based on available information on the
36 presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.4.11.2.1, following the
37 analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination
38 with federal or state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts
39 more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions
40 to avoid or mitigate impacts on birds (see Section 11.4.11.2.3).

41
42 In general, impacts on birds would result from habitat disturbance (i.e., habitat reduction,
43 fragmentation, and alteration), and from disturbance, injury, or mortality to individual birds.
44 Table 11.4.11.2-1 summarizes the magnitude of potential impacts on representative bird species
45 resulting from solar energy development in the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. On the
46 basis of the impacts on birds summarized in Table 11.4.11.2-1, direct impacts on representative

1 bird species would be small (10 species) to moderate (22 species). Direct impacts on these
2 species would range from less than 0.01% for the black-tailed gnatcatcher and black-throated
3 sparrow to 8.4% for the killdeer (Table 11.4.11.2-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitats
4 for the bird species occur within the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 10.9% of
5 available habitat for the killdeer). Indirect impacts on birds could result from noise (i.e.,
6 behavioral and physiological stresses; Section 5.10.2), surface water and sediment runoff from
7 disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, collection, and harassment. These
8 indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with implementation of programmatic design
9 features.

10
11 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts
12 on individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
13 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially
14 long-term benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas.
15 Section 5.10.2.1.4 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation
16 on wildlife. Of particular importance for bird species would be the restoration of original ground
17 surface contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with desert scrub, playa, and
18 wash habitats.

21 ***11.4.11.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

22
23 The successful implementation of programmatic design features presented in
24 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on birds, especially for those
25 species that depend on habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., wash and playa habitats). Indirect
26 impacts could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those
27 engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While
28 SEZ-specific design features important to reduce impacts on birds are best established when
29 considering specific project details, some design features can be identified at this time:

- 30
31 • The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding
32 between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds
33 will be followed.
- 34
35 • Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation
36 regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the
37 USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and
38 Golden Eagle Protection Act.
- 39
40 • Dry lake and wash habitats should be avoided.

41
42 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to the programmatic
43 design features, impacts on bird species could be reduced. However, as potentially suitable
44 habitats for a number of the bird species occur throughout much of the SEZ, additional species-
45 specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.

1 **11.4.11.3 Mammals**

2
3
4 **11.4.11.3.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section addresses mammal species that are known to occur, or for which potentially
7 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Dry Lake
8 Valley North SEZ. The list of mammal species potentially present in the SEZ area was
9 determined from the NNHP (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available
10 from SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined
11 from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See Appendix M for additional information on the
12 approach used.

13
14 More than 55 species of mammals have ranges that encompass the area of the proposed
15 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007); however, suitable habitats for a
16 number of these species are limited or nonexistent within the SEZ (USGS 2007). Similar to the
17 overview of mammals provided for the six-state solar energy study area (Section 4.6.2.3), the
18 following discussion for the SEZ emphasizes big game and other mammal species that (1) have
19 key habitats within or near the SEZ, (2) are important to humans (e.g., big game, small game,
20 and furbearer species), and/or (3) are representative of other species that share important
21 habitats.

22
23
24 **Big Game**

25
26 The big game species that could occur within the area of the proposed Dry Lake Valley
27 North SEZ include cougar (*Puma concolor*), elk (*Cervis canadensis*), mule deer (*Odocoileus*
28 *hemionus*), Nelson’s bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*), and pronghorn (*Antilocapra*
29 *americana*) (USGS 2007). Because of its special species status, the Nelson’s bighorn sheep is
30 addressed in Section 11.4.12. Figure 11.4.11.3-1 shows the location of the SEZ relative to
31 mapped elk habitat; Figure 11.4.11.3-2 shows the location of the SEZ relative to the mapped
32 range of mule deer habitat; and Figure 11.4.11.3-3 shows the location of the SEZ relative to
33 mapped pronghorn habitat.

34
35
36 **Other Mammals**

37
38 A number of small game and furbearer species occur within the area of the proposed Dry
39 Lake Valley North SEZ. Species that could occur within the area of the SEZ would include the
40 American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), bobcat (*Lynx*
41 *rufus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), gray fox (*Urocyon*
42 *cinereoargenteus*), kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*), and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) (USGS 2007).

43
44 The nongame (small) mammals include rodents, bats, and shrews. Representative species
45 for which potentially suitable habitat occurs within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
46 include Botta’s pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), cactus mouse (*Peromyscus eremicus*), canyon

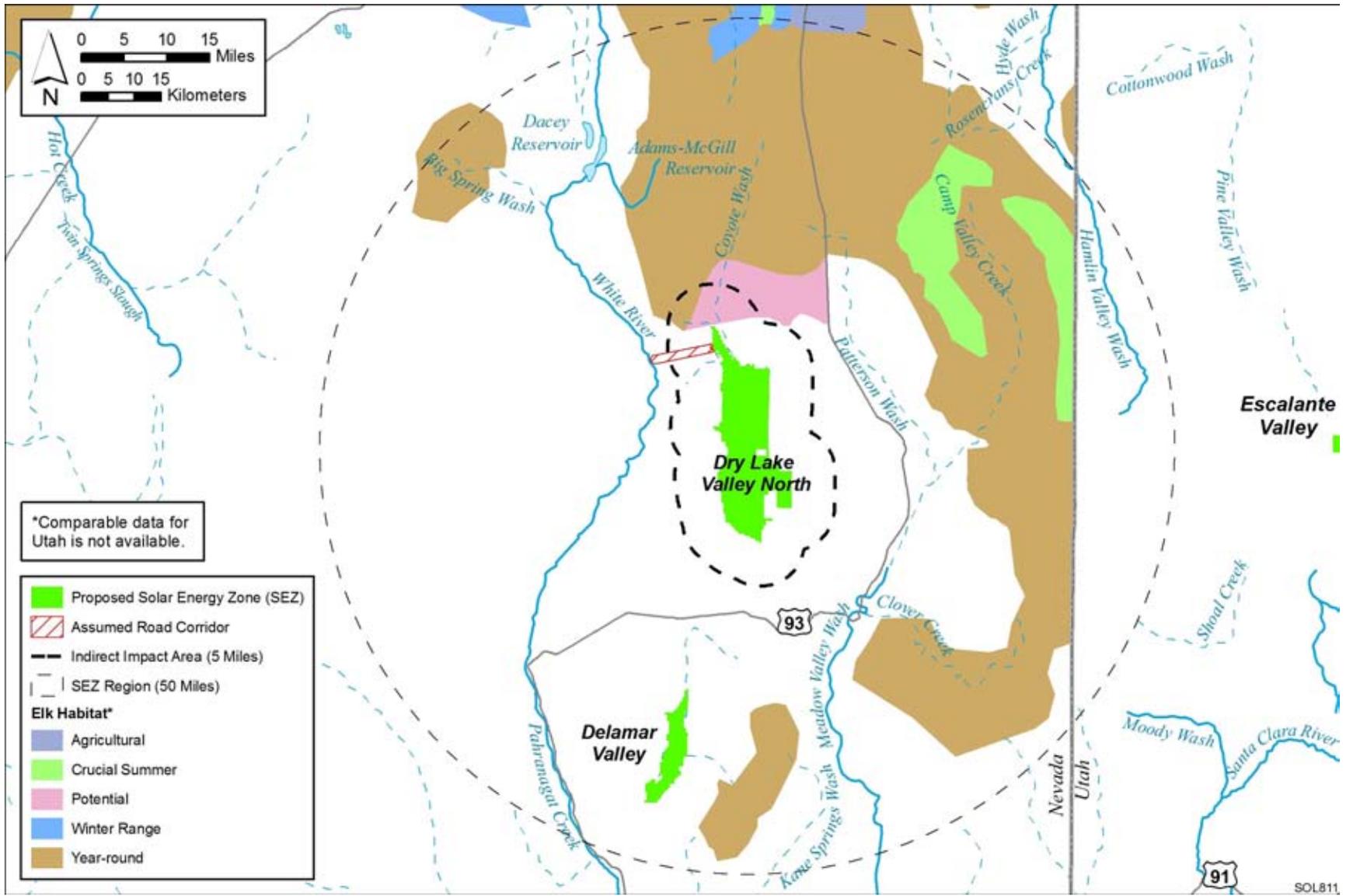


FIGURE 11.4.11.3-1 Location of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ Relative to the Mapped Range of Elk (Source: NDOW 2010)

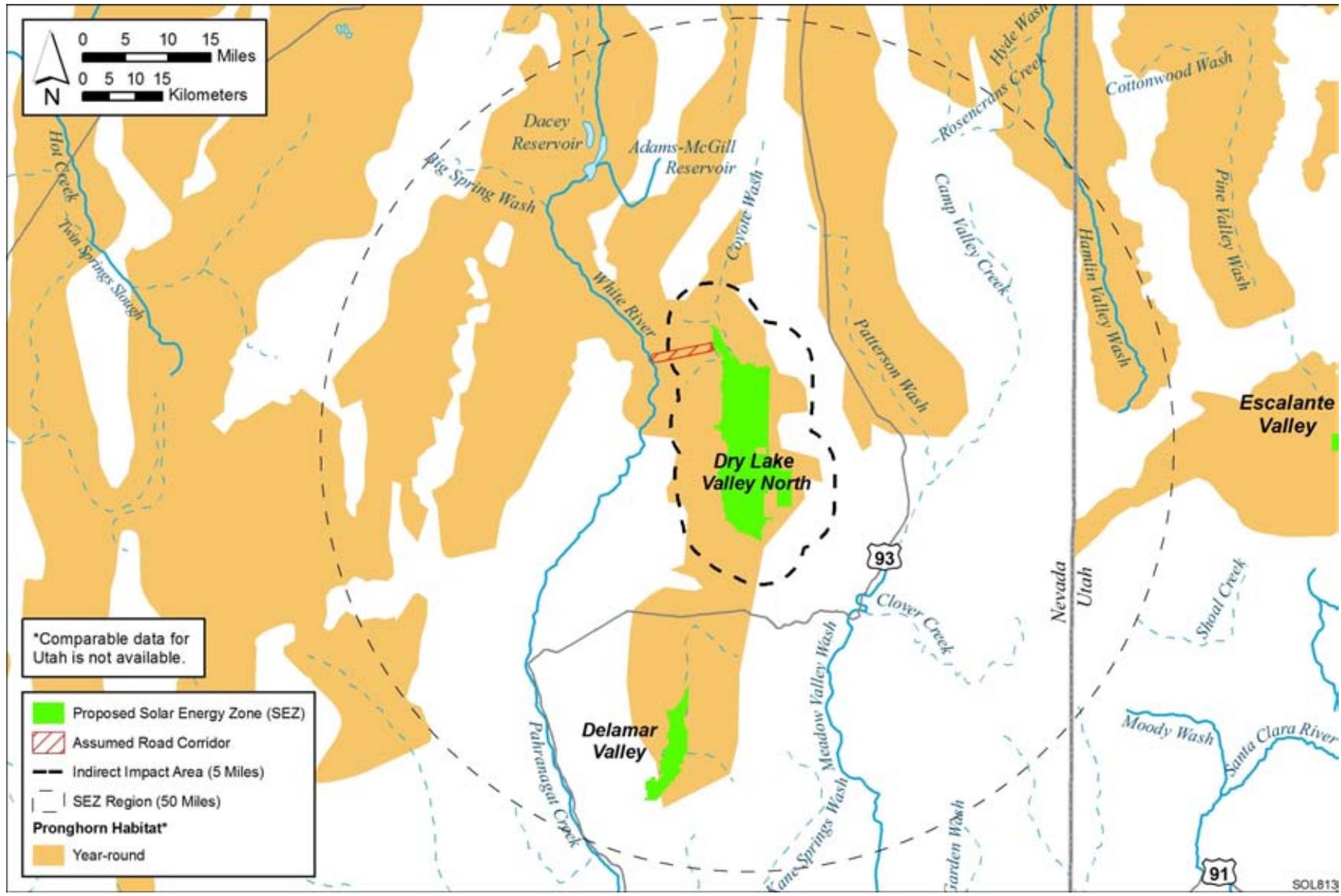


FIGURE 11.4.11.3-3 Location of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ Relative to the Mapped Range of Pronghorn (Source: NDOW 2010)

1

2

3

1 mouse (*P. crinitis*), deer mouse (*P. maniculatus*), desert shrew (*Notiosorex crawfordi*), desert
2 woodrat (*Neotoma lepida*), little pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris*), long-tailed pocket
3 mouse (*Chaetodipus formosus*), Merriam's pocket mouse (*Dipodomys merriami*), northern
4 grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys leucogaster*), southern grasshopper mouse (*O. torridus*),
5 western harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*), and white-tailed antelope squirrel
6 (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*) (USGS 2007). Bat species that may occur within the area of the
7 SEZ include the big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), Brazilian free-tailed bat (*Tadarida*
8 *brasiliensis*), California myotis (*Myotis californicus*), hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), little brown
9 myotis (*M. lucifugus*), long-legged myotis (*M. volans*), silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris*
10 *noctivagans*), and western pipistrelle (*Parastrellus hesperus*) (USGS 2007). However, roost sites
11 for the bat species (e.g., caves, hollow trees, rock crevices, or buildings) would be limited to
12 absent within the SEZ. Several other special status bat species that could occur within the SEZ
13 area are addressed in Section 11.4.12.1.

14
15 Table 11.4.11.3-1 provides habitat information for representative mammal species that
16 could occur within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Special status mammal species are
17 discussed in Section 11.4.12.

18 19 20 **11.4.11.3.2 Impacts**

21
22 The types of impacts that mammals could incur from construction, operation, and
23 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
24 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
25 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any additional mitigation applied.
26 Section 11.4.11.3.3 identifies design features of particular relevance to mammals for the
27 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.

28
29 The assessment of impacts on mammal species is based on available information on the
30 presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.4.11.3.1, following the
31 analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination
32 with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts more
33 thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions to
34 avoid or mitigate impacts on mammals (see Section 11.4.11.3.3).

35
36 Table 11.4.11.3-1 summarizes the magnitude of potential impacts on representative
37 mammal species resulting from solar energy development (with the inclusion of programmatic
38 design features) in the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.

39
40
41 **Cougar.** Up to 61,499 acres (248.9 km²) of potentially suitable cougar habitat could
42 be lost by solar energy development within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. This
43 represents about 1.2% of potentially suitable cougar habitat within the SEZ region. About
44 254,440 acres (1029.7 km²) of potentially suitable cougar habitat occurs within the area of

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Mammal Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Big Game Cougar (<i>Puma concolor</i>)	Most common in rough, broken foothills and canyon country, often in association with montane forests, shrublands, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. About 4,925,100 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	254,441 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Elk (<i>Cervis canadensis</i>)	Semi-open forest, mountain meadows, foothills, plains, valleys, and alpine tundra. Uses open spaces such as alpine pastures, marshy meadows, river flats, brushy clean cuts, forest edges, and semidesert areas. About 2,117,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,113 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	142,569 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	28 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,401 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Big Game (Cont.)					
Mule deer (<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>)	Most habitats, including coniferous forests, desert shrub, chaparral, and grasslands with shrubs. Greatest densities in shrublands on rough, broken terrain that provides abundant browse and cover. About 3,405,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	241,469 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Pronghorn (<i>Antilocapra americana</i>)	Grasslands and semidesert shrublands on rolling topography that affords good visibility. Most abundant in shortgrass or midgrass prairies and least common in xeric habitats. About 2,395,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,087 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	165,220 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	33 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,861 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers</i>					
American badger (<i>Taxidea taxus</i>)	Open grasslands and deserts, meadows in subalpine and montane forests, alpine tundra. Digs burrows in friable soils. Most common in areas with abundant populations of ground squirrels, prairie dogs, and pocket gophers. About 4,856,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	267,902 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Black-tailed jackrabbit (<i>Lepus californicus</i>)	Open plains, fields, and deserts with scattered thickets or patches of shrubs. Also open, early stages of forests and chaparral habitats. Rests during the day in shallow depressions, and uses shrubs for cover. About 4,954,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	267,807 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)</i>					
Bobcat (<i>Lynx rufus</i>)	Most habitats except subalpine coniferous forest and montane meadow grasslands. Most common in rocky country from deserts through ponderosa forests. About 4,330,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	16,330 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	193,231 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	3 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.0001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,937 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.
Coyote (<i>Canis latrans</i>)	All habitats at all elevations. Least common in dense coniferous forest. Where human control efforts occur, they are restricted to broken, rough country with abundant shrub cover and a good supply of rabbits or rodents. About 5023,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	268,338 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,552 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)</i>					
Desert cottontail (<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>)	Abundant to common in grasslands, open forests, and desert shrub habitats. Can occur in areas with minimal vegetation as long as adequate cover (e.g., rock piles, fallen logs, fence rows) is present. Tickets and patches of shrubs, vines, and brush also used as cover. About 4,602,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	255,742 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,503 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Gray fox (<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>)	Deserts, open forests and brush. Prefer wooded areas, broken country, brushlands, and rocky areas. Tolerant of low levels of residential development. About 2,712,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	117,841 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	24 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,105 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)</i>					
Kit fox (<i>Vulpes macrotis</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas with relatively open vegetative cover and soft soils. Seek shelter in underground burrows. About 3,300,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	240,464 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Red fox (<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>)	Most common in open woodlands, pasturelands, riparian areas, and agricultural lands. About 3,942,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,675 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	185,789 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	33 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,861 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals</i>					
Big brown bat (<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>)	Most habitats from lowland deserts to timberline meadows. Roosts in hollow trees, rock crevices, mines, tunnels, and buildings. About 2,676,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	117,721 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	24 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,105 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Botta's pocket gopher (<i>Thomomys bottae</i>)	Variety of habitats, including shortgrass plains, oak savanna, agricultural lands, and deserts. Burrows are more common in disturbed areas such as roadways and stream floodplains. About 2,526,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	184,437 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,065 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Brazilian free-tailed bat (<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>)	Cliffs, deserts, grasslands, old fields, savannas, shrublands, woodlands, and suburban/urban areas. Roosts in buildings, caves, and hollow trees. May roost in rock crevices, bridges, signs, or cliff swallow nests during migration. Large maternity colonies inhabit caves, buildings, culverts, and bridges. About 4,121,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	203,730 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,065 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Cactus mouse (<i>Peromyscus eremicus</i>)	Variety of areas, including desert scrub, semidesert chaparral, desert wash, semidesert grassland, and cliff and canyon habitats. About 2,257,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	10,206 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	47,145 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	6 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.0002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 505 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
California myotis (<i>Myotis californicus</i>)	Desertscrub, semidesert shrublands, lowland riparian, swamps, riparian suburban areas, plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, woodlands, and forests. Roosts in caves, mine tunnels, hollow trees, and loose rocks. About 2,586,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	184,376 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,065 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Canyon mouse (<i>Peromyscus crinitus</i>)	Associated with rocky substrates in a variety of habitats, including desert scrub, sagebrush shrublands, woodlands, cliffs and canyons, and volcanic rock and cinder lands. Source of free water not required. About 2,420,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,083 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	147,140 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	28 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,441 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Deer mouse <i>(Peromyscus maniculatus)</i>	Tundra; alpine and subalpine grasslands; plains grasslands; open, sparsely vegetated deserts; warm temperate swamps and riparian forests; and Sonoran desert scrub habitats. About 4,894,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	260,656 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,546 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Desert shrew <i>(Notiosorex crawfordi)</i>	Usually in arid areas with adequate cover such as semiarid grasslands, shortgrass plains, desert scrub, chaparral slopes, shortgrass plains, oak savannas and woodlands, and alluvial fans. About 1,406,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (4.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	102,801 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	25 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.0021% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,147 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Desert woodrat (<i>Neotoma lepida</i>)	Sagebrush scrub; chaparral; deserts and rocky slopes with scattered cactus, yucca, pine-juniper, or other low vegetation; creosotebush desert; Joshua tree woodlands; scrub oak woodlands, pinyon-juniper woodlands; and riparian zones. Most abundant in rocky areas with Joshua trees. Dens built of debris on ground, among cacti or yucca, along cliffs, among rocks, or occasionally in trees. About 4,939,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	261,016 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Hoary bat (<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>)	Chaparral, shortgrass plains, scrub-grassland, desertscrub, forests and woodlands. Usually roosts in trees, also in caves, rock crevices, and houses. About 2,101,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,120 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	46,641 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 463 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Little brown myotis (<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>)	Various habitats, including pinyon-juniper woodlands, montane shrublands, and riparian woodlands. It uses man-made structures for summer roosting, although caves and hollow trees are also utilized. Winter hibernation often occurs in caves or mines, Most foraging activity occurs in woodlands over or near water. About 4,145,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	194,514 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,108 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Little pocket mouse (<i>Perognathus longimembris</i>)	Mostly sandy and gravelly soils, but also stony soils and rarely rocky sites. About 3,149,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	233,334 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,546 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Long-legged myotis (<i>Myotis volans</i>)	Prefers pine forest, desert, and riparian habitats. Old buildings, rock crevices, and hollow trees are used for daytime roosting and winter hibernation. It forages in open areas, such as forest clearings. About 2,739,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	118,064 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	24 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,108 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Long-tailed pocket mouse (<i>Chaetodipus formosus</i>)	Prefers pine forest, desert, and riparian habitats. Old buildings, rock crevices, and hollow trees used for daytime roosting and winter hibernation. It forages in open areas, such as forest clearings. About 3,156,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	233,606 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,546 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Merriam's kangaroo rat (<i>Dipodomys merriami</i>)	Plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, desertscrub, shortgrass plains, oak and juniper savannahs, mesquite dunes, and creosote flats. About 3,299,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	248,159 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	52 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.0021% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,549 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Northern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys leucogaster</i>)	Occurs in grasslands, sagebrush deserts, overgrazed pastures, weedy roadside ditches, sand dunes, and other habitats with sandy soil and sparse vegetation. About 4,277,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	9,757 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	185,903 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	33 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,904 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Silver-haired bat (<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>)	Urban areas, chaparral, alpine and subalpine grasslands, forests, scrub-grassland, oak savannah and desertscrub habitats. Roosts under bark, in hollow trees, caves and mines. Forages over clearings and open water. About 4,063,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost 1.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	196,166 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,065 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Southern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys torridus</i>)	Low, arid, shrub and semiscrub vegetation of deserts. About 1,228,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (5.0% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,116 acres of potentially suitable habitat (8.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	25 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,147 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Western harvest mouse (<i>Reithrodontomys megalotis</i>)	Various habitats including scrub-grasslands, temperate swamps and riparian forests, salt marshes, shortgrass plains, oak savannah, dry fields, agricultural areas, deserts, and desertscrub. Grasses are the preferred cover. About 2,651,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	117,378 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	24 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,105 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western pipistrelle (<i>Parastrellus hesperus</i>)	Deserts and lowlands, desert mountain ranges, desert scrub flats, and rocky canyons. Roosts mostly in rock crevices, sometimes mines and caves, and rarely in buildings. Suitable roosts occur in rocky canyons and cliffs. Most abundant bat in desert regions. About 2,531,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	184,395 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,065 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
White-tailed antelope squirrel (<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>)	Low deserts, semidesert and montane shrublands, plateaus, and foothills in areas with sparse vegetation and hard gravelly surfaces. Spends its nights and other periods of inactivity in underground burrows. About 1,917,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	162,024 acres of potentially suitable habitat (8.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	30 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,588 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Yuma myotis (<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>)	Riparian areas, grasslands, semidesert shrubland, mountain brush, woodlands, and deserts. It occurs where there is open water, regardless of the habitat. Roosts in caves, mines, cliffs, crevices, buildings, and swallow nests. About 2,590,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	61,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	184,454 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	47 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,065 acres in area of indirect effect	Moderate overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

Footnotes on next page.

TABLE 11.4.11.3-1 (Cont.)

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- ^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimated the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 61,499 acres of direct effect within the SEZ was assumed.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 61,499 acres of direct effect was also added to the area of indirect effect. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- ^e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within a 7-mi (11-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide access road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest existing highway. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide access road corridor to the existing highway, less the assumed area of direct effects.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 indirect effect. This is about 5.2% of potentially suitable cougar habitat within the SEZ region.
2 Overall, impacts on the cougar from solar energy development in the SEZ would be moderate.
3
4

5 **Elk.** Based on land cover analyses, up to 3,113 acres (12.6 km²) of potentially suitable
6 elk habitat could be lost by solar energy development within the proposed Dry Lake Valley
7 North SEZ. This represents about 0.1% of potentially suitable elk habitat within the SEZ region.
8 About 142,570 acres (577 km²) of potentially suitable elk habitat occurs within the area of
9 indirect effect. This is about 6.7% of potentially suitable elk habitat within the SEZ region.
10 Based on mapped ranges, the closest year-round elk habitat is about 1.7 mi (2.7 km) from the
11 SEZ, while potential habitat is adjacent to the northern tip of the SEZ (Figure 11.4.11.3-1).
12 About 7,050 acres (28.5 km²) of mapped year-round elk habitat and 17,645 acres (71.4 km²) of
13 potential elk range occurs within the area of indirect effect. Crucial summer and winter ranges
14 are 20 mi (32 km) and 30 mi (48 km) from the SEZ, respectively (Figure 11.4.11.3-1). Overall,
15 impacts on elk from solar energy development in the SEZ would be small.
16
17

18 **Mule Deer.** Based on land cover analyses, up to 61,499 acres (248.9 km²) of potentially
19 suitable mule deer habitat could be lost by solar energy development within the proposed Dry
20 Lake Valley North SEZ. This represents about 1.8% of potentially suitable mule deer habitat
21 within the SEZ region. About 241,470 acres (977.2 km²) of potentially suitable mule deer habitat
22 occurs within the area of indirect effect. This is about 7.1% of potentially suitable mule deer
23 habitat within the SEZ region. Based on mapped range, the closest year-round mule deer habitat
24 is about 4.4 mi (7.1 km) from the SEZ (Figure 11.4.11.3-2). About 480 acres (1.9 km²) of year-
25 round mule deer habitat occurs within the area of indirect effect. This is only about 0.04% of
26 the year-round mule deer habitat within the SEZ region. The closest summer range is 3.2 mi
27 (5.1 km) from the SEZ (Figure 11.4.11.3-2). About 12,415 acres (50.2 km²) of mule deer
28 summer range occurs within the indirect effect area. About 1,150 acres (4.7 km²) of winter range
29 and 8 acres (0.03 km²) of crucial winter range occur within the SEZ (Figure 11.4.11.3-2). These
30 are about 0.09 and 0.002 % of the respective ranges within the SEZ region. These would be
31 considered small direct effects on these mule deer ranges. An additional 4 acres (0.02 km²) of
32 winter range and 27 acres (0.1 km²) of crucial winter range would be directly affected by
33 access road development. More than 115,000 acres (465 km²) of winter range and 57,580 acres
34 (233 km²) of crucial winter range occurs within the area of indirect effect. Overall, impacts on
35 mule deer from solar energy development in the SEZ would be small (based on mapped range) to
36 moderate (based on land cover).
37
38

39 **Pronghorn.** Based on land cover analyses, up to 13,087 acres (53.0 km²) of potentially
40 suitable pronghorn habitat could be lost by solar energy development within the proposed Dry
41 Lake Valley North SEZ. This represents about 0.5% of potentially suitable pronghorn habitat
42 within the SEZ region. About 165,220 acres (688.6 km²) of potentially suitable pronghorn
43 habitat occurs within the area of indirect effect. This is about 6.9% of potentially suitable
44 pronghorn habitat within the SEZ region. Based on mapped range, up to 61,499 acres
45 (248.9 km²) year-round pronghorn habitat would be directly impacted by solar energy
46 development within the SEZ (Figure 11.4.11.3-3). This is about 3.2% of the year-round habitat

1 mapped within the SEZ region, which would be considered a moderate impact. An additional
2 52 acres (0.2 km²) of year-round habitat could be directly affected by access road development.
3 About 183,100 acres (741 km²) of year-round pronghorn range occurs within the area of indirect
4 effect (Figure 11.4.11.3-3. Overall, impacts on pronghorn from solar energy development in the
5 SEZ would be small (based on land cover) to moderate (based on mapped range).
6
7

8 **Other Mammals**

9

10 Direct impacts on other representative mammal species would be small (6 species) to
11 moderate (24 species) (Table 11.4.11.3-1). Direct impacts (percent loss of potentially available
12 habitat) for these species would range from 0.1% for the canyon mouse to 5.0% for the southern
13 grasshopper mouse (Table 11.4.11.3-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitats for these
14 mammal species occur within the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 8.4% of available
15 habitat for the white-tailed antelope squirrel).
16
17

18 **Summary**

19

20 Overall, impacts on mammal species, based on land cover analyses, would be small to
21 moderate (Table 11.4.11.3-1). Based on mapped ranges for big game, a moderate impact could
22 occur to pronghorn. In addition to habitat loss, other direct impacts on mammals could result
23 from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., fences). Indirect impacts on mammals could
24 result from noise (i.e., behavioral and physiological stresses; Section 5.10.2), surface water and
25 sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental
26 spills, collection, and harassment. Indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with
27 implementation of programmatic design features.
28

29 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
30 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
31 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
32 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
33 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
34 particular importance for mammal species would be the restoration of original ground surface
35 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with desert scrub, playa, and wash
36 habitats.
37
38

39 ***11.4.11.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

40

41 The implementation of required programmatic design features presented in Appendix A,
42 Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on mammals. Indirect impacts could be
43 reduced to negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those engineering
44 controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While SEZ-specific
45 design features important for reducing impacts on mammals are best established when
46 considering specific project details, design features that can be identified at this time are:
47

- The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free movement of mammals, particularly big game species.
- Playa and wash habitats should be avoided.

If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to the programmatic design features, impacts on mammals could be reduced. However, potentially suitable habitats for a number of the mammal species occur throughout much of the SEZ; therefore, species-specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.

11.4.11.4 Aquatic Biota

11.4.11.4.1 Affected Environment

This section addresses aquatic habitats and biota known to occur on the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ itself or within an area that could be affected, either directly or indirectly, by activities associated with solar energy development within the SEZ. There are no perennial surface water bodies or perennial streams within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ or within the assumed new road corridor. As described in Section 11.4.9.1.1, 18 mi (29 km) of the intermittent/ephemeral Coyote Wash and 28 mi (45 km) of unnamed washes cross through the SEZ. These washes are typically dry and flow only after precipitation, at which time they carry water to an unnamed dry lake, 4,472 acres (18 km²) of which are located within the SEZ. Other ephemeral washes may also cross the SEZ, but they typically do not support wetland or riparian habitats. As described in Section 11.4.9.1.1, the unnamed dry lake is classified as a lacustrine wetland by the NWI. However, wetlands associated with dry lakes in the desert southwest rarely have water (USFS 1998). Although aquatic habitat and communities are not likely to exist in the intermittent and ephemeral surface water features in the SEZ, opportunistic crustaceans and aquatic insect larvae adapted to desert conditions may be present even under dry conditions. More detailed site survey data would be needed to characterize the aquatic biota, if present.

There are no permanent surface water bodies or perennial streams within the area of indirect effects associated with the SEZ or the assumed new road corridor. There are 3,750 acres (15 km²) of dry lake and associated wetlands and 21 mi (34 km) of intermittent washes located within the area of SEZ indirect effects, but none are within the area of indirect effects associated with the new road corridor. The intermittent/ephemeral nature of these features suggests aquatic habitat and biota are unlikely, although more detailed site survey data would be needed to characterize the aquatic biota, if present.

Outside of the potential indirect effects area, but within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ, there are several lakes, covering a total area of 57,748 acres (92,936 km²). Of this total, 4,212 acres (6,778 km²) are permanent lake (reservoirs formed from the White River) and 53,546 acres (86,174 km²) are dry lake. There are 158 mi (254 km) of perennial stream and 378 mi (608 km) of intermittent stream located within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ. The White River, its tributaries,

1 and spring-fed pools support populations of native and non-native fishes as well as several
2 endangered fish species, including the White River spinedace (*Lepidomeda albivallis*) and the
3 White River springfish (*Crenichthys baileyi baileyi*). Within the SEZ and the area of potential
4 indirect effects, intermittent streams and dry lakes are the only surface water features present,
5 representing approximately 18% of the amount of intermittent stream and 8% of the dry lake
6 available within the overall analysis area. The proposed new road corridor boundary is less than
7 1 mi (1.6 km) from the perennial White River.

8 9 10 **11.4.11.4.2 Impacts**

11
12 Section 5.10.3 discusses in detail the types of impacts that could occur on aquatic habitats
13 and biota due to the development of utility-scale solar energy facilities. Effects that are
14 particularly relevant to aquatic habitats and communities include surface water and groundwater
15 withdrawal and changes in water, sediment, and contaminant inputs associated with runoff.

16
17 No permanent water bodies or streams are present within the boundaries of the proposed
18 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, the assumed new access road, or the area of indirect effects. The
19 nearest perennial surface water (White River) is located approximately 7 mi (11 km) from the
20 SEZ and more than 1 mi (1.6 km) from the area of direct disturbance for the presumed new
21 access road. In addition, the intermittent streams in the SEZ do not drain into any permanent
22 surface waters. Therefore, no direct or indirect impacts on perennial surface water features are
23 expected. Intermittent stream, wetland, and water body features are present in the area of direct
24 and indirect effects, and ground disturbance for solar energy development within the SEZ could
25 result in air- and waterborne sediment deposition into these habitats. However, these areas are
26 typically dry and aquatic habitat is not likely to be present, although more detailed site surveys of
27 these areas would be necessary to determine whether solar energy development activities would
28 result in direct or indirect impacts to aquatic biota. The implementation of commonly used
29 engineering practices to control water runoff and sediment deposition into intermittent surface
30 waters would further minimize the potential for impacts on aquatic organisms.

31
32 As identified in Section 5.10.3, water quality in aquatic habitats could be affected by the
33 introduction of contaminants such as fuels, lubricants, or pesticides/herbicides during site
34 characterization, construction, operation, or decommissioning for a solar energy facility. There is
35 the potential for contaminants within the SEZ to enter washes and the dry lake, especially if
36 heavy machinery is used in or near these areas. Because of the relatively large distance from any
37 permanent surface water features to the SEZ (minimum of 1 mi [1.6 km]), the potential for
38 introducing contaminants into such water bodies would be small.

39
40 In arid environments, reductions in the quantity of water in aquatic habitats are of
41 particular concern. Water quantity in aquatic habitats could also be affected if significant
42 amounts of surface water or groundwater were utilized for power plant cooling water, for
43 washing mirrors, or for other needs. The greatest need for water would occur if technologies
44 employing wet cooling, such as parabolic trough or power tower facilities, were developed at the
45 site; the associated impacts would ultimately depend on the water source used (including
46 groundwater from aquifers at various depths). Obtaining cooling water from groundwater or

1 perennial surface water features in the region could affect water levels in surface water features
2 outside of the SEZ and area of indirect effects, (Section 8.1.9.2.2) and, as a consequence,
3 potentially reduce habitat size, connectivity, and create more adverse environmental conditions
4 for aquatic organisms in those habitats. Additional details regarding the volume of water required
5 and the types of organisms present in potentially affected water bodies would be required in
6 order to further evaluate the potential for impacts from water withdrawals.
7
8

9 ***11.4.11.4.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

10
11 The implementation of required programmatic design features presented in Appendix A,
12 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects on aquatic biota and
13 aquatic habitats from development and operation of solar energy facilities. While some SEZ-
14 specific design features are best established when specific project details are being considered,
15 the following design feature can be identified at this time
16

- 17 • Appropriate engineering controls should be implemented to minimize the
18 amount of contaminants and sediment entering Coyote Wash and the unnamed
19 washes and dry lakes within the SEZ.
20

21 If this SEZ-specific design feature is implemented in addition to programmatic design
22 features and if the utilization of water from groundwater or surface water sources is adequately
23 controlled to maintain sufficient water levels in aquatic habitats, the potential impacts on aquatic
24 biota and habitats from solar energy development at the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ would be
25 negligible.
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1 **11.4.12 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Rare Species)**
2

3 This section addresses special status species that are known to occur, or for which
4 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Dry Lake
5 Valley North SEZ. Special status species include the following types of species⁴:
6

- 7 • Species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA;
- 8
- 9 • Species that are proposed for listing, are under review, or are candidates for
10 listing under the ESA;
- 11
- 12 • Species that are listed by the BLM as sensitive;
- 13
- 14 • Species that are listed by the State of Nevada⁵; and
- 15
- 16 • Species that have been ranked by the State of Nevada as S1 or S2 or species of
17 concern by the State of Nevada or the USFWS, hereafter referred to as “rare”
18 species.
19

20 Special status species known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the Dry Lake Valley
21 North SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined from natural heritage records available
22 through NatureServe Explorer (NatureServe 2010), information provided by the NNHP
23 (NDCNR 2004, 2009a,b; Miskow 2009), SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007), and the
24 USFWS Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS) (USFWS 2010a). Information
25 reviewed consisted of county-level occurrences as determined from NatureServe, element
26 occurrences provided by the NNHP, as well as modeled land cover types and predicted suitable
27 habitats for the species within the 50-mi (80-km) region as determined from SWReGAP. The
28 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region intersects Lincoln and Nye Counties, Nevada, as well as Beaver, Iron,
29 and Washington Counties, Utah; however, the affected area around the SEZ occurs entirely
30 within Lincoln County, Nevada. See Appendix M for additional information on the approach
31 used to identify species that could be affected by development within the SEZ.
32

33
34 **11.4.12.1 Affected Environment**
35

36 The affected area considered in the assessment included the areas of direct and indirect
37 effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified
38 during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur). For the Dry
39 Lake Valley North SEZ, the area of direct effects included the SEZ and the portion of the road
40 corridor where ground-disturbing activities are assumed to occur. Due to the proximity of

⁴ See Section 4.6.4 for definitions of these species categories. Note that some of the categories of species included here do not fit BLM’s definition of special status species as defined in BLM Manual 6840 (BLM 2008d). These species are included here to ensure broad consideration of species that may be most vulnerable to impacts.

⁵ State-listed species for the state of Nevada are those protected under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants).

1 existing infrastructure, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside of
2 the SEZ are not assessed, assuming that the existing transmission infrastructure might be used to
3 connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-specific analysis
4 would be conducted for new transmission construction or line upgrades (see Section 11.4.1.2 for
5 development assumptions for this SEZ). The area of indirect effects was defined as the area
6 within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and portions of the access road corridor where ground-
7 disturbing activities would not occur but that could be indirectly affected by activities in the area
8 of direct effects. Indirect effects considered in the assessment included effects from surface
9 runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and accidental spills from the SEZ, but did not include ground-
10 disturbing activities. The potential magnitude of indirect effects would decrease with increasing
11 distance from the SEZ. This area of indirect effects was identified on the basis of professional
12 judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be
13 subject to indirect effects. The affected area includes both the direct and indirect effects areas.
14

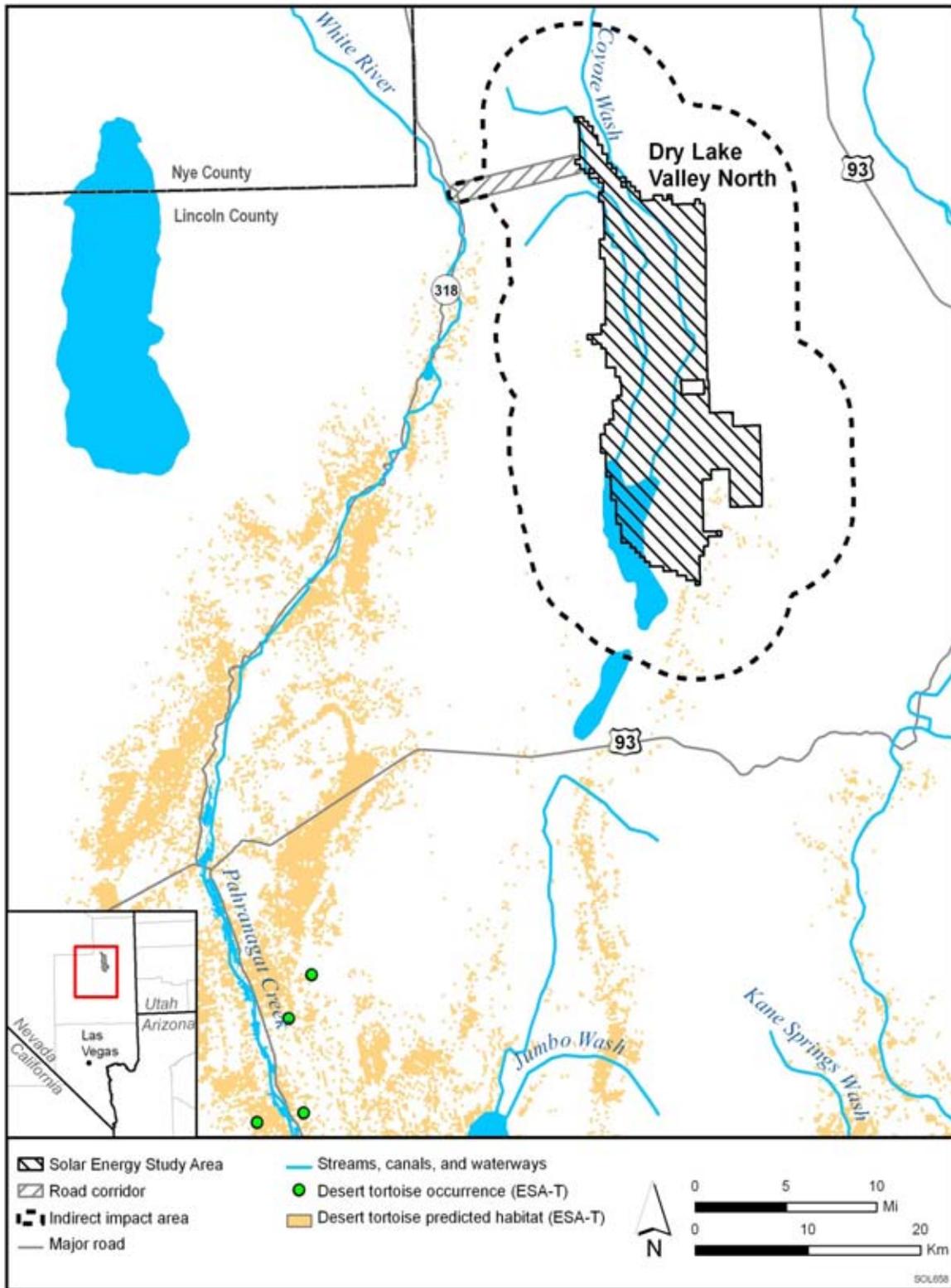
15 The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is intermountain basin mixed
16 desert scrub (see Section 11.4.10). Potentially unique habitats in the affected area in which
17 special status species may reside include cliffs and rock outcrops, pinyon-juniper woodlands,
18 and playa habitats. Aquatic habitats that occur in the affected area include Coyote Wash and
19 other small ephemeral streams that drain into an unnamed dry lake, approximately 8,000 acres
20 (32 km²) in size, in the southwest portion of the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects. The
21 assumed access road corridor for the SEZ is also within 1 mi (1.6 km) east of the White River
22 (Figure 11.4.12.1-1).
23

24 All special status species known to occur within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
25 region (i.e., within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ) are listed, with their status, nearest
26 recorded occurrence, and habitats, in Appendix J. Of these species, 22 could be affected by solar
27 energy development on the SEZ, based on recorded occurrences or the presence of potentially
28 suitable habitat in the area. These species, their status, and their habitats are presented in
29 Table 11.4.12.1-1. For many of the species listed in the table, their predicted potential occurrence
30 in the affected area is based only on a general correspondence between mapped SWReGAP land
31 cover types and descriptions of species habitat preferences. This overall approach to identifying
32 species in the affected area probably overestimates the number of species that actually occur in
33 the affected area. For many of the species identified as having potentially suitable habitat in the
34 affected area, the nearest known occurrence is more than 20 mi (32 km) from the SEZ.
35

36 Based on NNHP records and information provided by the USFWS, three special status
37 species are known to occur within the affected area of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ: Blaine
38 fishhook cactus, Eastwood milkweed, and Desert Valley kangaroo mouse. There are no
39 groundwater-dependent species in the vicinity of the SEZ based upon NNHP records, comments
40 provided by the USFWS (Stout 2009), and the evaluation of groundwater resources in the Dry
41 Lake Valley North SEZ region (Section 11.4.9).
42
43

44 ***11.4.12.1.1 Species Listed under the ESA That Could Occur in the Affected Area*** 45

46 In its scoping comments on the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, the USFWS did
47 not express concern for impacts of project development within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ



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FIGURE 11.4.12.1-1 Known or Potential Occurrences of Species Listed as Endangered or Threatened under the ESA in the Affected Area of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (Sources: Miskow 2009; USFWS 2010a; USGS 2007)

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Special Status Species That Could Be Affected by Solar Energy Development on the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
<i>Plants</i>							
Blaine fishhook cactusⁱ	<i>Sclerocactus blaneii</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S1	Endemic to southeastern Nevada and southwestern Utah on alkaline substrates and volcanic gravels in valley bottoms. Elevation ranges between 5,100 and 5,300 ft. ^j There are only three known occurrences of this species. One of these occurrences is located in the Dry Lake Valley. About 20,150 acres ^k of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (15.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0 acres	3,875 acres of potentially suitable habitat (19.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Large overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to playa habitat could reduce impacts. In addition, pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects; translocation of individuals from the area of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
<i>Plants (Cont.)</i>							
Eastwood milkweed	<i>Asclepias eastwoodiana</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada on public and private lands in Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, and Nye Counties in open areas on a wide variety of basic (pH usually >8) soils, including calcareous clay knolls, sand, carbonate, or basaltic gravels, or shale outcrops, generally barren and lacking competition. Frequently in small washes or other moisture-accumulating microsites at elevations between 4,700 and 7,100 ft. Known to occur on the SEZ. About 413,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	10,250 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	23,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects; translocation of individuals from the area of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. Note that these same potential mitigations apply to all special status plants.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Long-calyx milkvetch	<i>Astragalus oophorus</i> var. <i>lonchocalyx</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Regionally endemic to the Great Basin in western Utah and eastern Nevada in pinyon-juniper woodlands, sagebrush, and mixed shrub communities at elevations between 5,800 and 7,500 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 8 mi ¹ east of the SEZ. About 4,351,850 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	63,550 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	40 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	228,650 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. See Eastwood milkweed for a list of other potential mitigations.
Needle Mountains milkvetch	<i>Astragalus eurylobus</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Gravel washes and sandy soils in alkaline desert and arid grasslands at elevations between 4,250 and 6,250 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi southeast of the SEZ. About 39,650 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (9.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0 acres	4,250 acres of potentially suitable habitat (10.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to playa habitat could reduce impacts. In addition, see the Eastwood milkweed for a list of other potential mitigations.
Nevada willowherb	<i>Epilobium nevadense</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Pinyon-juniper woodlands and oak/mountain mahogany communities, on talus slopes and rocky limestone outcrops. Elevation ranges between 5,000 and 8,800 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 20 mi south of the SEZ. About 1,578,650 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	19,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Pioche blazingstar	<i>Mentzelia argillicola</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Endemic to Nevada on dry, soft, silty clay soils on knolls and slopes with sparse vegetation consisting mainly of sagebrush. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Patterson Wash, approximately 12 mi east of the SEZ. About 2,869,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	73,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	46 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	228,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (8.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. See Eastwood milkweed for a list of other potential mitigation.
Rock purpusia	<i>Ivesia arizonica</i> var. <i>saxosa</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Endemic to southern Nevada in crevices of cliffs and boulders on volcanic substrates in pinyon-juniper communities at elevations between 4,900 and 6,900 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi south of the SEZ. About 1,525,250 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	19,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Tiehm blazingstar	<i>Mentzelia tiehmii</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	Endemic to Nevada on hilltops of white soil, sparsely vegetated white calcareous knolls and bluffs with scattered perennials. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the White River, approximately 7 mi west of the SEZ. About 2,326,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	73,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	40 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	169,350 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. See Eastwood milkweed for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
White River cat's-eye	<i>Cryptantha welshii</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Endemic to southern Nevada on dry, open, sparsely vegetated outcrops and carbonate substrates at elevations between 4,500 and 6,600 ft. Nearest recorded occurrences are 12 mi east of the SEZ. About 33,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	385 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Reptiles							
Desert tortoise	<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	ESA-T; NV-P; NV-S2	Mojave and Sonoran Deserts in desert creosote bush communities on firm soils for digging burrows, and often along riverbanks, washes, canyon bottoms, creosote flats, and desert oases. Nearest recorded occurrence is 30 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 227,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	1,550 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Birds							
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Winter resident in grasslands, sagebrush and saltbrush habitats, as well as the periphery of pinyon-juniper woodlands. Nests in tall trees or on rock outcrops along cliff faces. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 2,071,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	6,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	25 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	148,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Birds (Cont.)							
Prairie falcon	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	BLM-S	Year-round resident in open habitats in mountainous areas, steppe, grasslands, or cultivated areas. Typically nests in well-sheltered ledges of rocky cliffs and outcrops. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 1,690,150 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	67,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (4.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	26 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	139,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat (8.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Swainson's hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S2	Summer breeding resident in the SEZ region in savannas, open pine-oak woodlands, grasslands, and cultivated lands. Nests in solitary trees, bushes, or small groves. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 2,114,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	4 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	43,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Birds (Cont.)							
Western burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia hypugaea</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Summer breeding resident in open grasslands and prairies, as well as disturbed sites such as golf courses, cemeteries, and airports. Nests in burrows constructed by mammals (especially prairie dogs and badgers). Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 3,159,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	73,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	46 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	234,250 acres of potentially suitable habitat (7.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact on foraging and nesting habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied burrows in the area of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Birds (Cont.)							
Western snowy plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus</i>	BLM-S; NV-P	Summer breeding resident on alkali flats around reservoirs and sandy shorelines. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Adams-McGill Reservoir, approximately 23 mi northwest of the SEZ. About 66,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	6,950 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (10.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0 acres	8,150 acres of potentially suitable habitat (12.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Large overall impact on foraging and nesting habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to playa habitats and other occupied habitats in the area of direct effects (particularly associated with the playa habitat in the southern portion of the SEZ) or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals							
Desert Valley kangaroo mouse	<i>Microdipodops megacephalus albiventer</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to central Nevada in desert areas at playa margins and in dune habitats. Known to occur on the SEZ in association with the dry lake along the southwestern portion of the SEZ. About 1,257,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	64,750 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (5.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	17 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	109,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat (8.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to playa habitats within the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the areas of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Fringed myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in a wide range of habitats including lowland riparian, desert shrub, pinyon-juniper, and sagebrush habitats. Roosts in buildings and caves. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 4,645,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	73,300 of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	42 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	221,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Nelson's bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis nelsoni</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Open, steep rocky terrain in mountainous habitats of the eastern Mojave and Sonoran Deserts. Rarely uses desert lowlands, but may use them as corridors for travel between mountain ranges. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 1,771,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	700 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	13 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	65,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to habitats within the SEZ and access road corridor could further reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Pahranagat Valley montane vole	<i>Microtus montanus fucosus</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to Lincoln County, Nevada, where it is restricted to springs in the Pahranagat Valley. Within that area, isolated populations utilize mesic montane and desert riparian patches. Nearest recorded occurrence is from Pahranagat Creek, approximately 27 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 23,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	900 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0 acres	300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to plays within the SEZ could reduce impacts. In addition, pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the areas of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Pygmy rabbit	<i>Brachylagus idahoensis</i>	BLM-S; NV-P	Sagebrush-shrubland habitats throughout the SEZ region. Prefers loose soils to dig burrows. Nearest recorded occurrence is from BLM-administered lands approximately 20 mi northwest of the SEZ. About 1,325,950 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	2,550 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	20 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	82,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the areas of direct effect; translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Spotted bat	<i>Euderma maculatum</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in forests and shrubland habitats. Uses caves and rock crevices for day roosting and winter hibernation. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the vicinity of Panaca, Nevada, approximately 13 mi east of the SEZ. About 3,952,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	66,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	37 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	174,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western small-footed myotis	<i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in a variety of woodlands and riparian habitats at elevations below 9,000 ft. Roosts in caves, buildings, mines, and crevices of cliff faces. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 5,016,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	76,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	46 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	257,375 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

Footnotes on next page.

TABLE 11.4.12.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^a BLM-S = listed as a sensitive species by the BLM; ESA-E = listed as endangered under the ESA; ESA-T = listed as threatened under the ESA; ESA-UR = under review for listing under the ESA; FWS-SC = USFWS species of concern; NV-P = protected in the state of Nevada under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants); NV-S1 = ranked as S1 in the state of Nevada; NV-S2 = ranked as S2 in the state of Nevada.
- ^b For plant species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP land cover types. For terrestrial vertebrate species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^c Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. Impacts of transmission line construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this evaluation due to the proximity of existing infrastructure to the SEZ.
- ^d Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within a 5-mi (8-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide road corridor from the SEZ to the nearest state highway. Direct impacts within this area were determined from the proportion of potentially suitable habitat within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide road corridor.
- ^f Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and the portions of the road and transmission corridors where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from project developments. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. Indirect effects on groundwater-dependent species were considered outside these defined areas.
- ^g Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^h Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ⁱ Species in bold text have been recorded or have designated critical habitat within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary.
- ^j To convert ft to m, multiply by 0.3048.
- ^k To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.
- ^l To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

1 on any species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA (Stout 2009). However, the
2 desert tortoise, listed as threatened under the ESA, may occur in the affected area. This species
3 is discussed below, and information on its habitat is presented in Table 11.4.12.1-1. Additional
4 basic information on life history, habitat needs, and threats to populations of the desert tortoise
5 is provided in Appendix J.
6

7 The Mojave population of the desert tortoise is listed as threatened under the ESA and is
8 known to occur in the SEZ region, although the USFWS determined that the species is not likely
9 to occur on the SEZ because of lack of suitable habitat (Stout 2009). According to NNHP
10 records, the desert tortoise occurs about 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ, and according to
11 the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 1,500 acres (6 km²) of potentially
12 suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of indirect effects and 227,000 acres (919 km²)
13 occurs in the SEZ region as a whole; no suitable habitat occurs on the SEZ itself or assumed
14 access road corridor. The USGS desert tortoise model (Nussear et al. 2009) identifies the SEZ
15 affected area as having low habitat suitability for desert tortoise (modeled suitability value
16 ≤ 0.3 out of 1.0). The nearest potentially suitable habitat according to the USGS model is along
17 Pahrnagat Creek, approximately 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ, where the modeled
18 suitability value is greater than or equal to 0.8 (out of 1.0). Designated critical habitat for this
19 species does not occur in the SEZ affected area.
20

21 ***11.4.12.1.2 BLM-Designated Sensitive Species*** 22

23 A total of 21 BLM-designated sensitive species may occur in the affected area of the
24 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ or may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ
25 (Table 11.4.12.1-1). These BLM-designated sensitive species include the following: (1) plants—
26 Blaine fishhook cactus, Eastwood milkweed, long-calyx milkvetch, Needle Mountains
27 milkvetch, Nevada willowherb, Pioche blazingstar, rock purpusia, Tiehm blazingstar, and White
28 River cat's-eye; (2) birds—ferruginous hawk, prairie falcon, Swainson's hawk, western
29 burrowing owl, and western snowy plover; and (3) mammals—Desert Valley kangaroo mouse,
30 fringed myotis, Nelson's bighorn sheep, Pahrnagat Valley montane vole, pygmy rabbit, spotted
31 bat, and western small-footed myotis. Of the BLM-designated sensitive species with potentially
32 suitable habitat in the affected area, only the Blaine fishhook cactus, Eastwood milkweed, and
33 Desert Valley kangaroo mouse have been recorded within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary.
34 Habitats in which BLM-designated sensitive species are found, the amount of potentially suitable
35 habitat in the affected area, and known locations of the species relative to the SEZ are presented
36 in Table 11.4.12.1-1. These species as related to the SEZ are described in the remainder of this
37 section. Additional life history information for these species is provided in Appendix J.
38
39

40 **Blaine Fishhook Cactus** 41

42 The Blaine fishhook cactus is a small cactus endemic to southeastern Nevada and
43 southwestern Utah, where it occurs on alkaline substrates and volcanic gravels in valley bottoms.
44 Only three occurrences of this species are currently known. One of these occurrences is in the
45

1 Dry Lake Valley (Stout 2009). Potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs on the Dry
2 Lake Valley North SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

5 **Eastwood Milkweed**

7 The Eastwood milkweed is a perennial forb endemic to Nevada from public and private
8 lands in Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, and Nye Counties. It occurs in open areas on a wide variety
9 of basic (pH usually >8) soils, including calcareous clay knolls, sand, carbonate or basaltic
10 gravels, washes, or shale outcrops at elevations between 4,700 and 7,100 ft (1,430 and 2,150 m).
11 The species is known to occur on the SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs on
12 the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

15 **Long-Calyx Milkvetch**

17 The long-calyx milkvetch is a perennial forb regionally endemic to the Great Basin in
18 southwestern Utah and eastern Nevada. It occurs in pinyon-juniper woodlands, sagebrush, and
19 mixed shrub communities at elevations between 5,800 and 7,500 ft (1,760 and 2,290 m). The
20 species is known to occur 8 mi (13 km) east of the SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat for this
21 species occurs on the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ and in other portions of the affected area
22 (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

25 **Needle Mountains Milkvetch**

27 The Needle Mountains milkvetch is a perennial forb that occurs on gravel washes and
28 sandy soils in alkaline desert and arid grasslands at elevations between 4,250 and 6,250 ft
29 (1,295 and 1,900 m). The species is known to occur about 15 mi (24 km) southeast of the SEZ.
30 Potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs on the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ and in
31 other portions of the affected area (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

34 **Nevada Willowherb**

36 The Nevada willowherb is a perennial forb endemic to eastern Nevada and western Utah.
37 It occurs in pinyon-juniper woodlands and oak/mountain mahogany communities and on talus
38 slopes and rocky limestone outcrops at elevations between 5,000 and 8,800 ft (1,525 and
39 2,680 m). The species occurs about 20 mi (32 km) south of the SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat
40 for this species does not occur on the SEZ but may occur in portions of the area of indirect
41 effects (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

44 **Pioche Blazingstar**

46 The Pioche blazingstar is a perennial forb endemic to Nevada. It occurs on dry, soft,
47 silty clay soils on knolls and slopes with sparse vegetation consisting mainly of sagebrush

1 (*Artemisia* spp.). Nearest known occurrences are from Patterson Wash, approximately 12 mi
2 (19 km) east of the SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs on the Dry Lake
3 Valley North SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.4.12.1-1).
4
5

6 **Rock Purpusia**

7

8 The rock purpusia is a perennial forb endemic to southern Nevada. It inhabits crevices of
9 cliffs and boulders on volcanic substrates in pinyon-juniper communities at elevations between
10 4,900 and 6,900 ft (1,490 and 2,100 m). The species occurs about 15 mi (24 km) south of the
11 SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ but may occur in
12 portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.4.12.1-1).
13
14

15 **Tiehm Blazingstar**

16

17 The Tiehm blazingstar is a perennial forb endemic to Nevada. It occurs on hilltops,
18 sparsely vegetated white calcareous knolls, and bluffs with other scattered perennial plant
19 species. Nearest recorded occurrences are from the White River, approximately 7 mi (11 km)
20 west of the SEZ. Potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs on the Dry Lake Valley
21 North SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.4.12.1-1).
22
23

24 **White River Cat's-Eye**

25

26 The White River cat's-eye is a perennial forb endemic to southern Nevada. It occurs on
27 dry, open, sparsely vegetated outcrops on carbonate substrates at elevations between 4,500 and
28 6,600 ft (1,370 and 2,010 m). Nearest recorded occurrences are 12 mi (19 km) east of the SEZ.
29 Potentially suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ but may occur in portions
30 of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.4.12.1-1).
31
32

33 **Ferruginous Hawk**

34

35 The ferruginous hawk occurs as a winter resident in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
36 affected area. The species inhabits open grasslands, sagebrush flats, desert scrub, and the
37 edges of pinyon-juniper woodlands. This species occurs in Lincoln County, Nevada, and
38 potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected
39 area (Table 11.4.12.1-1).
40
41

42 **Prairie Falcon**

43

44 The prairie falcon occurs throughout the western United States. According to the
45 SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the prairie falcon, it is a year-round resident throughout
46 the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ region. The species occurs in open habitats in mountainous

1 areas, sagebrush-steppe, grasslands, or cultivated areas. Nests are typically constructed in well-
2 sheltered ledges of rocky cliffs and outcrops. This species occurs in Lincoln County, Nevada,
3 and potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected
4 area (Table 11.4.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types,
5 potentially suitable nesting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or
6 access road corridor; however, approximately 385 acres (1.5 km²) of this habitat that may be
7 potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
8
9

10 **Swainson's Hawk**

11
12 The Swainson's hawk occurs throughout the southwestern United States. According to
13 the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the Swainson's hawk, only summer breeding habitat
14 occurs in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ region. This species inhabits desert, savanna, open
15 pine-oak woodland, grassland, and cultivated habitats. Nests are typically constructed in solitary
16 trees, bushes, or small groves. This species occurs in Lincoln County, Nevada, and potentially
17 suitable foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area
18 (Table 11.4.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, potentially
19 suitable nesting habitat (woodlands) does not occur on the SEZ or access road corridor; however,
20 approximately 19,300 acres (78 km²) of woodland habitat that may be potentially suitable
21 nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
22
23

24 **Western Burrowing Owl**

25
26 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the western burrowing owl, the
27 species is a summer (breeding) resident of open, dry grasslands and desert habitats in the Dry
28 Lake Valley North SEZ region. The species occurs locally in open areas with sparse vegetation,
29 where it forages in grasslands, shrublands, and open disturbed areas and nests in burrows
30 typically constructed by mammals. The species occurs in Lincoln County, Nevada, and
31 potentially suitable summer breeding habitat is expected to occur in the SEZ and in other
32 portions of the affected area (Table 11.4.12.1-1). The availability of nest sites (burrows) within
33 the affected area has not been determined, but shrubland habitat that may be suitable for either
34 foraging or nesting occurs throughout the affected area.
35
36

37 **Western Snowy Plover**

38
39 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, the western snowy plover is
40 a summer (breeding) resident throughout the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ region. This
41 species breeds on alkali flats around reservoirs and sandy shorelines. The species is known
42 to occur at Adams-McGill Reservoir, approximately 23 mi (37 km) northwest of the SEZ
43 (Table 11.4.12.1-1). Suitable breeding habitat is expected to occur on the SEZ and in portions
44 of the affected area, particularly associated with the playa habitat along the southwestern border
45 of the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects.
46

1 **Desert Valley Kangaroo Mouse**

2
3 The Desert Valley kangaroo mouse is endemic to central Nevada, where it inhabits desert
4 areas at playa margins and in dune habitats. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability
5 model for the kangaroo mouse, potentially suitable year-round habitat occurs within the SEZ and
6 throughout the affected area, particularly associated with the periphery of the playa habitat in the
7 southwestern portion of the SEZ. This species occurs along the playa habitat in the southwest
8 portion of the SEZ (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

9
10
11 **Fringed Myotis**

12
13 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ region,
14 where it occurs in a variety of habitats including riparian, shrubland, sagebrush, and pinyon-
15 juniper woodlands. The species roosts in buildings and caves. It is known to occur in Lincoln
16 County, Nevada, and the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the species indicates that
17 potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected
18 area (Table 11.4.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types,
19 potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or
20 access road corridor; however, approximately 385 acres (1.5 km²) of this potentially suitable
21 roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.

22
23
24 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

25
26 The Nelson's bighorn sheep is a subspecies of bighorn sheep known to occur in the
27 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ region. This species occurs in desert mountain ranges in Arizona,
28 California, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah. The Nelson's bighorn sheep uses primarily montane
29 shrubland, forest, and grassland habitats and may utilize desert valleys as corridors for travel
30 between range habitats. It occurs in Lincoln County, Nevada, and the SWReGAP habitat
31 suitability model for the species indicates that potentially suitable habitat occurs on the SEZ
32 and in portions of the affected area (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

33
34
35 **Pahranagat Valley Montane Vole**

36
37 The Pahranagat Valley montane vole is endemic to Lincoln County, Nevada, where it is
38 restricted to springs in the Pahranagat Valley. Within that area, isolated populations utilize mesic
39 montane and desert riparian patches of habitat. The species occurs along Pahranagat Creek,
40 approximately 27 mi (43 km) southwest of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat
41 suitability model, potentially suitable year-round habitat for this species occurs on the SEZ and
42 in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

1 **Pygmy Rabbit**

2
3 The pygmy rabbit is widespread in western North America where available sagebrush-
4 shrubland habitats are present. The species primarily occurs in areas with loose soils for digging
5 burrows. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable year-round
6 habitat for this species occurs throughout the SEZ region. This species occurs about 20 mi
7 (32 km) north of the SEZ (Table 11.4.12.1-1).
8

9
10 **Spotted Bat**

11
12 The spotted bat is a year-round resident in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ region, where
13 it occurs in a variety of forested and shrubland habitats. It roosts in caves and rock crevices. The
14 species occurs in the vicinity of Panaca, Nevada, approximately 13 mi (21 km) east of the SEZ.
15 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable foraging habitat may
16 occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.4.12.1-1). On the basis of
17 an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs
18 and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or access road corridor; however, approximately
19 385 acres (1.5 km²) of this potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
20 effects.
21

22
23 **Western Small-Footed Bat**

24
25 The western small-footed bat is widely distributed throughout the western United States.
26 This species is a year-round resident in southern Nevada, where it occupies a wide variety of
27 desert and nondesert habitats including cliffs and rock outcrops, grasslands, shrubland, and
28 mixed woodlands. The species roosts in caves, mines, tunnels, beneath boulders or loose bark,
29 buildings, and other man-made structures. The species occurs in Lincoln County, Nevada, and
30 according to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable foraging habitat may
31 occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.4.12.1-1). On the basis of
32 an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs
33 and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or access road corridor; however, approximately
34 385 acres (1.5 km²) of this potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
35 effects.
36
37
38

39 ***11.4.12.1.3 State-Listed Species***

40
41 There are eight species listed by the State of Nevada that may occur in the Dry Lake
42 Valley North SEZ affected area or may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ
43 (Table 11.4.12.1-1). These state-listed species include the following: (1) plant—Blaine fishhook
44 cactus; (2) reptile—desert tortoise; (3) bird—Swainson’s hawk; and (4) mammals—Desert
45 Valley kangaroo mouse, fringed myotis, Pahrangat Valley montane vole, pygmy rabbit, and
46 spotted bat. All these species are protected in the state of Nevada under NRS 501.110 (animals)

1 or NRS 527 (plants). Each of these species has been previously discussed because of its known
2 status under the ESA (Section 11.4.12.1.1) or the BLM (Section 11.4.12.1.3). Additional life
3 history information for these species is provided in Appendix J.
4

6 **11.4.12.1.4 Rare Species**

7
8 A total of 20 rare species (i.e., state rank of S1 or S2 in the state of Nevada or a species of
9 concern by the State of Nevada or USFWS) may be affected by solar energy development on the
10 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (Table 11.4.12.1-1). All these species have already been discussed
11 as ESA-listed species (Section 11.4.12.1.1) or BLM-designated sensitive (Section 11.4.12.1.2).
12 The habitats and known occurrences of these species relative to the SEZ are shown in
13 Table 11.4.12.1-1. Additional life history information is provided in Appendix J.
14

16 **11.4.12.2 Impacts**

17
18 The potential for impacts on special status species from utility-scale solar energy
19 development within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is presented in this section. The
20 types of impacts that special status species could incur from construction and operation of utility-
21 scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.4.
22

23 The assessment of impacts on special status species is based on available information
24 on the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.4.12.1 following the
25 analysis approach described in Appendix M. It is assumed that, prior to development, surveys
26 would be conducted to determine the presence of special status species and their habitats in and
27 near areas where ground-disturbing activities would occur. Additional NEPA assessments,
28 ESA consultations, and coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to
29 address project-specific impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could
30 result in additional required actions to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts on special status
31 species (see Section 11.4.12.3).
32

33 Solar energy development within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ could affect a variety
34 of habitats (see Sections 11.4.9 and 11.4.10). These impacts on habitats could in turn affect
35 special status species dependent on those habitats. Based on NNHP records, three special status
36 species are known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ boundary:
37 Blaine fishhook cactus, Eastwood milkweed, and Desert Valley kangaroo mouse. These species
38 are listed in bold in Table 11.4.12.1-1. Other special status species may occur on the SEZ or
39 within the affected area based on the presence of potentially suitable habitat. As discussed in
40 Section 11.4.12.1, this approach to identifying the species that could occur in the affected area
41 probably overestimates the number of species that actually occur in the affected area and may
42 therefore overestimate impacts on some special status species.
43

44 Impacts on special status species could occur during all phases of development
45 (construction, operation, and decommissioning and reclamation) of a utility-scale solar energy
46 project within the SEZ. Construction and operation activities could result in short- or long-term

1 impacts on individuals and their habitats, especially if these activities are sited in areas where
2 special status species are known to or could occur. As presented in Section 11.4.1.2, a 5-mi
3 (8-km) long access road corridor is assumed to be needed to serve solar facilities within this
4 SEZ. Impacts of transmission line construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this
5 evaluation due to the proximity of existing transmission infrastructure to the SEZ.
6

7 Direct impacts would result from habitat destruction or modification. It is assumed
8 that direct impacts would be incurred only within the SEZ and the access road construction area
9 where ground-disturbing activities are expected to occur. Indirect impacts could result from
10 depletions of groundwater resources, surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas,
11 fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental spills, harassment, and lighting. No
12 ground-disturbing activities associated with project development are anticipated to occur within
13 the area of indirect effects. Decommissioning of facilities and reclamation of disturbed areas
14 after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on individuals and habitats
15 adjacent to project areas, but long-term benefits would accrue if original land contours and native
16 plant communities were restored in previously disturbed areas.
17

18 The successful implementation of programmatic design features (discussed in
19 Appendix A) would reduce direct impacts on some special status species, especially those that
20 depend on habitat types that can be easily avoided (e.g., dunes and playas). Indirect impacts on
21 special status species could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic
22 design features, especially those engineering controls that would reduce groundwater
23 consumption, runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust.
24
25

26 ***11.4.12.2.1 Impacts on Species Listed under the ESA***

27
28
29 Impacts on the desert tortoise, the only ESA-listed species that may occur in the Dry
30 Lake Valley North SEZ affected area or that may be affected by solar energy development on
31 the SEZ, are discussed below. This assessment is based on the best information available, but
32 discussions of potential impacts and mitigation options should be held in consultation with the
33 USFWS.
34

35 The Mojave population of the desert tortoise is listed as threatened under the ESA and is
36 known to occur about 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ (Figure 11.4.12.1-1). According to
37 the USFWS (Stout 2009), desert tortoise populations are not likely to occur in the area of direct
38 effects for the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. The USGS desert tortoise habitat suitability model
39 (Nussear et al. 2009) indicates low habitat suitability in the affected area (modeled suitability
40 value ≤ 0.3 out of 1.0 throughout the affected area). However, approximately 1,550 acres (6 km²)
41 of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs outside of the SEZ in the area of indirect
42 effects (Table 11.4.12.1-1). The overall impact on the desert tortoise from construction,
43 operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake
44 Valley North SEZ is considered small, because there is no potentially suitable habitat for this
45 species in the area of direct effects and design features are expected to reduce indirect effects to
46 negligible levels.
47

1 Consultation with the UFWs should be conducted to address the potential for direct and
2 indirect impacts and to determine the need for additional mitigation requirements, which may
3 include development of a survey protocol, translocation actions, and compensatory mitigation.
4

6 ***11.4.12.2.2 Impacts on BLM-Designated Sensitive Species***

7
8 BLM-designated sensitive species that may be affected by solar energy development
9 on the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ and are not previously discussed as ESA-listed in
10 Section 11.4.12.2.1 are discussed below.
11

12 13 **Blaine Fishhook Cactus**

14
15 The Blaine fishhook cactus is known to occur in the Dry Lake Valley. Approximately
16 3,000 acres (12 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by
17 construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents about 15% of
18 potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 3,875 acres (16 km²) of potentially suitable
19 habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 19% of the potentially
20 suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).
21

22 The overall impact on the Blaine fishhook cactus from construction, operation, and
23 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
24 is considered large, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the
25 area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 10% of potentially suitable habitat in the
26 SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
27 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
28

29 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to all playa habitat in the area of direct effects may
30 be sufficient to reduce impacts on the Blaine fishhook cactus to small or negligible levels, but
31 this would restrict development on a large portion of the SEZ. For this species and other special
32 status plants, impacts could be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or
33 minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats on the SEZ. If avoidance or minimization are not
34 feasible options, plants could be translocated from areas of direct effects to protected areas that
35 would not be affected directly or indirectly by future development. Alternatively, or in
36 combination with translocation, a compensatory plan could be developed and implemented to
37 mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. The plan could involve the protection and
38 enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to
39 development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or more of these options could
40 be designed to completely offset the impacts of development.
41

42 43 **Eastwood Milkweed**

44
45 The Eastwood milkweed is known to occur in the Dry Lake Valley. Approximately
46 10,250 acres (41 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of

1 potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected by construction and
2 operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents about 3% of potentially
3 suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 23,900 acres (97 km²) of potentially suitable habitat
4 occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 6% of the potentially suitable
5 habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

6
7 The overall impact on the Eastwood milkweed from construction, operation, and
8 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
9 is considered moderate, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in
10 the area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10% of potentially
11 suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is
12 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

13
14 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts on
15 the Eastwood milkweed because potentially suitable sagebrush and mixed shrubland habitat is
16 widespread throughout the area of direct effects. Impacts could be reduced by conducting pre-
17 disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats on the SEZ. If
18 avoidance or minimization is not a feasible option, plants could be translocated from areas of
19 direct effects to protected areas that would not be affected directly or indirectly by future
20 development. Alternatively, or in combination with translocation, a compensatory plan could be
21 developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. The plan could
22 involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate
23 for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or more of
24 these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development.

25 26 27 **Long-Calyx Milkvetch**

28
29 The long-calyx milkvetch is not known to occur in the affected area of the Dry Lake
30 Valley North SEZ; however, approximately 63,550 acres (257 km²) of potentially suitable
31 habitat on the SEZ and 40 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor
32 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects
33 area represents about 2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 228,650 acres
34 (925 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
35 about 5% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

36
37 The overall impact on the long-calyx milkvetch from construction, operation, and
38 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is
39 considered moderate, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the
40 area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10% of potentially
41 suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is
42 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

43
44 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to mitigate impacts on the long-calyx
45 milkvetch is not feasible, because potentially suitable shrubland habitat is widespread throughout
46 the area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced with the implementation of

1 programmatic design features and the mitigation options described previously for the Eastwood
2 milkweed. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be
3 determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
4

6 **Needle Mountains Milkvetch**

7
8 The Needle Mountains milkvetch is not known to occur in the affected area of the Dry
9 Lake Valley North SEZ; however, approximately 3,900 acres (16 km²) of potentially suitable
10 habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1).
11 This direct effects area represents about 10% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region.
12 About 4,250 acres (17 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects;
13 this area represents about 11% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region
14 (Table 11.4.12.1-1).
15

16 The overall impact on the Needle Mountains milkvetch from construction, operation, and
17 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is
18 considered large, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of
19 direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10% of potentially suitable
20 habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be
21 sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
22

23 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to playa and arid grassland habitats on the SEZ may
24 be sufficient to reduce impacts on the Needle Mountains milkvetch to small or negligible levels,
25 but this would restrict development on a large portion of the SEZ. In addition, impacts could be
26 reduced with the implementation of programmatic design features and the mitigation options
27 described previously for the Eastwood milkweed. The need for mitigation, other than
28 programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for
29 the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
30

32 **Nevada Willowherb**

33
34 The Nevada willowherb is not known to occur in the affected area of the Dry Lake Valley
35 North SEZ, and potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur in the area of direct
36 effects. However, approximately 19,200 acres (78 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in
37 the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 5% of the potentially suitable habitat in the
38 SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).
39

40 The overall impact on the Nevada willowherb from construction, operation, and
41 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
42 is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
43 direct effects and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design
44 features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
45
46

1 **Pioche Blazingstar**

2
3 The Pioche blazingstar is not known to occur in the affected area of the Dry Lake Valley
4 North SEZ; however, approximately 73,700 acres (298 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the
5 SEZ and 46 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly
6 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents
7 about 3% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 228,300 acres (924 km²) of
8 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 8% of
9 the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

10
11 The overall impact on the Pioche blazingstar from construction, operation, and
12 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is
13 considered moderate, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the
14 area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10% of potentially
15 suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is
16 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

17
18 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to mitigate impacts on the Pioche
19 blazingstar is not feasible, because potentially suitable shrubland habitat is widespread
20 throughout the area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced with the
21 implementation of programmatic design features and the mitigation options described previously
22 for the Eastwood milkweed. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features,
23 should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the
24 SEZ.

25
26
27 **Rock Purpusia**

28
29 The rock purpusia is not known to occur in the affected area of the Dry Lake Valley
30 North SEZ, and potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur in the area of direct
31 effects. However, approximately 19,100 acres (77 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in
32 the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the
33 SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

34
35 The overall impact on the rock purpusia from construction, operation, and
36 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
37 is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
38 direct effects and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design
39 features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

40
41
42 **Tiehm Blazingstar**

43
44 The Tiehm blazingstar is not known to occur in the affected area of the Dry Lake Valley
45 North SEZ; however, approximately 73,200 acres (296 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the
46 SEZ and 40 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly

1 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents
2 about 3% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 169,350 acres (685 km²) of
3 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 7% of
4 the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

5
6 The overall impact on the Tiehm blazingstar from construction, operation, and
7 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is
8 considered moderate, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the
9 area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10% of potentially
10 suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is
11 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

12
13 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to mitigate impacts on the Tiehm
14 blazingstar is not feasible, because potentially suitable shrubland habitat is widespread
15 throughout the area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced with the
16 implementation of programmatic design features and the mitigation options described
17 previously for the Eastwood milkweed. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic
18 design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species
19 and its habitat on the SEZ.

20 21 22 **White River Cat's-Eye**

23
24 The White River cat's-eye is not known to occur in the affected area of the Dry Lake
25 Valley North SEZ, and potentially suitable habitat for the species does not occur in the area of
26 direct effects. However, approximately 385 acres (2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in
27 the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the
28 SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

29
30 The overall impact on the White River cat's-eye from construction, operation, and
31 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
32 is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
33 direct effects and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design
34 features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

35 36 37 **Ferruginous Hawk**

38
39 The ferruginous hawk occurs only as a winter resident in the vicinity of the Dry Lake
40 Valley North SEZ, and potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in the affected
41 area. Approximately 6,300 acres (25 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ
42 and 25 acres (0.1 km²) within the road corridor could be directly affected by construction and
43 operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents 0.3% of potentially suitable
44 habitat in the SEZ region. About 148,900 acres (603 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat
45 occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 7% of the available suitable
46 foraging habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

1 The overall impact on the ferruginous hawk from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is
3 considered small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in
4 the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the
5 SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
6 reduce indirect impacts on this species. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitats
7 (desert shrublands) is not a feasible means of mitigating impacts on this species because
8 potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effects and in other
9 portions of the SEZ region.

12 **Prairie Falcon**

14 The prairie falcon is a year-round resident in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ region,
15 and potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in the affected area. Approximately
16 67,500 acres (273 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and 26 acres (0.1 km²) of
17 potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected by construction and
18 operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents 4% of potentially suitable
19 habitat in the SEZ region. About 139,800 acres (566 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs
20 in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 8% of the potentially suitable habitat in
21 the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1). Most of this area could serve as foraging habitat (open
22 shrublands). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, potentially suitable
23 nesting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or access road corridor;
24 however, approximately 385 acres (1.5 km²) of this habitat that may be potentially suitable
25 nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.

27 The overall impact on the prairie falcon from construction, operation, and
28 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
29 is considered moderate, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this
30 species in the area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10% of
31 potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design
32 features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species. Avoidance of all
33 potentially suitable foraging habitats to mitigate impacts on the prairie falcon is not feasible
34 because potentially suitable shrubland habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effect
35 and in other portions of the SEZ region.

38 **Swainson's Hawk**

40 The Swainson's hawk is considered a summer breeding resident within the Dry Lake
41 Valley North SEZ region, and potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in the
42 affected area. Approximately 7,100 acres (29 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and
43 4 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected
44 by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents 0.3% of
45 potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 43,900 acres (178 km²) of potentially
46 suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2% of the

1 potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1). Most of this area could serve
2 as foraging habitat (open shrublands). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover
3 types, potentially suitable nesting habitat (woodlands) does not occur on the SEZ or access road
4 corridor; however, approximately 19,300 acres (78 km²) of woodland habitat that may be
5 potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
6

7 The overall impact on the Swainson's hawk from construction, operation, and
8 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
9 is considered small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat for
10 this species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging
11 and nesting habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design features is
12 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species. Avoidance of all potentially
13 suitable foraging habitats to mitigate impacts on the Swainson's hawk is not feasible because
14 potentially suitable shrubland habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effect and in
15 other portions of the SEZ region.
16

17 **Western Burrowing Owl**

18
19
20 The western burrowing owl is considered a summer breeding resident within the Dry
21 Lake Valley North SEZ region, and potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in
22 the affected area. Approximately 73,400 acres (297 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on
23 the SEZ and 46 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be
24 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area
25 represents 2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 234,250 acres (948 km²)
26 of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 7%
27 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1). Most of this area could
28 serve as foraging and nesting habitat (shrublands). The abundance of burrows suitable for nesting
29 on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects has not been determined.
30

31 The overall impact on the western burrowing owl from construction, operation, and
32 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is
33 considered moderate, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat for
34 this species in the area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10%
35 of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat in the region. The implementation of
36 programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this
37 species.
38

39 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts
40 on the western burrowing owl, because potentially suitable shrubland habitats are widespread
41 throughout the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
42 Impacts on the western burrowing owl could be reduced by implementing programmatic
43 design features, conducting pre-disturbance surveys, and avoiding or minimizing disturbance
44 to occupied burrows on the SEZ. If avoidance or minimization is not a feasible option, a
45 compensatory plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects. The plan
46 could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to

1 compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one
2 or both of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development. The
3 need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by
4 conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
5
6

7 **Western Snowy Plover**

8

9 The western snowy plover is considered a summer breeding resident within the Dry Lake
10 Valley North SEZ region, and potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in the
11 affected area. Approximately 6,950 acres (28 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ
12 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects
13 area represents 11% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 8,150 acres (33 km²)
14 of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about
15 12% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1). Most of this area
16 could serve as foraging and nesting habitat in and along playa margins. On the basis of an
17 evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, approximately 3,000 acres (12 km²) of playa habitat
18 exists on the SEZ that may be potentially suitable nesting or foraging habitat for this species. An
19 additional 3,900 acres (16 km²) of playa habitat that may be potentially suitable nesting or
20 foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
21

22 The overall impact on the western snowy plover from construction, operation, and
23 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is
24 considered large, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat for this
25 species in the area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 10% of potentially suitable
26 foraging and nesting habitat in the region.
27

28 Impacts on the western snowy plover could be reduced by implementing programmatic
29 design features, conducting pre-disturbance surveys, and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to
30 all playa habitats and other occupied habitats on the SEZ. If avoidance or minimization of playas
31 and all occupied habitats is not a feasible option, a compensatory plan could be developed and
32 implemented to mitigate direct effects. The plan could involve the protection and enhancement
33 of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A
34 comprehensive mitigation strategy using one or both of these options could be designed to
35 completely offset the impacts of development. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic
36 design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and
37 its habitat on the SEZ.
38
39

40 **Desert Valley Kangaroo Mouse**

41

42 The Desert Valley kangaroo mouse is endemic to Nevada and is known to occur on the
43 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Approximately 64,750 acres (262 km²) of potentially suitable
44 habitat on the SEZ and 17 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor
45 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct
46 effects area represents 5% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 109,900 acres

1 (445 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
2 about 9% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

3
4 The overall impact on the Desert Valley kangaroo mouse from construction, operation,
5 and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North
6 SEZ is considered moderate, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in
7 the area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10% of potentially
8 suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features may be
9 sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.

10
11 Despite the apparent widespread availability of potentially suitable habitat in the affected
12 area, the complete avoidance of all playa habitats in the SEZ could reduce impacts on this
13 species. However, this would restrict development on a large portion of the SEZ. Consistent with
14 the mitigation recommendations provided by the USFWS (Stout 2009), pre-disturbance surveys
15 and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects could
16 reduce impacts. If avoidance or minimization is not a feasible option, a compensatory plan could
17 be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. The plan could
18 involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate
19 for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that uses one or both of
20 these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development.

21 22 23 **Fringed Myotis**

24
25 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
26 region. Suitable roosting habitats (caves and buildings) are not expected to occur on the SEZ, but
27 the availability of suitable roosting sites in the area of indirect effects has not been determined.
28 Approximately 73,300 acres (297 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ and
29 42 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the road corridor could be directly
30 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents
31 about 2% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region. About 221,700 acres (897 km²)
32 of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
33 about 5% of the available suitable foraging habitat in the region (Table 11.4.12.1-1). On the
34 basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky
35 cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or access road corridor; however, approximately
36 385 acres (1.5 km²) of this potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
37 effects.

38
39 The overall impact on the fringed myotis from construction, operation, and
40 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is
41 considered moderate, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat for
42 this species in the area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10%
43 of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design
44 features may be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species. However, avoidance of all
45 potentially suitable foraging habitats to mitigate impacts on the fringed myotis is not feasible
46 because potentially suitable shrubland habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effect.

1 **Nelson’s Bighorn Sheep**
2

3 The Nelson’s bighorn sheep is not known to occur in the affected area of the Dry Lake
4 Valley North SEZ. However, approximately 700 acres (3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat
5 within the SEZ and 13 acres (0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could
6 be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area
7 represents less than 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. About 65,000 acres
8 (263 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area
9 represents about 4% of the available suitable foraging habitat in the region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

10
11 The overall impact on the Nelson’s bighorn sheep from construction, operation, and
12 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
13 is considered small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
14 of direct effects represents less than 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
15 implementation of programmatic design features are expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
16 impacts on this species.

17
18 Direct impacts on the Nelson’s bighorn sheep could be reduced by conducting pre-
19 disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats and important
20 movement corridors on the SEZ. If avoidance or minimization is not a feasible option, a
21 compensatory plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied
22 habitats. The plan could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable
23 habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy
24 that uses one or both of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of
25 development. The need for mitigation should first be determined by conducting pre-disturbance
26 surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

27
28
29 **Pahranagat Valley Montane Vole**
30

31 The Pahranagat Valley montane vole is endemic to Lincoln County, Nevada, near the
32 Pahranagat Creek. The species is not known to occur in the affected area of the Dry Lake Valley
33 North SEZ; however, approximately 900 acres (4 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ
34 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects
35 area represents 4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 300 acres (1 km²) of
36 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 1% of
37 the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

38
39 The overall impact on the Pahranagat Valley montane vole from construction, operation,
40 and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North
41 SEZ is considered moderate, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and nesting
42 habitat for this species in the area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less
43 than 10% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic
44 design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible
45 levels.

1 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to all mesic habitats in the SEZ (e.g., playas) could
2 reduce impacts on this species, but this would restrict development on a large portion of the SEZ.
3 In addition, pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats
4 in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. If avoidance or minimization are not feasible
5 options, a compensatory plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on
6 occupied habitats. The plan could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied
7 or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation
8 strategy that uses one or both of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts
9 of development.

12 **Pygmy Rabbit**

14 The pygmy rabbit is considered to be a year-round resident within the Dry Lake Valley
15 North SEZ region, where it is known to occur in sagebrush habitats. Approximately 2,550 acres
16 (10 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and 20 acres (0.1 km²) of potentially
17 suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations
18 (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents about 0.2% of available suitable habitat in
19 the SEZ region. About 82,700 acres (335 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area
20 of potential indirect effects; this area represents about 6% of the available suitable habitat in the
21 SEZ region (Table 11.4.12.1-1).

23 The overall impact on the pygmy rabbit from construction, operation, and
24 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North
25 SEZ is considered small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in
26 the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region.
27 The implementation of programmatic design features may be sufficient to reduce indirect
28 impacts on this species to negligible levels.

30 The avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts
31 on the pygmy rabbit, because potentially suitable sagebrush habitats are widespread throughout
32 the area of direct effects. However, pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing
33 disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. If avoidance
34 or minimization are not feasible options, a compensatory plan could be developed and
35 implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. The plan could involve the
36 protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats
37 lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that uses one or both of these options
38 could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development.

41 **Spotted Bat**

43 The spotted bat is a year-round resident within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ region.
44 Suitable roosting habitats (caves and rock outcrops) are not expected to occur on the SEZ, but
45 the availability of suitable roosting sites in the area of indirect effects has not been determined.
46 Approximately 66,000 acres (267 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ and

1 37 acres (0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected
2 by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents about 2%
3 of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region. About 174,200 acres (705 km²) of
4 potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
5 about 4.4% of the potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region (Table 11.4.12.1-1). On the
6 basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, potentially suitable roosting habitat
7 (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or access road corridor; however,
8 approximately 385 acres (1.5 km²) of this potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the
9 area of indirect effects.

10
11 The overall impact on the spotted bat from construction, operation, and decommissioning
12 of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is considered
13 moderate, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area
14 of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10% of potentially suitable
15 habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design features may be sufficient to
16 reduce indirect impacts on this species. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitats to
17 mitigate impacts on the prairie falcon is not feasible because potentially suitable shrubland
18 habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effect and in other portions of the SEZ region.

21 **Western Small-Footed Bat**

22
23 The western small-footed bat is a year-round resident within the Dry Lake Valley North
24 SEZ region. Suitable roosting habitats (caves, rock outcrops, and buildings) are not expected to
25 occur on the SEZ, but the availability of suitable roosting sites in the area of indirect effects has
26 not been determined. Approximately 76,700 acres (310 km²) of potentially suitable foraging
27 habitat on the SEZ and 46 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor
28 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.4.12.1-1). This direct
29 effects area represents about 2% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region. About
30 257,375 acres (1,041 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect
31 effects; this area represents about 5% of the potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region
32 (Table 11.4.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, potentially
33 suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or access road
34 corridor; however, approximately 385 acres (1.5 km²) of this potentially suitable roosting habitat
35 occurs in the area of indirect effects.

36
37 The overall impact on the western small-footed bat from construction, operation, and
38 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
39 is considered moderate, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this
40 species in the area of direct effects represents greater than or equal to 1% but less than 10% of
41 potentially suitable habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design features
42 may be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species. However, avoidance of all
43 potentially suitable foraging habitats to mitigate impacts on the prairie falcon is not feasible
44 because potentially suitable shrubland habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effect
45 and in other portions of the SEZ region.

1 **11.4.12.2.3 Impacts on State-Listed Species**
2

3 Eight species listed by the State of Nevada may occur in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
4 affected area or may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ (Table 11.4.12.1-1).
5 These state-listed species include the following: (1) plant—Blaine fishhook cactus; (2) reptile—
6 desert tortoise; (3) bird—Swainson’s hawk; and (4) mammals—Desert Valley kangaroo mouse,
7 fringed myotis, Pahranaagat Valley montane vole, pygmy rabbit, and spotted bat. Impacts on each
8 of these species have been previously discussed because of their known or pending status under
9 the ESA (Section 11.4.12.2.1) or their designation by the BLM as a sensitive species
10 (Section 11.4.12.2.2). State-listed species known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the Dry Lake
11 Valley North SEZ include the Blaine fishhook cactus and Desert Valley kangaroo mouse.
12
13

14 **11.4.12.2.4 Impacts on Rare Species**
15

16 A total of 20 rare species (state rank of S1 or S2 in Nevada or a species of concern by
17 the State of Nevada or the USFWS) may be affected by solar energy development on the
18 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. All these species have already been discussed as ESA-listed
19 (Section 11.4.12.2.1) or BLM-designated sensitive (Section 11.4.12.2.2). Rare species that are
20 known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ include the Blaine
21 fishhook cactus, Eastwood milkweed, and Desert Valley kangaroo mouse.
22
23

24 **11.4.12.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
25

26 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A
27 would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects of utility-scale solar energy
28 development on special status species. While some SEZ-specific design features are best
29 established when specific project details are being considered, some design features can be
30 identified at this time, including the following:
31

- 32 • Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the SEZ and access road
33 corridor (i.e., area of direct effects) to determine the presence and abundance
34 of special status species, including those identified in Table 11.4.12.1-1;
35 disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be avoided or
36 minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing impacts to
37 occupied habitats is not possible, translocation of individuals from areas of
38 direct effect, or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats
39 could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy for special status
40 species that used one or more of these options to offset the impacts of
41 development should be developed in coordination with the appropriate federal
42 and state agencies.
43
- 44 • Avoiding or minimizing disturbance of playa habitat on the SEZ could reduce
45 or eliminate impacts on the Blaine fishhook cactus, Needle Mountains

1 milkvetch, western snowy plover, Desert Valley kangaroo mouse, and
2 Pahranaagat Valley montane vole.

- 3
- 4 • Consultation with the USFWS should be conducted to address the potential
5 for impacts (primarily indirect impacts) on the desert tortoise, a species listed
6 as threatened under the ESA. Consultation would identify an appropriate
7 survey protocol, avoidance and minimization measures, and, if appropriate,
8 reasonable and prudent alternatives, reasonable and prudent measures, and
9 terms and conditions for incidental take statements.
 - 10
 - 11 • Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the
12 affected area should be avoided or minimized. This can be accomplished by
13 identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary
14 protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.
 - 15

16 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to required
17 programmatic design features, impacts on the special status and rare species could be reduced.

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1 **11.4.13 Air Quality and Climate**

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3
4 **11.4.13.1 Affected Environment**

5
6
7 **11.4.13.1.1 Climate**

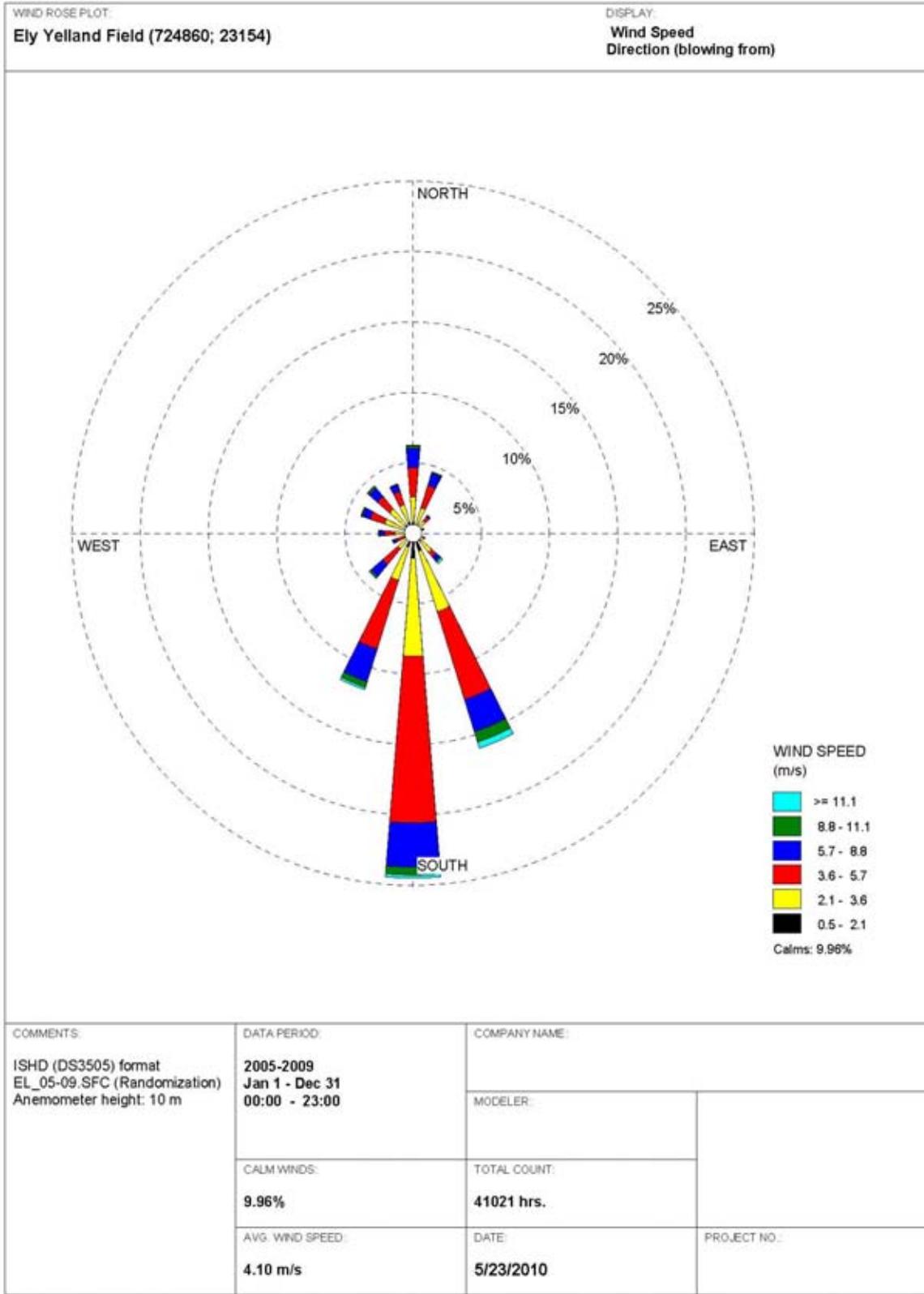
8
9 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located in southeastern Nevada, in the north
10 central portion of Lincoln County. Nevada lies on the eastern lee side of the Sierra Nevada
11 Range, which markedly influences the climate of the state under the prevailing westerlies
12 (NCDC 2010a). In addition, the mountains east and north of Nevada act as a barrier to the cold
13 arctic air masses, and thus long periods of extremely cold weather are uncommon. The SEZ lies
14 at an average elevation of about 4,760 ft (1,450 m) in the south-central portion of the Great Basin
15 Desert, which has a high desert climate marked by year-round pleasant weather (mild winters
16 and warm summers), large daily temperature swings due to dry air, scant precipitation, low
17 relative humidity, and abundant sunshine. Meteorological data collected at the Ely Yelland Field,
18 about 82 mi (132 km) north of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ boundary, and at Caliente, about
19 14 mi (23 km) southeast, are summarized below.

20
21 A wind rose from the Ely Yelland Field, Nevada, for the 5-year period 2005 to 2009,
22 taken at a level of 33 ft (10 m), is presented in Figure 11.4.13.1-1 (NCDC 2010b).⁶ During this
23 period, the annual average wind speed at the airport was about 9.2 mph (4.1 m/s); the prevailing
24 wind direction was from the south (about 24.4% of the time) and secondarily from the south–
25 southeast (about 16.0% of the time). Winds blew predominantly from the south every month
26 throughout the year (about 52% in wind directions ranging from south–southeast clockwise to
27 south–southwest inclusive). Wind speeds categorized as calm (less than 1.1 mph [0.5 m/s])
28 occurred frequently (about 10% of the time) because of the stable conditions caused by strong
29 radiative cooling from late night to sunrise. Average wind speeds by season were relatively
30 uniform; they were highest in spring at 9.7 mph (4.3 m/s), lower in summer and fall at 9.2 mph
31 (4.1 m/s), and lowest in winter at 8.7 mph (3.9 m/s).

32
33 For the 1903 to 2009 period, the annual average temperature at Caliente was 53.4°F
34 (11.9°C) (WRCC 2010c).⁷ January was the coldest month, with an average minimum
35 temperature of 17.8°F (−7.9°C), and July was the warmest month, with an average maximum of
36 95.4°F (35.2°C). In summer, daytime maximum temperatures were frequently in the 90s, and
37 minimums were in the 50s. The minimum temperatures recorded were below freezing ($\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$
38 [0°C]) during the colder months (most days from November through March), but subzero

⁶ Although the Ely Yelland Field is rather far from the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, it was chosen to be representative of the SEZ, considering the similar north–south orientation of valley and mountain ranges.

⁷ Pioche is closer (about 12 mi [19 km]) to the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ than Caliente (14 mi [23 km]) but at a higher elevation, about 1,800 ft (550 m) and 1,400 ft (430 m), than Caliente and the SEZ, respectively. Temperatures at Caliente are about few degrees higher than those at Pioche, while precipitation and snowfall at Caliente are about two-thirds and one-third of those at Pioche, respectively.



1

2

3

FIGURE 11.4.13.1-1 Wind Rose at 33 ft (10 m) at Ely Yelland Field, Nevada, 2005–2009 (Source: NCDC 2010b)

1 temperatures were recorded about 3 days per year from December to February. During the same
2 period, the highest temperature, 110°F (43.3°C), was reached in July 1915, and the lowest,
3 -31°F (-35.0°C), in January 1937. In a typical year, about 78 days had a maximum temperature
4 of greater than or equal to 90°F (32.2°C), while about 158 days had minimum temperatures at or
5 below freezing.

6
7 For the 1903 to 2009 period, annual precipitation at Caliente averaged about 8.74 in.
8 (22.2 cm) (WRCC 2010c).² On average, there are 45 days annually with measurable
9 precipitation (0.01 in. [0.025 cm] or higher). Precipitation is relatively evenly distributed by
10 season. Snow falls as early as October and continues as late as April; most of it falls from
11 December through February. The annual average snowfall at Caliente is about 11.2 in. (28.4 cm);
12 the highest monthly snowfall recorded was 31.0 in (78.7 cm) in January 1930.

13
14 Because the area surrounding the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is far from major
15 water bodies (more than 330 mi [531 km]) and because surrounding mountain ranges block air
16 masses from penetrating into the area, severe weather events, such as thunderstorms and
17 tornadoes, are rare.

18
19 In Nevada, flooding can occur from melting of heavy snowpack. On occasion, heavy
20 summer thunderstorms also cause flooding of local streams, usually in sparsely populated
21 mountainous areas, but are seldom destructive (NCDC 2010a). Since 1996, 18 floods (17 flash
22 floods and 1 flood) were reported in Lincoln County, most of which occurred in the nestled
23 mountain communities and some of which caused property damage. In January 2005, heavy rain
24 and rapid snow melt caused extensive flooding in southern Lincoln and northeast Clark Counties,
25 which brought about significant property damage.

26
27 In Lincoln County, seven hail events have been reported since 1981, none of which
28 caused property damage (NCDC 2010c). Hail measuring 1.5 in (3.8 cm) in diameter was
29 reported in 1981. In Lincoln County, 22 high wind events have been reported since 1995, which
30 caused some property damage. Such events, with a maximum wind speed of up to 83 mph
31 (37 m/s), have occurred any time of the year with a peak during spring months. In addition,
32 four thunderstorm wind events have been reported since 1964. Thunderstorm winds, with a
33 maximum wind speed of up to 69 mph (31 m/s) occurred mostly during summer months; one
34 of these caused minor property damage.

35
36 In Lincoln County, no dust storm event was reported (NCDC 2010c). However, about
37 71% the SEZ is covered with silty to fine sandy loams, which have moderate dust storm
38 potential. On occasion, high winds and dry soil conditions could result in blowing dust in
39 Lincoln County. Dust storms can deteriorate air quality and visibility and have adverse effects
40 on health.

41
42 Hurricanes and tropical storms formed off the coast of Central America and Mexico
43 weaken over the cold waters off the California coast. Accordingly, hurricanes never hit Nevada.
44 Historically, one tropical depression passed within 100 mi (160 km) of the proposed Dry Lake
45 Valley North SEZ (CSC 2010). Tornadoes in Lincoln County, which encompasses the proposed
46 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, occur infrequently. In the period 1950 to July 2010, a total of

1 six tornadoes (0.1 per year) were reported in Lincoln County (NCDC 2010c). However, all
 2 tornadoes occurring in Lincoln County were relatively weak (i.e., one was uncategorized; four
 3 were F0; and one was F1 on the Fujita tornado scale). None of these tornadoes caused injuries or
 4 deaths, but one of them caused some property damage. All tornadoes in Lincoln County were
 5 reported far from the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.

6
7
8 **11.4.13.1.2 Existing Air Emissions**
9

10 Lincoln County has several industrial emission sources
 11 scattered over the county, but their emissions are relatively
 12 small. No emission sources are located around the proposed Dry
 13 Lake Valley North SEZ. Because of the sparse population, only
 14 a handful of major roads exist in Lincoln County, such as
 15 U.S. 93 and State Routes 318, 319, and 375. Thus, onroad
 16 mobile source emissions are not substantial. Data on annual
 17 emissions of criteria pollutants and VOCs in Lincoln County
 18 are presented in Table 11.4.13.1-1 for 2002 (WRAP 2009).
 19 Emission data are classified into six source categories: point,
 20 area, onroad mobile, nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire
 21 (wildfires, prescribed fires, agricultural fires, structural fires). In
 22 2002, nonroad sources were major contributors to total SO₂ and
 23 NO_x emissions (about 56% and 57%, respectively). Biogenic
 24 sources (i.e., vegetation—including trees, plants, and crops—
 25 and soils) that release naturally occurring emissions contributed
 26 primarily to CO emissions (about 56%) and secondarily to NO_x
 27 emissions (about 22%), and accounted for most of the VOC
 28 emissions (about 99%). Fire sources were primary contributors
 29 to PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions (about 60% and 83%,
 30 respectively) and secondary contributors to SO₂ and CO
 31 emissions (41% and 33%, respectively). Area sources
 32 accounted for about 37% of PM₁₀ and 13% of PM_{2.5}. In
 33 Lincoln County, point sources were minor contributors to
 34 criteria pollutants and VOCs.

35
36 In 2005, Nevada produced about 56.3 MMt of *gross*⁸
 37 carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_{2e})⁹ emissions, which is about
 38 0.8% of total U.S. GHG emissions in that year (NDEP 2008).
 39 Gross GHG emissions in Nevada increased by about 65% from

TABLE 11.4.13.1-1 Annual Emissions of Criteria Pollutants and VOCs in Lincoln County, Nevada, Encompassing the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, 2002^a

Pollutant	Emissions (tons/yr)
SO ₂	230
NO _x	3,453
CO	47,458
VOCs	172,491
PM ₁₀	2,586
PM _{2.5}	1,604

^a Includes point, area, onroad and nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire emissions.

^b Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 μm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 μm; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; and VOCs = volatile organic compounds.

Source: WRAP (2009).

⁸ Excluding GHG emissions removed as a result of forestry and other land uses and excluding GHG emissions associated with exported electricity.

⁹ A measure used to compare the emissions from various GHGs on the basis of their global warming potential, defined as the cumulative radiative forcing effects of a gas over a specified time horizon resulting from the emission of a unit mass of gas relative to a reference gas, CO₂. The CO_{2e} for a gas is derived by multiplying the mass of the gas by the associated global warming potential.

1 1990 to 2005 because of Nevada’s rapid population growth, compared to 16.3% growth in
2 U.S. GHG emissions during the same period. In 2005, electrical generation (48%) and
3 transportation (30%) were the primary contributors to gross GHG emission sources in Nevada.
4 Fuel use in the residential, commercial, and industrial sectors combined accounted for about 12%
5 of total state emissions. Nevada’s *net* emissions were about 51.3 MMt CO₂e, considering carbon
6 sinks from forestry activities and agricultural soils throughout the state. The EPA (2009a) also
7 estimated 2005 emissions in Nevada. Its estimate of CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion
8 was 49.6 MMt, which was comparable to the state’s estimate. Electric power generation and
9 transportation accounted for about 52.7% and 33.6% of the CO₂ emissions total, respectively,
10 while the residential, commercial, and industrial sectors accounted for the remainder (about
11 13.7%).
12
13

14 ***11.4.13.1.3 Air Quality*** 15

16 The EPA set NAAQS for six criteria pollutants (EPA 2010a): SO₂, NO₂, CO, O₃, PM
17 (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and Pb. Nevada has its own SAAQS, which are similar to the NAAQS with
18 some differences (NAC 445B.22097). In addition, Nevada has set standards for 1-hour H₂S,
19 which are not addressed by the NAAQS. The NAAQS and Nevada SAAQS for criteria
20 pollutants are presented in Table 11.4.13.1-2.
21

22 Lincoln County is located administratively within the Nevada Intrastate AQCR, along
23 with 10 other counties in Nevada, with the exception of the Las Vegas Intrastate AQCR
24 (Clark County only), which encompasses Las Vegas, and the Northwest Nevada Intrastate
25 AQCR (five northwest counties), which encompasses Reno. Currently, the area surrounding the
26 proposed SEZ is designated as being in unclassifiable/attainment of NAAQS for all criteria
27 pollutants (40 CFR 81.329).
28

29 Because of Lincoln County’s low population density, it has no significant emission
30 sources of its own and only minor mobile emissions along major highways. Accordingly,
31 ambient air quality in Lincoln County is relatively good. There are no ambient air-monitoring
32 stations in Lincoln County. To characterize ambient air quality around the SEZ, one monitoring
33 station in Clark County was chosen: Apex in the northeast corner of North Las Vegas in Clark
34 County, about 93 mi (150 km) south of the SEZ. The Apex station, which is downwind of the
35 Las Vegas area along with predominant southwesterly winds but upwind of the SEZ, can be
36 considered representative of the proposed SEZ. Ambient concentrations of NO₂, O₃, PM₁₀,
37 and PM_{2.5} are recorded at the Apex station. CO concentrations at the East Tonopah station in
38 Las Vegas, which is the farthest downwind station of Las Vegas, were presented. The
39 East Sahara Avenue station, which is on the outskirts of Las Vegas, has only one SO₂ monitor
40 in the area. No Pb measurements have been made in the state of Nevada because of low Pb
41 concentration levels after the phaseout of leaded gasoline. The background concentrations of
42 criteria pollutants at these stations for the period 2004 to 2008 are presented in Table 11.4.13.1-2
43 (EPA 2010b). Monitored concentration levels were lower than their respective standards (up to
44 65%), except O₃, which approaches the 1-hour NAAQS/SAAQS but exceeds the 8-hour
45 NAAQS. However, ambient concentrations around the SEZ are anticipated to be lower than
46 those presented in the table, except PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, which can be either higher or lower.

TABLE 11.4.13.1-2 NAAQS, SAAQS, and Background Concentration Levels Representative of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ in Lincoln County, Nevada, 2004 to 2008

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	NAAQS	SAAQS	Background Concentration Level	
				Concentration ^{b,c}	Measurement Location, Year
SO ₂	1-hour	75 ppb ^d	– ^e	–	–
	3-hour	0.5 ppm	0.5 ppm	0.009 ppm (1.8%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
	24-hour	0.14 ppm	0.14 ppm	0.008 ppm (5.7%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
	Annual	0.030 ppm	0.030 ppm	0.006 ppm (20%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
NO ₂	1-hour	100 ppb ^f	–	–	–
	Annual	0.053 ppm	0.053 ppm	0.006 ppm (11%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2007
CO	1-hour	35 ppm	35 ppm	5.7 ppm (16%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2004
	8-hour	9 ppm	9 ppm ^g	3.9 ppm (43%)	Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
O ₃	1-hour	0.12 ppm ^h	0.12 ppm ⁱ	0.104 ppm (87%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
	8-hour	0.075 ppm	–	0.081 ppm (108%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2007
PM ₁₀	24-hour	150 µg/m ³	150 µg/m ³	97 µg/m ³ (65%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2006
	Annual	–	50 µg/m ³	22 µg/m ³ (44%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2008
PM _{2.5}	24-hour	35 µg/m ³	–	10.2 µg/m ³ (29%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
	Annual	15.0 µg/m ³	–	4.05 µg/m ³ (27%)	North Las Vegas, Clark County, 2005
Pb	30-day	–	1.5 µg/m ³	–	–
	Calendar quarter	1.5 µg/m ³	–	–	–
	Rolling 3-month	0.15 µg/m ³ ^j	–	–	–

^a Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO₂ = nitrogen dioxide; O₃ = ozone; Pb = lead; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 µm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 µm; and SO₂ = sulfur dioxide.

^b Monitored concentrations are the second-highest for all averaging times less than or equal to 24-hour averages, except fourth-highest daily maximum for 8-hour O₃ and the 98th percentile for 24-hour PM_{2.5}; and arithmetic mean for annual SO₂, NO₂, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}.

^c Values in parentheses are background concentration levels as a percentage of NAAQS or SAAQS. Calculation of 1-hour SO₂ and NO₂ to NAAQS was not made, because no measurement data based on new NAAQS are available.

^d Effective August 23, 2010.

^e Not applicable or not available.

^f Effective April 12, 2010.

^g CO standard for the area less than 5,000 ft (1,524 m) above mean sea level. CO standard for the area at or greater than 5,000 ft (1,524 m) above mean sea level is 6 ppm.

^h The EPA revoked the 1-hour O₃ standard in all areas, although some areas have continuing obligations under that standard (“anti-backsliding”).

ⁱ O₃ standard for the Lake Tahoe Basin, #90, is 0.10 ppm.

^j Effective January 12, 2009.

Sources: EPA (2010a,b); NAC 445B.22097.

1 The PSD regulations (see 40 CFR 52.21), which are designed to limit the growth of air
2 pollution in clean areas, apply to a major new source or modification of an existing major source
3 within an attainment or unclassified area (see Section 4.11.2.3). As a matter of policy, EPA
4 recommends that the permitting authority notify the federal land managers when a proposed
5 PSD source would locate within 62 mi (100 km) of a sensitive Class I area. There are several
6 Class I areas around the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, none of which is situated within the 62-mi
7 (100-km) distance in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. The nearest Class I area is Zion NP in Utah
8 (40 CFR 81.405), about 81 mi (131 km) east-southeast of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. This
9 Class I area is not located downwind of prevailing winds at the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
10 (Figure 11.4.13.1-1). The next nearest Class I area is Grand Canyon NP in Arizona, which is
11 about 120 mi (193 km) southeast of the SEZ.

12 13 14 **11.4.13.2 Impacts**

15
16 Potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with a solar project would be of
17 most concern during the construction phase. Impacts on ambient air quality from fugitive dust
18 emissions resulting from soil disturbances are anticipated, but they would be of short duration.
19 During the operations phase, only a few sources with generally low-level emissions would exist
20 for any of the four types of solar technologies evaluated. A solar facility would either not burn
21 fossil fuels or burn only small amounts during operation. (For facilities using heat transfer fluids
22 [HTFs], fuel could be used to maintain the temperature of the HTFs for more efficient daily
23 start-up.) Conversely, solar facilities could displace air emissions that would otherwise be
24 released from fossil fuel power plants.

25
26 Air quality impacts shared by all solar technologies are discussed in detail in
27 Section 5.11.1, and technology-specific impacts are discussed in Section 5.11.2. Impacts specific
28 to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are presented in the following sections. Any such
29 impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
30 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any additional mitigation applied.
31 Section 11.4.13.3 below identifies SEZ-specific design features of particular relevance to the Dry
32 Lake Valley North SEZ.

33 34 35 **11.4.13.2.1 Construction**

36
37 The Dry Lake Valley North SEZ has a relatively flat terrain; thus only a minimum
38 number of site preparation activities, perhaps with no large-scale earthmoving operations,
39 would be required. However, fugitive dust emissions from soil disturbances during the entire
40 construction phase would be a major concern because of the large areas that would be disturbed
41 in a region that experiences windblown dust problems. Fugitive dusts, which are released near
42 ground level, typically have more localized impacts than similar emissions from an elevated
43 stack with additional plume rise induced by buoyancy and momentum effects.

1 **Methods and Assumptions**

2
3 Air quality modeling for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions associated with construction
4 activities was performed using the EPA-recommended AERMOD model (EPA 2009b). Details
5 for emissions estimation, the description of AERMOD, input data processing procedures, and
6 modeling assumption are described in Section M.13 of Appendix M. Estimated air
7 concentrations were compared with the applicable NAAQS/SAAQS levels at the site boundaries
8 and nearby communities and with Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) increment
9 levels at nearby Class I areas.¹⁰ However, no receptors were modeled for PSD analysis at the
10 nearest Class I area, Zion NP in Utah, because it is about 81 mi (131 km) from the SEZ, which is
11 over the maximum modeling distance of 31 mi (50 km) for the AERMOD. Rather, several
12 regularly spaced receptors in the direction of the Zion NP were selected as surrogates for the
13 PSD analysis. For the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, the modeling was conducted based on the
14 following assumptions and input:

- 15
- 16 • Uniformly distributed emissions of 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) each and
17 9,000 acres (36.4 km²) in total, in the southeastern portion of the SEZ, close
18 to the nearest communities (Caselton and Prince) and the nearby towns of
19 Caliente, Panaca, and Pioche,
20
 - 21 • Surface hourly meteorological data from the Ely Yelland Field¹¹ and upper air
22 sounding data from the Mercury/Desert Rock Airport for the 2005 to 2009
23 period, and
24
 - 25 • A regularly spaced receptor grid over a modeling domain of 62 × 62 mi
26 (100 km × 100 km) centered on the proposed SEZ, and additional discrete
27 receptors at the SEZ boundaries.
28

29

30 **Results**

31

32 The modeling results for concentration increments and total concentrations (modeled plus
33 background concentrations) for both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} that would result from construction-related
34 fugitive emissions are summarized in Table 11.4.13.2-1. Maximum 24-hour PM₁₀ concentration
35 increments modeled to occur at the site boundaries would be an estimated 399 μg/m³, which far

10 To provide a quantitative assessment, the modeled air impacts of construction were compared to the NAAQS/SAAQS levels and the PSD Class I increment levels. Although the Clean Air Act exempts construction activities from PSD requirements, a comparison with the Class I increment levels was used to quantify potential impacts. Only monitored data can be used to determine the attainment status. Modeled data are used to assess potential problems and as a consideration in the permitting process.

11 The number of missing hours at the Ely Yelland Field amounts to about 17.7% of the total hours, which may not be acceptable for regulatory applications, because that percentage exceeds the 10% limit defined by the EPA. However, because the wind patterns at Ely Yelland Field are more representative of wind at the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ than the wind patterns at other airports (which have more complete data but are located in different topographic features), the former values were used for the screening analysis.

TABLE 11.4.13.2-1 Maximum Air Quality Impacts from Emissions Associated with Construction Activities for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	Rank ^b	Concentration ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)				Percentage of NAAQS/SAAQS	
			Maximum Increment ^b	Background ^c	Total	NAAQS/SAAQS	Increment	Total
PM ₁₀	24 hours	H6H	399	97	496	150	266	331
	Annual	— ^d	58.8	22	80.8	50	118	162
PM _{2.5}	24 hours	H8H	21.3	10.2	31.5	35	61	90
	Annual	—	5.9	4.1	9.9	15.0	39	66

^a PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 2.5 \mu\text{m}$; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 10 \mu\text{m}$.

^b Concentrations for attainment demonstration are presented. H6H = highest of the sixth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. H8H = highest of the multiyear average of the eighth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. For the annual average, multiyear averages of annual means over the 5-year period are presented. Maximum concentrations are predicted to occur at the site boundaries.

^c See Table 11.4.13.1-2.

^d Not applicable.

1
2
3 exceeds the relevant standard level of $150 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Total 24-hour PM₁₀ concentrations of
4 $496 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ would also exceed the standard level at the SEZ boundary. However, high PM₁₀
5 concentrations would be limited to the immediate areas surrounding the SEZ boundary and
6 would decrease quickly with distance. Predicted maximum 24-hour PM₁₀ concentration
7 increments would be about $15 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at Caliente and Panaca (about 14 mi [23 km] southeast and
8 east-southeast from the SEZ, respectively) and $3 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at the nearest communities (Caselton and
9 Prince, about 10 mi [16 km] east of the SEZ), Pioche, and Hiko. Due to high mountain ranges to
10 the direction of the SEZ, concentration levels at the nearest communities are predicted to be
11 much lower than those at Caliente and Panaca. Annual average modeled concentration
12 increments and total concentrations (increment plus background) for PM₁₀ at the SEZ boundary
13 would be about $58.8 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and $80.8 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, respectively, which are higher than the SAAQS
14 level of $50 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Annual PM₁₀ increments would be much lower, less than $0.1 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, at all
15 nearby towns. Total 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentrations would be $31.5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at the SEZ boundary,
16 which is lower than the NAAQS level of $35 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$; modeled increments contribute about two
17 times more than background concentration to this total. The total annual average PM_{2.5}
18 concentration would be $9.9 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which is below the NAAQS level of $15.0 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. At Caliente,
19 predicted maximum 24-hour and annual PM_{2.5} concentration increments would be about 0.3
20 and less than $0.01 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, respectively.

21
22 Predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ concentration increments at the surrogate receptors
23 for the nearest Class I Area—Zion NP in Utah—would be about 4.0 and $0.09 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, or 50% and

1 2.2% of the PSD increments for the Class I area, respectively. These surrogate receptors are
2 more than 42 mi (67 km) from the Zion NP, and thus predicted concentrations in Zion NP would
3 be much lower than the above values (about 25% and 1% of the PSD increments for 24-hour and
4 annual PM₁₀, respectively), considering the same decay ratio with distance.
5

6 In conclusion, predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ concentration levels could exceed
7 the standard levels at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding areas during the
8 construction of solar facilities. To reduce potential impacts on ambient air quality and in
9 compliance with programmatic design features, aggressive dust control measures would be used.
10 Potential air quality impacts on nearby communities would be much lower. Predicted total
11 concentrations for 24-hour and annual PM_{2.5} would be below the respective standard level.
12 Modeling indicates that emissions from construction activities are not anticipated to exceed
13 Class I PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearest federal Class I area (Zion NP in Utah). Construction
14 activities are not subject to the PSD program, and the comparison provides only a screen for
15 gauging the size of the impact. Accordingly, it is anticipated that impacts of construction
16 activities on ambient air quality would be moderate and temporary.
17

18 Construction emissions from the engine exhaust from heavy equipment and vehicles
19 have the potential to cause impacts on AQRVs (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at the nearby
20 federal Class I area. However, SO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be very low, because
21 programmatic design features would require ultra-low-sulfur fuel with a sulfur content of
22 15 ppm. NO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be primary contributors to potential impacts
23 on AQRVs. Construction-related emissions are temporary in nature and thus would cause some
24 unavoidable but short-term impacts.
25

26 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
27 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 69-kV transmission line might
28 be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-specific
29 analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However, some
30 construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ. Potential impacts on ambient air
31 quality would be a minor component of construction impacts in comparison with solar facility
32 construction and would be temporary in nature.
33

34 ***11.4.13.2.2 Operations***

35
36
37 Emission sources associated with the operation of a solar facility would include auxiliary
38 boilers; vehicle (commuter, visitor, support, and delivery) traffic; maintenance (e.g., mirror
39 cleaning and repair and replacement of damaged mirrors); and drift from cooling towers for the
40 parabolic trough or power tower technology if wet cooling were implemented (drift comprises
41 low-level PM emissions).
42

43 The type of emission sources caused by and offset by operation of a solar facility are
44 discussed in Appendix M.13.4.
45

1 Potential air emissions displaced by solar project development at the Dry Lake Valley
 2 North SEZ are presented in Table 11.4.13.2-2. Total power generation capacity ranging from
 3 6,833 to 12,300 MW is estimated for the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ for various solar
 4 technologies (see Section 11.4.2). The estimated amount of emissions avoided for the solar
 5 technologies evaluated depends only on the megawatts of conventional fossil fuel-generated
 6 power displaced, because a composite emission factor per megawatt-hour of power by
 7 conventional technologies is assumed (EPA 2009c). If the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ were
 8 fully developed, it is expected that emissions avoided could be substantial. Development of
 9 solar power in the SEZ could result in avoided air emissions ranging from 32 to 57% of total
 10 emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ from electric power systems in the state of Nevada
 11 (EPA 2009c). Avoided emissions could be up to 12% of total emissions from electric power
 12 systems in the six-state study area. When compared with all source categories, power production
 13 from the same solar facilities could displace up to 46% of SO₂, 17% of NO_x, and 31% of CO₂
 14 emissions in the state of Nevada (EPA 2009a; WRAP 2009). These emissions could be up to
 15
 16

TABLE 11.4.13.2-2 Annual Emissions from Combustion-Related Power Generation Avoided by Full Solar Development of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Area Size (acres)	Capacity (MW) ^a	Power Generation (GWh/yr) ^b	Emissions Displaced (tons/yr; 10 ³ tons/yr for CO ₂) ^c			
			SO ₂	NO _x	Hg	CO ₂
76,874	6,833–12,300	11,972–21,549	16,891–30,404	14,488–26,078	0.096–0.17	9,298–16,737
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in Nevada ^d			32–57%	32–57%	32–57%	32–57%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in Nevada ^e			26–46%	9.6–17%	– ^f	17–31%
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in the six-state study area ^d			6.7–12%	3.9–7.1%	3.3–5.9%	3.5–6.4%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in the six-state study area ^e			3.6–6.5%	0.54–1.0%	–	1.1–2.0%

^a It is assumed that the SEZ would eventually have development on 80% of the lands and that a range of 5 acres (0.020 km²) per MW (for parabolic trough technology) to 9 acres (0.036 km²) per MW (power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies) would be required.

^b A capacity factor of 20% was assumed.

^c Composite combustion-related emission factors for SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ of 2.82, 2.42, 1.6 × 10⁻⁵, and 1,553 lb/MWh, respectively, were used for the state of Nevada.

^d Emission data for all air pollutants are for 2005.

^e Emission data for SO₂ and NO_x are for 2002, while those for CO₂ are for 2005.

^f Not estimated.

Sources: EPA (2009a,c); WRAP (2009).

1 6.5% of total emissions from all source categories in the six-state study area. Power generation
2 from fossil fuel-fired power plants accounts for about 93% of the total electric power generated
3 in Nevada for which contribution of natural gas and coal combustion is comparable
4 (EPA 2009c). Thus, solar facilities to be built in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ could be more
5 important than those built in other states in terms of reducing fuel combustion-related emissions.
6

7 As discussed in Section 5.11.1.5, the operation of associated transmission lines would
8 generate some air pollutants from activities such as periodic site inspections and maintenance.
9 However, these activities would occur infrequently, and the amount of emissions would be
10 small. In addition, transmission lines could produce minute amounts of O₃ and its precursor
11 NO_x associated with corona discharge (i.e., the breakdown of air near high-voltage conductors),
12 which is most noticeable for high-voltage lines during rain or very humid conditions. Since
13 the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located in an arid desert environment, these emissions would
14 be small, and potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with transmission lines would
15 be negligible, considering the infrequent occurrences and small amount of emissions from
16 corona discharges.
17
18

19 ***11.4.13.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation***

20
21 As discussed in Section 5.11.1.4, decommissioning/reclamation activities are similar to
22 construction activities but are on a more limited scale and of shorter duration. Potential impacts
23 on ambient air quality would be correspondingly less than those from construction activities.
24 Decommissioning activities would last for a short period, and their potential impacts would be
25 moderate and temporary. The same mitigation measures adopted during the construction phase
26 would also be implemented during the decommissioning phase (Section 5.11.3).
27
28

29 **11.4.13.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

30
31 No SEZ-specific design features are required. Limiting dust generation during
32 construction and operations at the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (such as increased
33 watering frequency or road paving or treatment) is a required design feature under BLM's Solar
34 Energy Program. These extensive fugitive dust control measures would keep off-site PM levels
35 as low as possible during construction.
36
37

1 **11.4.14 Visual Resources**

2
3
4 **11.4.14.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located in Lincoln County in eastern
7 Nevada. The SEZ is 33 mi (53 km) west of the Utah border. The SEZ occupies 78,874 acres
8 (319.19 km²) within the Dry Lake Valley, extending about 8.6 mi (13.8 km) east to west and
9 25 mi (40 km) north to south.

10
11 The proposed SEZ is located within the Central Basin and Range Level III ecoregion
12 (Bryce et al. 2003), typified by northerly trending fault-block ranges and intervening drier basins.
13 Valleys, lower slopes, and alluvial fans within this ecoregion are either shrub and grass covered
14 or shrub covered. Flat basins form broad expanses of barren plains, generally with low scrub and
15 grass vegetation and expansive views. The proposed SEZ encompasses areas within the
16 Carbonate Sagebrush Valleys, Shadscale-Dominated Saline Basins, and the Salt Deserts
17 Level IV ecoregions.

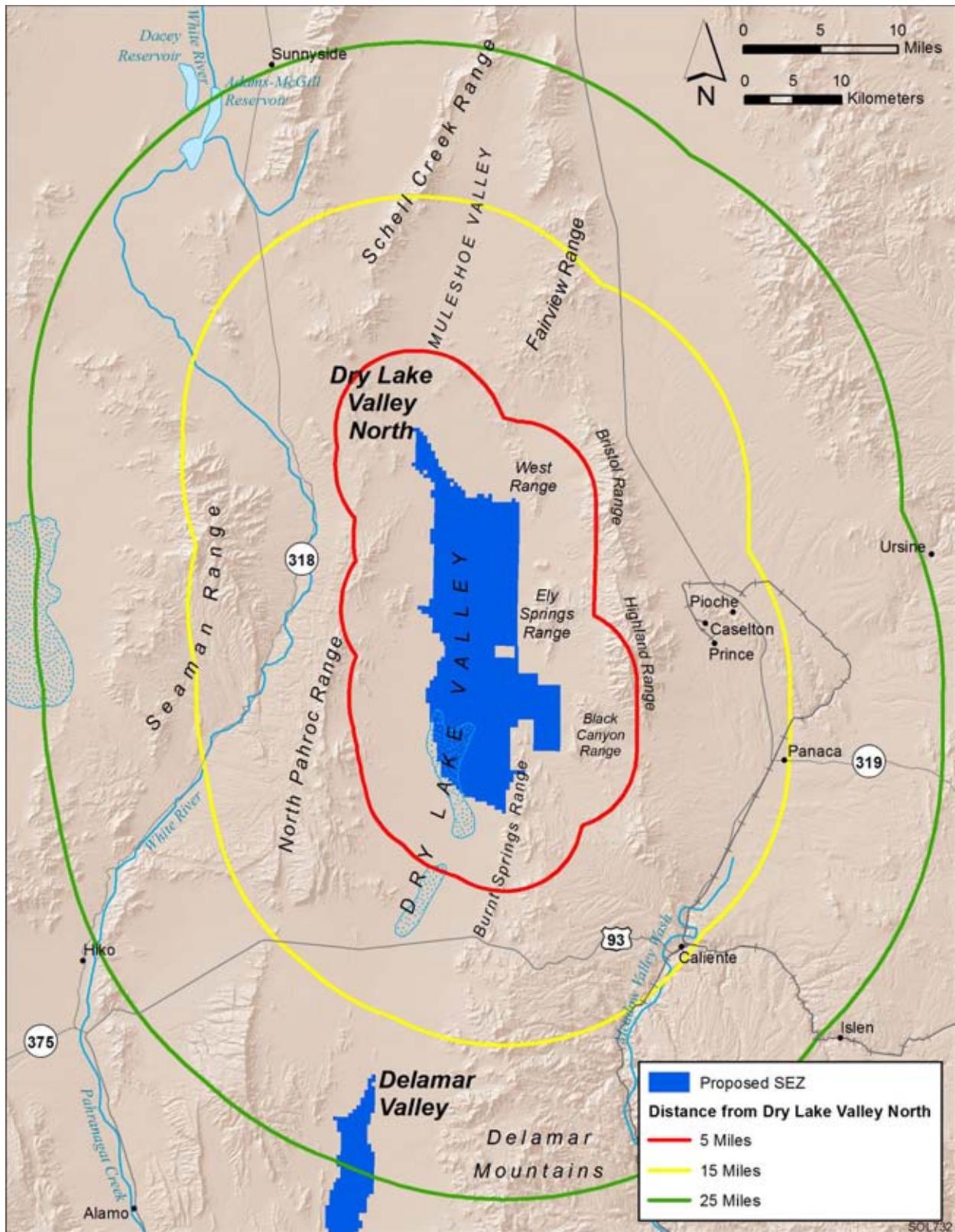
18
19 The SEZ ranges in elevation from 4,620 ft (1,408 m) in the central portion to
20 5,400 ft (1,646 m) in the northern portion. The SEZ and surrounding lands are shown in
21 Figure 11.4.14.1-1.

22
23 The SEZ occupies the central portion of the relatively broad and very flat Dry Lake
24 Valley, with the flat valley floor, the strong horizon line, and the forms of surrounding mountain
25 ranges being the dominant visual features. The SEZ is framed by mountain ranges on the east
26 and west, with more open views to the north and south. The North Pahroc range rises about 6 mi
27 (10 km) west of the SEZ. Several mountain ranges occur east of the SEZ: West Range, Bristol
28 Range, Highland Range, Ely Springs Range, Black Canyon Range, and Burnt Springs Range.
29 These ranges include peaks generally between 5,000 and 6,000 ft (1,520 and 1,830 m) in
30 elevation, but with some peaks over 8,000 feet (2,440 m) high. From the northwest to the
31 southeast, the Dry Lake Valley extends more than 34 mi (55 km) and is about 10 mi (16 km)
32 wide.

33
34 Vegetation is generally sparse in much of the SEZ, with large areas of low grasses
35 and low scrubland. The adjacent areas support Joshua Tree-sagebrush habitat. During an
36 August 2009 site visit, the sparse, medium-to-fine textured vegetation presented a limited
37 range of light greens, grays, and light browns against a backdrop of fine-textured, very light
38 brown soils.

39
40 No permanent surface water occurs within the SEZ; however, the far southwestern
41 portion of the SEZ occupies part of a dry lakebed. A very large wash on the north side of the
42 SEZ provides strong color and texture contrasts due to the lack of vegetative cover and the
43 exposed very light soil color within the wash.

44
45 Cultural disturbances visible within the SEZ include roads, fences, livestock ponds, and
46 a transmission line. The land is used primarily for grazing. There is evidence of damage from
47 OHV use. Overall, there is a low level of cultural disturbance; from most locations within the
48 SEZ, the landscape is generally natural in appearance.



1

2 **FIGURE 11.4.14.1-1 Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ and Surrounding Lands**

1 The SEZ itself is of low scenic quality because of the general lack of topographic relief,
2 water, variety, or other distinctive visual features. The adjacent mountains add somewhat to the
3 scenic quality, particularly when viewed from nearby locations within the SEZ. The mountain
4 slopes and peaks to the east and west of the SEZ are, in general, visually pristine. Panoramic
5 views of the SEZ are shown in Figures 11.4.14.1-2, 11.4.14.1-3 and 11.4.14.1-4.
6

7 The Silver State Trail is a 240-mi (386-km) long multiuse trail that encircles the SEZ
8 and allows visitors access to the mountain ranges that surround Dry Lake Valley. Portions of
9 the Silver State Trail are in the viewshed of the SEZ. No inhabited communities occur within
10 the viewshed of the SEZ, and there are few, if any, residences.
11

12 The BLM conducted a VRI for the SEZ and surrounding lands in 2004. The VRI
13 evaluates BLM-administered lands based on scenic quality; sensitivity level, in terms of public
14 concern for preservation of scenic values in the evaluated lands; and distance from travel routes
15 or KOPs. Based on these three factors, BLM-administered lands are placed into one of four VRI
16 Classes, which represent the relative value of the visual resources. Class I and II are the most
17 valued; Class III represents a moderate value; and Class IV represents the least value. Class I is
18 reserved for specially designated areas, such as national wildernesses and other congressionally
19 and administratively designated areas where decisions have been made to preserve a natural
20 landscape. Class II is the highest rating for lands without special designation. More information
21 about VRI methodology is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Inventory*, BLM
22 Manual Handbook 8410-1 (BLM 1986a).
23

24 The VRI values for the SEZ and immediate surroundings are VRI Class 4, indicating
25 low relative visual values (BLM 2009f). The BLM conducted a new VRI for the SEZ and
26 surrounding lands in 2010; however, the VRI was not completed in time for the new data to be
27 included in the Draft PEIS. The new VRI data will be incorporated into the analyses presented
28 in the Final PEIS.
29

30 The *Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan*
31 (BLM 2008a) indicate that the SEZ is managed as VRM Class IV, which permits major
32 modification of the existing character of the landscape. More information about the BLM
33 VRM program is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Management*, BLM
34 Manual Handbook 8400 (BLM 1984).
35

36 37 **11.4.14.2 Impacts** 38

39 The potential for impacts from utility-scale solar energy development on visual resources
40 within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ and surrounding lands, as well as the impacts of
41 related developments (e.g., access roads and transmission lines) outside of the SEZ, is presented
42 in this section.
43

44 Site-specific impact assessment is needed to systematically and thoroughly assess visual
45 impact levels for a particular project. Without precise information on the location of a project
46 and a relatively complete and accurate description of its major components and their layout, it is

1



2 **FIGURE 11.4.14.1-2** Approximately 180° Panoramic View of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, from Southern Portion, Looking
3 West toward North Pahroc Range

4

5



6

7 **FIGURE 11.4.14.1-3** Approximately 120° Panoramic View of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, from East-Central Portion,
8 Looking North toward Schell Creek and West Ranges

9

10



11

12 **FIGURE 11.4.14.1-4** Approximately 120° Panoramic View of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, from Far Northwestern Portion,
13 Looking Southeast toward West and Ely Springs Ranges (Foreground) and Bristol and Highland Ranges (Background)

1 not possible to assess precisely the visual impacts associated with the facility. However, if the
2 general nature and location of a facility are known, a more generalized assessment of potential
3 visual impacts can be made by describing the range of expected visual changes and discussing
4 contrasts typically associated with these changes. In addition, a general analysis can identify
5 sensitive resources that may be at risk if a future project is sited in a particular area. Detailed
6 information about the methodology used for the visual impact assessment presented in this PEIS,
7 including assumptions and limitations, is presented in Appendix M.
8

9 *Potential Glint and Glare Impacts.* Similarly, the nature and magnitude of potential
10 glint-and glare-related visual impacts for a given solar facility is highly dependent on viewer
11 position, sun angle, the nature of the reflective surface and its orientation relative to the sun and
12 the viewer, atmospheric conditions and other variables. The determination of potential impacts
13 from glint and glare from solar facilities within a given proposed SEZ would require precise
14 knowledge of these variables, and is not possible given the scope of the PEIS. Therefore, the
15 following analysis does not describe or suggest potential contrast levels arising from glint and
16 glare for facilities that might be developed within the SEZ; however, it should be assumed that
17 glint and glare are possible visual impacts from *any* utility-scale solar facility, regardless of size,
18 landscape setting, or technology type. The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could
19 potentially cause large though temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities.
20 The visual contrast levels projected for sensitive visual resource areas discussed in the following
21 analysis do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these effects would be
22 incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be conducted for
23 specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more information about potential
24 glint and glare impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy facilities, see Section 5.12 of
25 this PEIS.
26
27

28 ***11.4.14.2.1 Impacts on the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ***

29
30 Some or all of the SEZ could be developed for one or more utility-scale solar energy
31 projects, utilizing one or more of the solar energy technologies described in Appendix F.
32 Because of the industrial nature and large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities, large visual
33 impacts on the SEZ would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and decommissioning
34 of solar energy projects. In addition, large impacts could occur at solar facilities utilizing highly
35 reflective surfaces or major light-emitting components (solar dish, parabolic trough, and power
36 tower technologies). These impacts would be expected to involve major modification of the
37 existing character of the landscape and would likely dominate the views nearby. Additional,
38 and potentially large impacts would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and
39 decommissioning of related facilities, such as access roads and electric transmission lines. While
40 the primary visual impacts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ would
41 occur during daylight hours, lighting required for utility-scale solar energy facilities would be a
42 potential source of visual impacts at night, both within the SEZ and on surrounding lands.
43

44 Common and technology-specific visual impacts from utility-scale solar energy
45 development, as well as impacts associated with electric transmission lines, are discussed in
46 Section 5.12 of this PEIS. Impacts would last throughout construction, operation, and

1 decommissioning, and some impacts could continue after project decommissioning. Visual
2 impacts resulting from solar energy development in the SEZ would be in addition to impacts
3 from solar energy development and other development that may occur on other public or private
4 lands within the SEZ viewshed, and are subject to cumulative effects. For discussion of
5 cumulative impacts, see Section 11.4.22.4.13 of this PEIS.
6

7 The changes described above would be expected to be consistent with BLM VRM
8 objectives for VRM Class IV, as seen from nearby KOPs, which permits major modification of
9 the existing character of the landscape. As noted above, the entire SEZ is currently managed as
10 VRM Class IV. More information about impact determination using the BLM VRM program is
11 presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Contrast Rating*, BLM Manual
12 Handbook 8431-1 (BLM 1986b).
13

14 Implementation of the programmatic design features intended to reduce visual impacts
15 (described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would be expected to reduce visual impacts associated
16 with utility-scale solar energy development within the SEZ; however, the degree of effectiveness
17 of these design features could be assessed only at the site- and project-specific level. Given the
18 large scale, reflective surfaces, and strong regular geometry of utility-scale solar energy facilities
19 and the lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities
20 away from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive viewing areas would be the primary
21 means of mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other visual impact mitigation measures
22 would generally be limited, but would be important to reduce visual contrasts to the greatest
23 extent possible.
24
25

26 ***11.4.14.2.2 Impacts on Lands Surrounding the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ***

27

28 Because of the large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat,
29 open nature of the proposed SEZ, lands outside the SEZ would be subjected to visual impacts
30 related to construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities.
31 The affected areas and extent of impacts would depend on a number of visibility factors and
32 viewer distance (for a detailed discussion of visibility and related factors, see Section 5.12).
33 A key component in determining impact levels is the intervisibility between the project and
34 potentially affected lands; if topography, vegetation, or structures screen the project from
35 viewer locations, there is no impact.
36

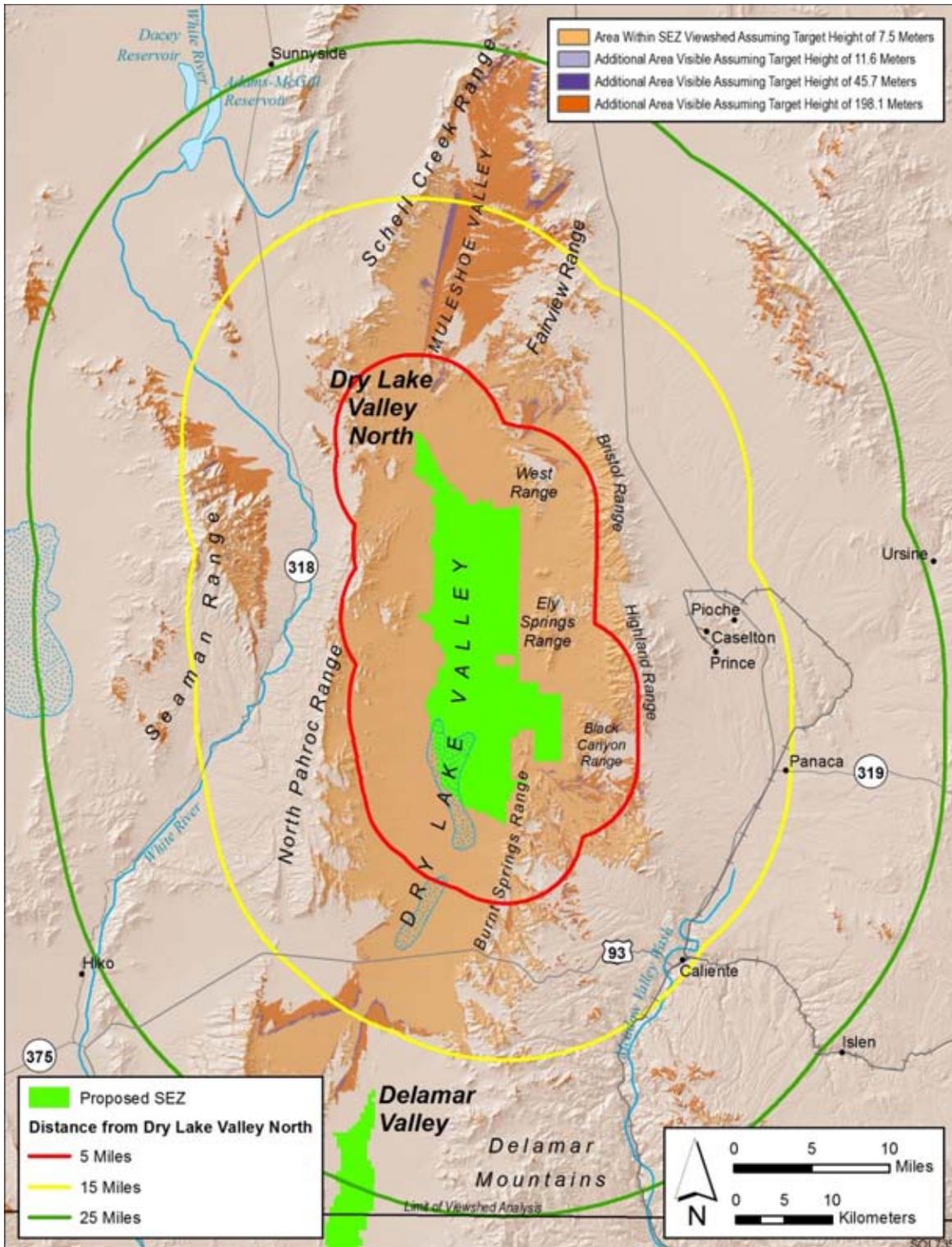
37 Preliminary viewshed analyses were conducted to identify which lands surrounding the
38 proposed SEZ are visible from the SEZ (see Appendix M for important information on
39 assumptions and limitations of the methods used). Four viewshed analyses were run, assuming
40 four different heights representative of project elements associated with potential solar energy
41 technologies: PV and parabolic trough arrays (24.6 ft [7.5 m]), solar dishes and power blocks
42 for CSP technologies (38 ft [11.6 m]), transmission towers and short solar power towers (150 ft
43 [45.7 m]), and tall solar power towers (650 ft [198.1 m]). Viewshed maps for the SEZ for all
44 four solar technology heights are presented in Appendix N.
45

1 Figure 11.4.14.2-1 shows the combined results of the viewshed analyses for all four solar
2 technologies. The colored segments indicate areas with clear lines of sight to one or more areas
3 within the SEZ and from which solar facilities within these areas of the SEZ would be expected
4 to be visible, assuming the absence of screening vegetation or structures and adequate lighting
5 and other atmospheric conditions. The light brown areas are locations from which PV and
6 parabolic trough arrays located in the SEZ could be visible. Solar dishes and power blocks for
7 CSP technologies would be visible from the areas shaded in light brown and the additional areas
8 shaded in light purple. Transmission towers and short solar power towers would be visible from
9 the areas shaded light brown, light purple, and the additional areas shaded in dark purple. Power
10 tower facilities located in the SEZ could be visible from areas shaded light brown, light purple,
11 dark purple, and at least the upper portions of power tower receivers in the additional areas
12 shaded in medium brown.

13
14 For the following visual impact discussion, the tall solar power tower (650 ft [198.1 m])
15 and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds are shown in figures and
16 discussed in the text. These heights represent the maximum and minimum landscape visibility
17 for solar energy technologies analyzed in the PEIS. Viewsheds for solar dish and CSP
18 technology power blocks (38 ft [11.6 m]), and transmission towers and short solar power towers
19 (150 ft [45.7 m]) are presented in Appendix N. The visibility of these facilities would fall
20 between that for tall power towers and PV and parabolic trough arrays.

21
22
23 ***Impacts on Selected Federal-, State-, and BLM-Designated Sensitive Visual Resource***
24 ***Areas.*** Figure 11.4.14.2-2 shows the results of a GIS analysis that overlays selected federal, state,
25 and BLM-designated sensitive visual resource areas onto the combined tall solar power tower
26 (650 ft [198.1 m]) and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds in order to
27 illustrate which of these sensitive visual resource areas would have views of (and potentially be
28 subject to visual impacts from) solar facilities within the SEZ. Distance zones that correspond
29 with BLM's VRM system-specified foreground-middleground distance (5 mi [8 km]),
30 background distance (15 mi [24 km]), and a 25-mi (40-km) distance zone are shown to indicate
31 the effect of distance from the SEZ on impact levels. The scenic resources included in the
32 analysis were as follows:

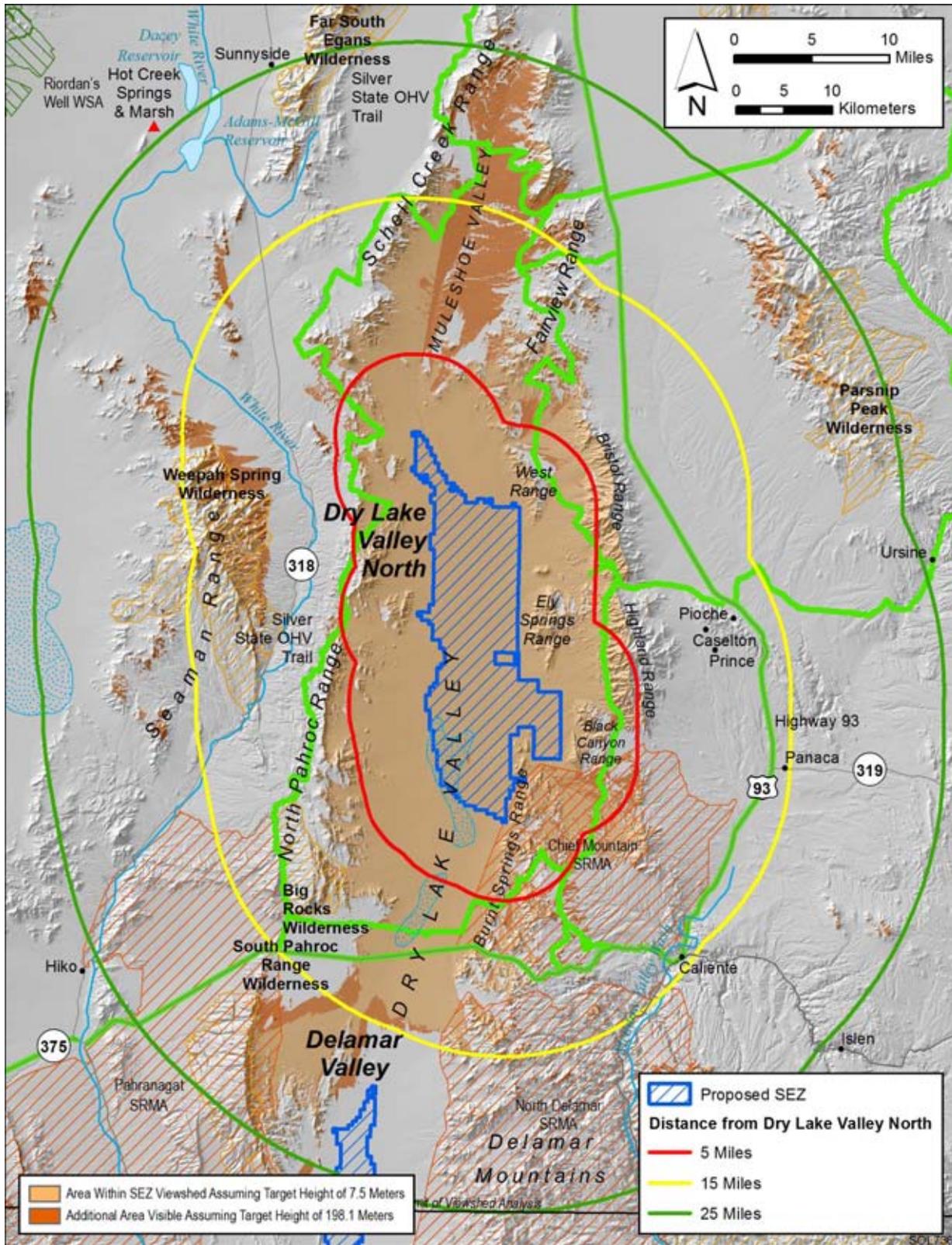
- 33
- 34 • National Parks, National Monuments, National Recreation Areas, National
35 Preserves, National Wildlife Refuges, National Reserves, National
36 Conservation Areas, National Historic Sites;
- 37
- 38 • Congressionally authorized Wilderness Areas;
- 39
- 40 • Wilderness Study Areas;
- 41
- 42 • National Wild and Scenic Rivers;
- 43
- 44 • Congressionally authorized Wild and Scenic Study Rivers;
- 45
- 46 • National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails;



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FIGURE 11.4.14.2-1 Viewshed Analyses for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ and Surrounding Lands, Assuming Solar Technology Heights of 24.6 ft (7.5 m), 38 ft (11.6 m), 150 ft (45.7 m), and 650 ft (198.1 m) (shaded areas indicate lands from which solar development within the SEZ could be visible)



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.4.14.2-2** Overlay of Selected Sensitive Visual Resource Areas onto Combined 650-ft
 3 (198.1-m) and 24.6-ft (7.5-m) Viewsheds for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

- National Historic Landmarks and National Natural Landmarks;
- All-American Roads, National Scenic Byways, State Scenic Highways; and BLM- and USFS-designated scenic highways/byways;
- BLM-designated Special Recreation Management Areas; and
- ACECs designated because of outstanding scenic qualities.

Potential impacts on specific sensitive resource areas visible from and within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are discussed below. The results of this analysis are also summarized in Table 11.4.14.2-1. Further discussion of impacts on these areas is presented in Sections 11.4.3 (Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics) and 11.4.17 (Cultural Resources) of this PEIS. The following visual impact analysis describes *visual contrast levels* rather than *visual impact levels*. *Visual contrasts* are changes in the seen landscape, including changes in the forms, lines, colors, and textures of objects seen in the landscape. A measure of *visual impact* includes potential human reactions to the visual contrasts arising from a development activity, based on viewer characteristics, including attitudes and values, expectations, and other characteristics that are viewer- and situation-specific. Accurate assessment of visual impacts requires knowledge of the potential types and numbers of viewers for a given development and their characteristics and expectations; specific locations where the project might be viewed from; and other variables that were not available or not feasible to incorporate in the PEIS analysis. These variables would be incorporated into a future site- and project-specific assessment that would be conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more discussion of visual contrasts and impacts, see Section 5.12 of the PEIS.

GOOGLE EARTH™ VISUALIZATIONS

The visual impact analysis discussion in this section utilizes three-dimensional Google Earth™ perspective visualizations of hypothetical solar facilities placed within the SEZ. The visualizations include simplified wireframe models of a hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed at various locations within the SEZ as visual aids for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of utility-scale solar facilities. The visualizations are intended to show the apparent size, distance, and configuration of the SEZ, as well as the apparent size of a typical utility-scale solar power tower project and its relationship to the surrounding landscape, as viewed from potentially sensitive visual resource areas within the viewshed of the SEZ.

The visualizations are not intended to be realistic simulations of the actual appearance of the landscape or of proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. The placement of models within the SEZ did not reflect any actual planned or proposed projects within the SEZ, and did not take into account engineering or other constraints that would affect the siting or choice of facilities for this particular SEZ. The number of facility models placed in the SEZ does not reflect the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, but it should be noted that the discussion of expected visual contrast levels does account for the 80% development scenario. A solar power tower was chosen for the models because the unique height characteristics of power tower facilities make their visual impact potential extend beyond other solar technology types.

TABLE 11.4.14.2-1 Selected Potentially Affected Sensitive Visual Resources within the 25-mi (40-km) Viewshed of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, Assuming a Target Height of 650 ft (198.1 m)^a

Feature Type	Feature Name (Total Acreage/ Linear Distance) ^a	Feature Area or Linear Distance ^b		
		Visible within 5 mi	Visible between	
			5 mi and 15 mi	15 mi and 25 mi
WA	Big Rocks (12,929 acres)	0 acres	1,590 acres (12%)	0
	Clover Mountains (85,621 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	26 acres (0.03%)
	Far South Egans (36,297 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	454 acres (1%)
	Parsnip Peak (43,485 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	1,833 acres (4%)
	South Pahroc Range (25,674 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	2,391 acres (9%)
	Weepah Spring (51,309 acres)	0 acres	13,468 acres (26%)	132 acres (0.3%)
Scenic Highway	U.S. 93	0 acres	10 mi	0
	Silver State	35 mi	(50 mi)	(15 mi)
SRMA	Chief Mountain (111,151 acres)	23,387 acres (21%)	15,689 acres (14%)	0
	Delamar North (202,839 acres)	0 acres	4,009 acres (2%)	2,377 acres (1%)
	Pahranagat (298,567 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	8,403 acres (3%)

^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047. To convert mi to km multiply by 1.609.

^b Percentage of total feature acreage or road length viewable.

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Wilderness Areas

- *Big Rocks*—Big Rocks is a 12,929-acre (52.322-km²), congressionally designated WA located 8.2 mi (13.2 km) southwest of the SEZ. Recreational opportunities include climbing, bouldering, camping, hiking, backpacking,

1 hunting, and horseback riding. Little Boulder Spring hiking trail is 2 mi
2 (3 km) long and begins on the east side of the wilderness area. This trail winds
3 its way up to a peak with views of the South Pahroc Range and the SEZ.
4

5 As shown in Figure 11.4.14.2-2, solar energy facilities within the SEZ could
6 be visible from the southeastern portion of the WA (approximately
7 1,590 acres [6.435 km²] in the 650-ft [198.1-m] viewshed, and 1,397 acres
8 [5.654 km²] in the 24.6-ft [7.5-m] viewshed, or 11% of the total WA acreage).
9 The visible area of the WA extends from approximately 9.1 mi (14.6 km) to
10 12 mi (19 km) from the southwestern boundary of the SEZ.
11

12 Figure 11.4.14.2-3 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
13 orange) as seen from an unnamed peak in the southeastern portion of the WA,
14 approximately 9.6 mi (15.5 km) from the nearest point on the southwest
15 boundary of the SEZ. The visualization includes simplified wireframe models
16 of a hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed within
17 the SEZ as a visual aide for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle
18 of utility-scale solar facilities.
19

20 The receiver towers depicted in the visualization are properly scaled models
21 of a 459-ft (139.9-m) power tower with an 867-acre (3.5-km²) field of 12-ft
22 (3.7-m) heliostats, each representing approximately 100 MW of electric
23 generating capacity. Three groups of four models were placed in the SEZ for
24 this and other visualizations shown in this section of the PEIS. In the
25 visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
26

27 The viewpoint is from an unnamed peak in the North Pahroc Range, at an
28 elevation of approximately 6,980 ft (2,130 m), 9.6 mi (15.5 km) from the
29 nearest point in the SEZ. The viewpoint is approximately 2,400 ft (730 m)
30 higher in elevation than the nearest point in the SEZ, and from this height and
31 view orientation, the SEZ occupies most of the horizontal field of view. At the
32 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, solar facilities within the
33 SEZ would likely appear as a moderately wide band of contrasting forms,
34 textures, and colors beneath the mountain ranges that border the eastern side
35 of the SEZ.
36

37 Despite the nearly 10-mi (16-km) distance from the viewpoint to the SEZ, the
38 elevation difference between the viewpoint and the SEZ is great enough that
39 the tops of collector/reflector arrays for solar facilities in the southern portions
40 of the SEZ would be visible, which would increase the visible surface area of
41 the facilities, and make their strong regular geometry more apparent, tending
42 to increase visual contrast.
43

44 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, and
45 cooling towers; and plumes (if present) would likely be visible projecting

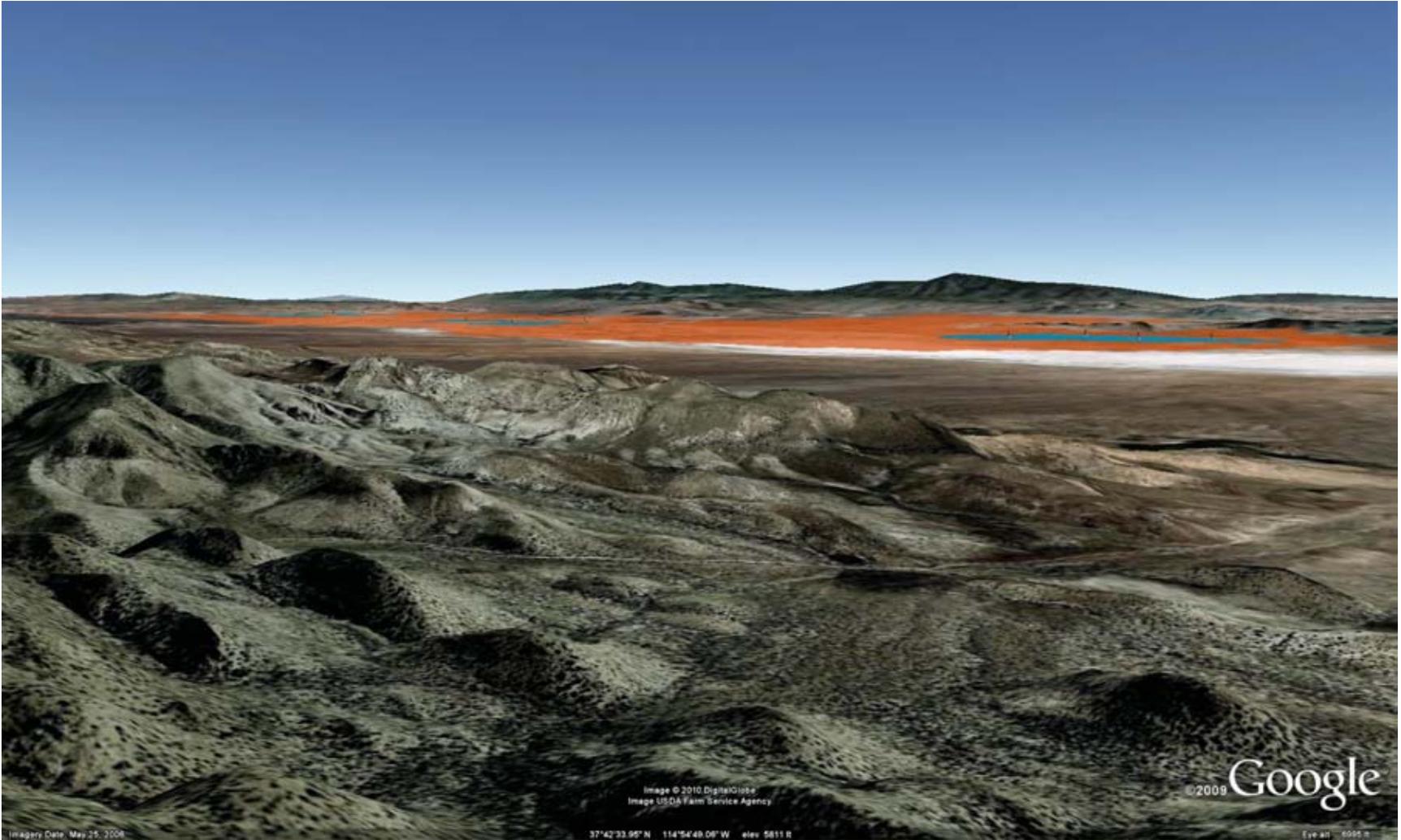


FIGURE 11.4.14.2-3 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Unnamed Peak in Big Rocks WA

1 above the collector/reflector arrays. The ancillary facilities could create form
2 and line contrasts with the strongly horizontal, regular, and repeating forms
3 and lines of the collector/reflector arrays.
4

5 If power tower facilities were located in the SEZ, when operating, the
6 receivers would likely be visible as bright points of light atop discernable
7 tower structures, against a backdrop of the valley floor. At night, if more than
8 200 ft (61 m) tall, power towers would have hazard navigation lights that
9 could potentially be visible from this location. The lights could be red flashing
10 lights or red or white strobe lights, and the light could be visible for long
11 distances. Other lighting associated with solar facilities could be visible
12 as well.
13

14 Visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ would depend
15 on the numbers, types, sizes and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and
16 other visibility factors. From this viewpoint, under the 80% development
17 scenario analyzed in this PEIS, solar development within the SEZ would be
18 expected to dominate views from this location, and strong visual contrasts
19 would be expected to result.
20

21 From some lower elevation viewpoints in portions of the WA within the SEZ
22 viewshed, partial topographic screening of the SEZ would occur because the
23 mountains within and outside the WA block views of portions of the SEZ.
24 However, the vertical angle of view is great enough that in most of these
25 partially screened areas, at least weak levels of visual contrast would be
26 expected, and where views of the SEZ are unobstructed, moderate levels of
27 visual contrast would be expected. Overall, under the 80% development
28 scenario, weak to strong visual contrasts would be expected from solar energy
29 facilities within the SEZ, as viewed from portions of the Big Rocks WA
30 within the SEZ viewshed.
31

- 32 • *Clover Mountains*—Clover Mountains is an 85,621-acre (346.50-km²)
33 congressionally designated WA located 24 mi (39 km) at the point of closest
34 approach southeast of the SEZ. Hiking, camping, climbing, and rock
35 scrambling, as well as horseback riding opportunities are, outstanding because
36 of the variety of scenic topography in the WA.
37

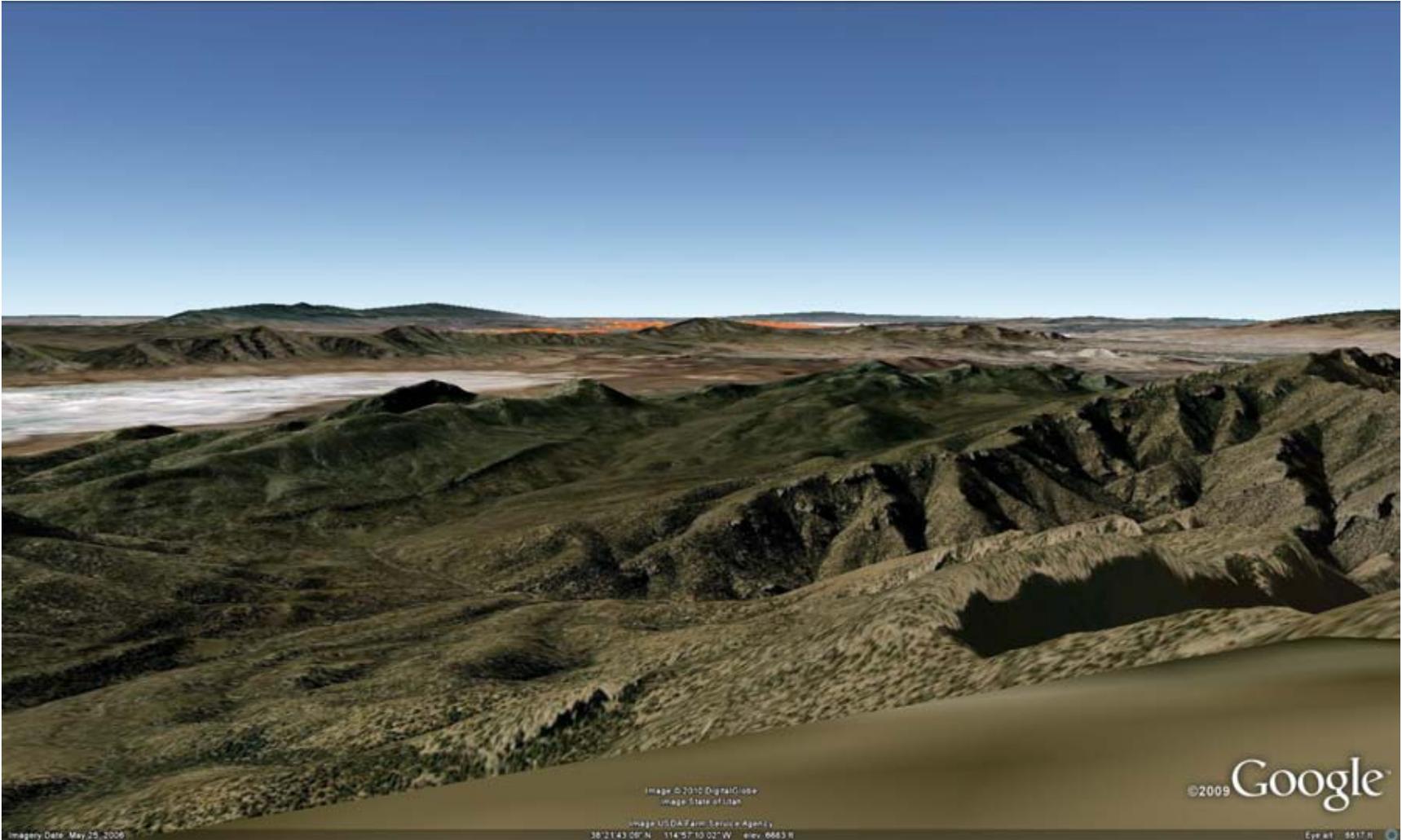
38 As shown in Figure 11.4.14.2-2, within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar
39 energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible from a very small area at
40 the northernmost tip of the WA. Visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi
41 (40-km) radius of analysis total approximately 26 acres (0.11 km²) in the
42 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or 0.03% of the total WA acreage, and 16 acres
43 [0.07 km²] in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 0.02% of the total WA acreage.
44 The visible area of the WA extends close to 25 mi (40 km) from the southern
45 boundary of the SEZ.
46

1 The area of the WA within the SEZ viewshed is near the summit of a 7,272-ft
2 (2,217-m) peak near Ella Mountain, close to 25 mi (40 km) from the SEZ. The
3 area is partially wooded, and vegetation may screen some views from within
4 the area. Mountains between the viewpoint and the SEZ screen most of the
5 SEZ from view. Because of the very long distance to the SEZ, the angle of
6 view is very low, and except for power towers, solar facilities within the Dry
7 Lake Valley North SEZ would likely not be visible from the WA. The upper
8 portions of sufficiently tall power towers placed within certain portions of the
9 SEZ might be visible as distant points of light on the northwestern horizon
10 during the day and, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, would have navigation
11 warning lights at night that could potentially be visible from the WA. Under
12 the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, minimal levels of visual
13 contrast would be expected.

- 14 • *Far South Egans*—Far South Egans is a 36,297-acre (146.89-km²)
15 congressionally designated WA located 21 mi (34 km) at the point of closest
16 approach north to northwest of the SEZ. Hiking, camping, and backpacking
17 are demanding because of the terrain. Technical rock climbers may find
18 challenges all along the western side of the wilderness area.

19
20
21 As shown in Figure 11.4.14.2-2, within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar
22 energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible from the highest elevations
23 on southeast facing ridges and from some peak sat the far southern end of the
24 Egan Range within the WA. Visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi
25 (40-km) radius of analysis total about 454 acres (1.84 km²) in the 650-ft
26 (198.1-m) viewshed, or 1% of the total WA acreage, and 292 acres [1.18 km²]
27 in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 0.8% of the total WA acreage. The visible
28 area of the WA is about 24 mi (39 km) from the northern boundary of the
29 SEZ.

30
31 Figure 11.4.14.2-4 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
32 orange) as seen from Whipple Peak (elevation 8,828 ft [2,690 m]) near the
33 south end of the Egan Range, about 23 mi (38 km) from the northernmost
34 point of the SEZ. The visualization suggests that even though intervening
35 mountains partially screen the view of the SEZ, because of the 3,700-ft
36 (1,130-m) elevation difference between the viewpoint and the SEZ, a
37 substantial portion of the SEZ is visible. However, the SEZ is so distant that it
38 occupies a small portion of the horizontal field of view, and the angle of view
39 is low. Solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen nearly on edge, tending
40 to repeat the line of the horizon, which would reduce visual contrast. The
41 receivers of power towers within the SEZ could be visible as distant points of
42 light just under the southwest horizon, against the backdrop of the distant
43 valley floor. At night, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, power towers would
44 have navigation warning lights that could potentially be visible from this
45 location. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, weak
46 levels of visual contrast would be expected.



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FIGURE 11.4.14.2-4 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Whipple Peak in Far South Egans WA

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1 In general, visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ
2 would depend on viewer location within the WA, the numbers, types, sizes
3 and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and other project- and site-specific
4 factors. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, where
5 there were unobstructed views, contrasts would be expected to be minimal to
6 weak.

- 7
8 • *Parsnip Peak*—Parsnip Peak is a 43,485-acre (175.98 km²) congressionally
9 designated WA located 19 mi (31 km) at the point of closest approach
10 northeast of the SEZ. Parsnip Peak WA is good for hiking, camping,
11 backpacking, horseback riding, rock climbing, hunting and trapping, plus the
12 study of archaeology and geology. The wilderness area provides excellent
13 opportunities for solitude, particularly in the thick stands of aspen along the
14 eastern side of Parsnip Peak (8,916 feet [2,718 m]).

15
16 As shown in Figure 11.4.14.2-2, within 25 mi (40 km), solar energy facilities
17 within the SEZ could be visible from the far northwestern portion of the WA.
18 Visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi (40-km) radius of analysis total
19 approximately 1,833 acres (7.418 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or
20 4% of the total WA acreage, and 505 acres (2.04 km²) in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m)
21 viewshed, or 1% of the total WA acreage. The visible area of the WA extends
22 to about 23 mi (37 km) from the eastern boundary of the SEZ.

23
24 The Bristol and Highland ranges screen most of the Dry Lake Valley North
25 SEZ from view from within the WA. Only the relatively small, far northern
26 part of the SEZ would be visible from within the WA. The visible portion of
27 the SEZ would occupy a small portion of the horizontal field of view. Despite
28 the elevated viewpoints within the WA, because of the long distance to the
29 SEZ the angle of view is low, and the collector/reflector arrays of solar
30 facilities within the SEZ would be seen edge on. This would reduce their
31 apparent size, conceal their strong regular geometry, and cause them to appear
32 to repeat the strong horizon line, thereby reducing potential levels of visual
33 contrast. The receivers of power towers placed within the visible portion of
34 the SEZ might be visible as distant points of light on the western horizon, and
35 could be visible at night if tall enough to require hazard navigation lighting.

36
37 In general, visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ
38 would depend on viewer location within the WA, the numbers, types, sizes
39 and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and other project- and site-specific
40 factors. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, where
41 there were unobstructed views, contrasts would be expected to be minimal to
42 weak.

- 43
44 • *South Pahroc Range*—The South Pahroc Range is a 25,674-acre (103.90-km²)
45 congressionally designated WA located 18 mi (29 km) southwest of the SEZ.
46 Hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and camping opportunities are good

1 throughout the South Pahroc Range Wilderness. Climbers and rock scramblers
2 will find challenging routes that culminate in scenic overlooks atop
3 gargantuan geologic features. Vantage points for hikers provide views of vast
4 desert valleys, interrupted by intervening chains of more distant mountains.
5

6 As shown in Figure 11.4.14.2-2, within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar
7 energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible from the eastern edge of the
8 South Pahroc Range, including Hyko Peak, which at an elevation of 7,950 ft
9 (2,423 m) is the high point within the WA. A few small, isolated areas with
10 SEZ visibility occur farther west at high elevations within the WA. The
11 viewshed encompasses about 2,391 acres (9.676 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m)
12 viewshed, or 9% of the total WA acreage, and 2,209 acres (8.940 km²) in the
13 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 9% of the total WA acreage. The visible area of
14 the WA extends from the point of closest approach to beyond 25 mi (40 km)
15 from the southwestern boundary of the SEZ.
16

17 Figure 11.4.14.2-5 is a Google Earth visual of the SEZ (highlighted in orange)
18 as seen from Hyko Peak in the south–central portion of the South Pahroc
19 Range, approximately 23 mi (38 km) from the southern boundary of the SEZ.
20 The visualization suggests that even though intervening mountains partially
21 screen the view of the northern end of the SEZ, most of the SEZ is visible, and
22 it would occupy a substantial portion of the horizontal field of view. However,
23 the SEZ is so distant that the angle of view is low. Under the 80%
24 development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, solar facilities within the SEZ
25 would likely appear as a narrow band of contrasting form and color beneath
26 the mountain ranges that border the eastern side of the SEZ. Solar facilities
27 within the SEZ would be seen nearly on edge. This would reduce their
28 apparent size, conceal their strong regular geometry, and cause them to appear
29 to repeat the strong horizon line, thereby reducing potential levels of visual
30 contrast. The receivers of power towers placed within the visible portion of
31 the SEZ might be visible as distant points of light against the backdrop of the
32 distant valley floor, and could be visible at night if tall enough to require
33 hazard navigation lighting. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in
34 the PEIS, weak levels of visual contrast would be expected.
35

36 From lower elevations within the WA, intervening terrain screens more of the
37 SEZ, and in some areas very little of the SEZ is visible. The angle of view is
38 lower as well, so that the SEZ would be seen as a very narrow band of
39 contrasting line and color. In these areas, weak visual contrasts would be
40 expected from solar energy development within the SEZ.
41

- 42 • *Weepah Spring*—Weepah Spring is a 51,309-acre (207.64-km²)
43 congressionally designated WA located 8.4 mi (13.5 km) at the point of
44 closest approach west of the SEZ. The Weepah Spring WA provides excellent
45 opportunities for solitude among the forested slopes or in one of the many

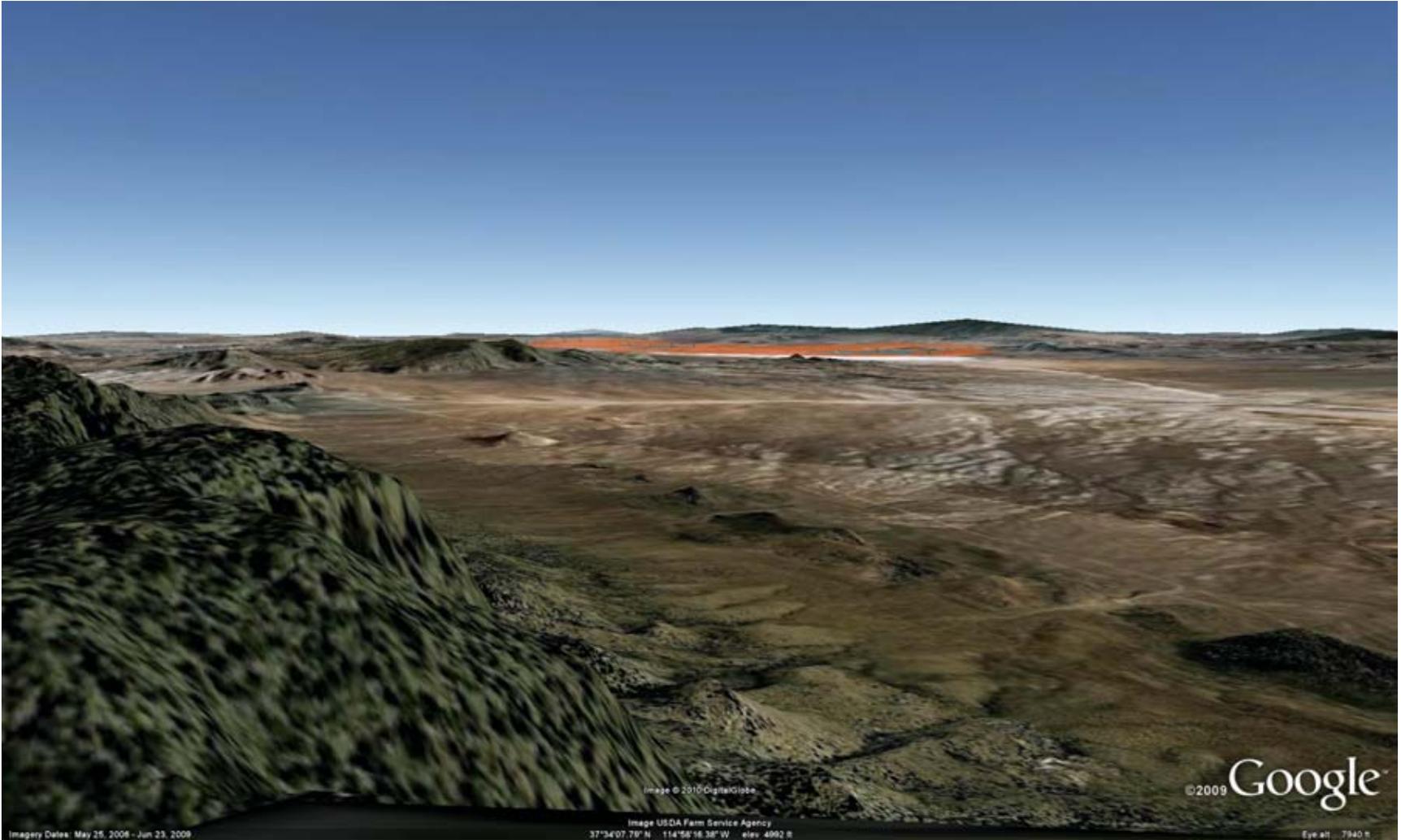


FIGURE 11.4.14.2-5 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Hyko Peak in South Pahroc WA

1 meandering washes and canyons. Recreational pursuits include camping,
2 hiking, backpacking, hunting, and horseback riding.

3
4 As shown in Figure 11.4.14.2-2, within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar
5 energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible from much of the eastern half
6 of the WA. Visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi (40-km) radius of
7 analysis total approximately 13,600 acres (55.037 km²) in the 650-ft
8 (198.1-m) viewshed, or 27% of the total WA acreage, and 8,105 acres
9 (32.800 km²) in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 16% of the total WA
10 acreage. The visible area of the WA extends to approximately 15 mi (24 km)
11 from the western boundary of the SEZ.

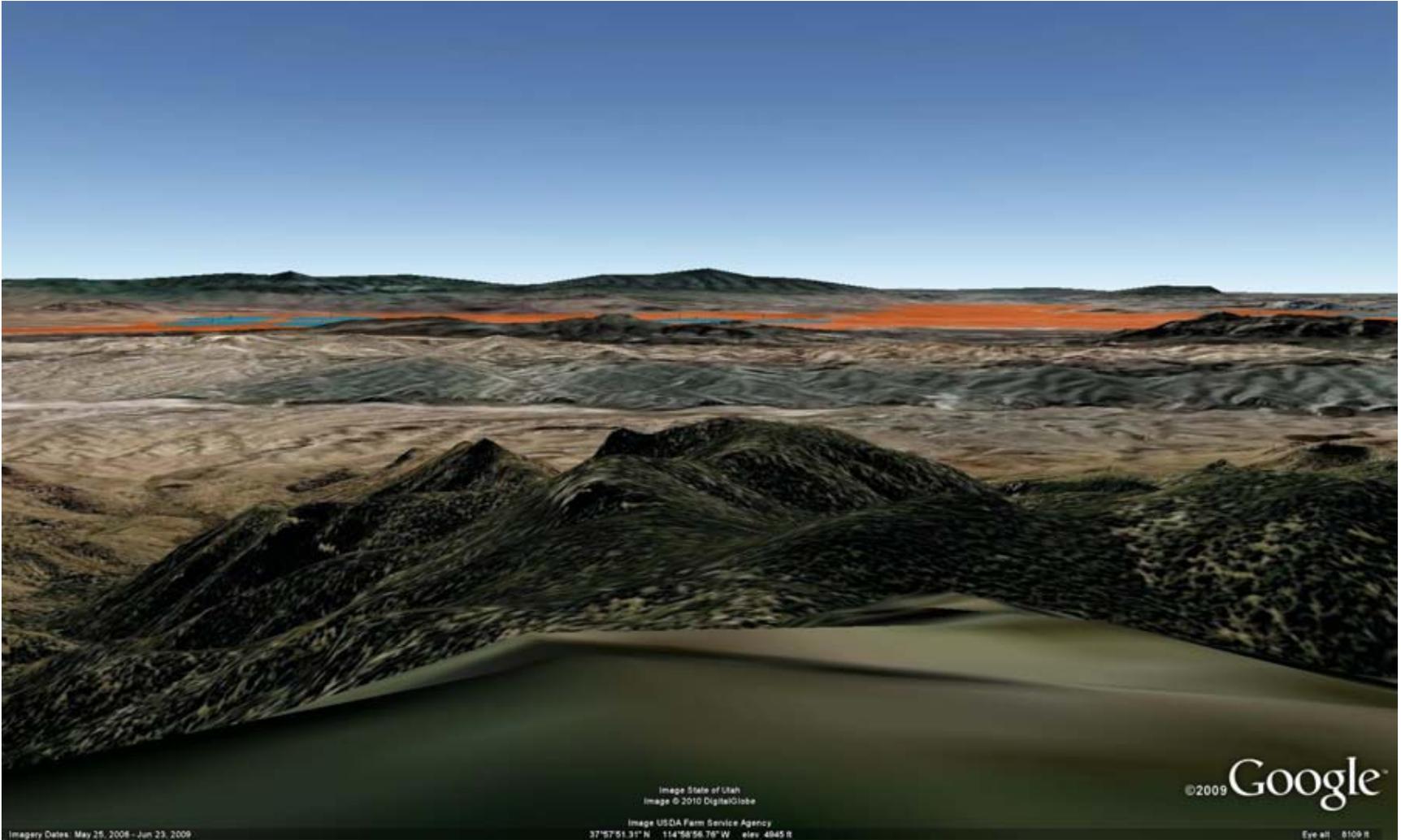
12
13 Figure 11.4.14.2-6 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
14 orange) as seen from an unnamed peak on Timber Mountain in the central
15 portion of the Seaman Range, about 14 mi (23 km) from the nearest point on
16 the western boundary of the SEZ. The viewpoint elevation is about 8,100 ft
17 (2,470 m), 3,240 ft (990 m) above the nearest point in the SEZ. The viewpoint
18 area contains some open stands of trees, which could provide partial screening
19 of views of the SEZ. From this height and view orientation directly west of
20 the SEZ, the SEZ occupies most of the horizontal field of view. At the 80%
21 development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, solar facilities within the SEZ
22 would likely appear as a thin band of contrasting forms, textures, and colors
23 beneath the mountain ranges that border the eastern side of the SEZ. The
24 elevation difference between the viewpoint and the SEZ is great enough that
25 the tops of collector/reflector arrays for solar facilities in the SEZ would be
26 visible, which would increase the visible surface area of the facilities, and
27 make their strong regular geometry more apparent, tending to increase visual
28 contrast.

29
30 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, and
31 cooling towers; and plumes (if present) would likely be visible projecting
32 above the collector/reflector arrays, and could create visual contrasts with the
33 strongly horizontal and regular geometry of the arrays.

34
35 If power tower facilities were located in the SEZ, when operating, the
36 receivers would likely be visible as bright points of light atop discernable
37 tower structures, against a backdrop of the valley floor. At night, if more than
38 200 ft (61 m) tall, power towers would have hazard navigation lights that
39 could potentially be visible from this location.

40
41 Visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ would depend
42 on the numbers, types, sizes and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and
43 other visibility factors. From this viewpoint, under the 80% development
44 scenario analyzed in this PEIS, strong visual contrasts would be expected
45 from solar energy facilities within the SEZ.

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FIGURE 11.4.14.2-6 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint within Weepah Spring WA

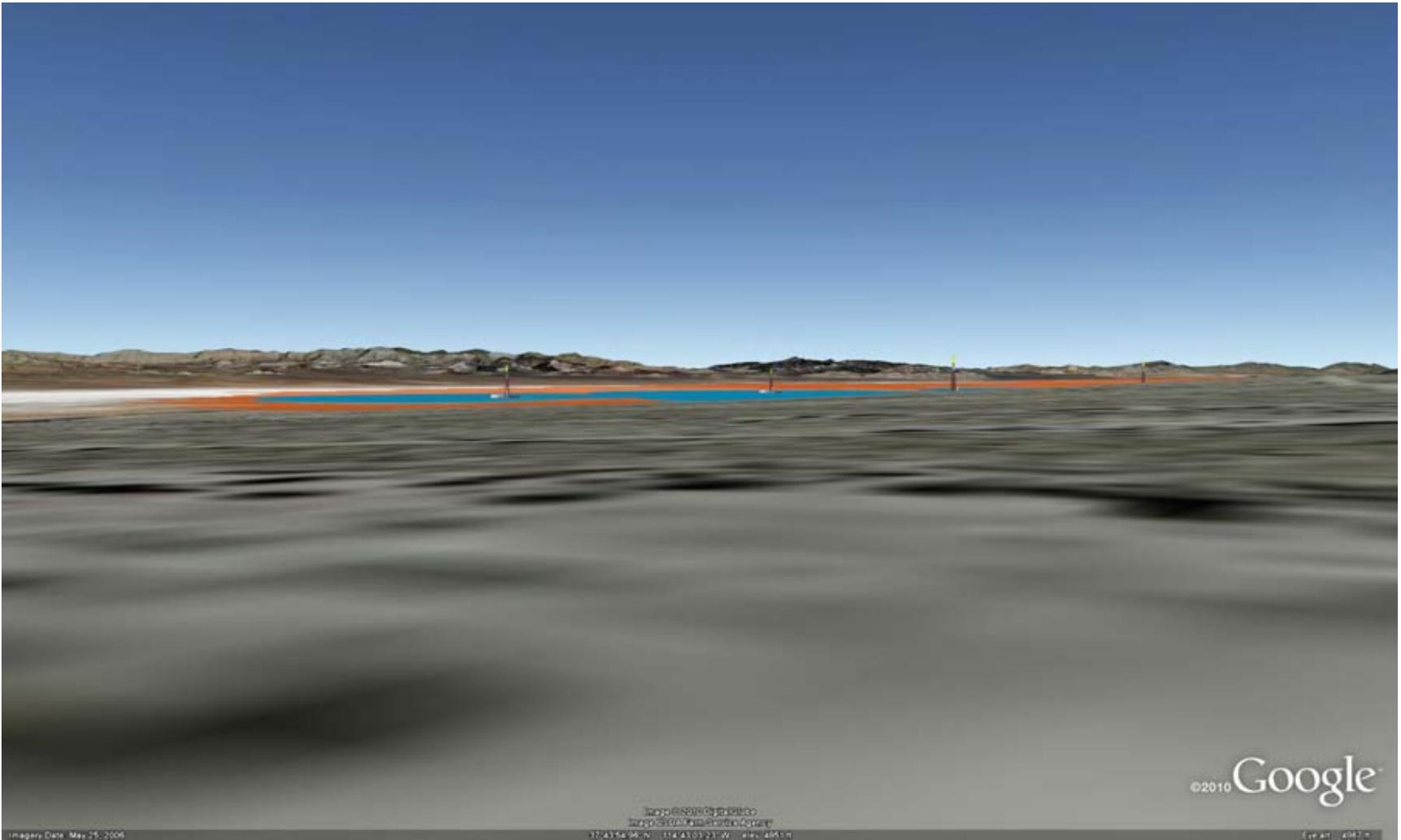
1 From some lower elevation viewpoints in portions of the WA within the SEZ
2 viewshed, partial topographic screening of the SEZ would occur because the
3 mountains between the WA and the SEZ block views of portions of the SEZ.
4 In some locations, screening would block most of the SEZ from view, and
5 weak levels of visual contrast would be expected; however, there are areas
6 where gaps in the intervening mountain ranges are sufficient that moderate
7 levels of visual contrast might result. Overall, under the 80% development
8 scenario, weak to strong visual contrasts would be expected from solar energy
9 facilities within the SEZ, as viewed from portions of the Weepah Spring WA
10 within the SEZ viewshed. The highest contrast levels would be expected at the
11 highest elevations in the central portion of the WA, with lower levels of
12 contrast expected for lower elevations, particularly in the eastern and southern
13 portions of the WA, where the low elevations and proximity of intervening
14 mountains would decrease visibility of the SEZ.

15
16
17 ***BLM-Designated Special Recreation Management Areas***

- 18
19 • *Chief Mountain*—The 111,151-acre (449.812-km²) Chief Mountain SRMA is
20 located adjacent to portions of the southeast boundary of the SEZ.
21 The area of the SRMA within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ
22 includes 39,076 acres (158.135 km²), or 35% of the total SRMA acreage. The
23 area of the SRMA within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes
24 73 acres (0.30 km²), or 0.07% of the total SRMA acreage. The visible area
25 extends from the point of closest approach adjacent to the SEZ boundary
26 to 10 mi (16 km) into the SRMA from the southeast boundary of the SEZ.

27
28 As shown in Figure 11.4.14.2-2, the northwest portion of the SRMA is within
29 the SEZ viewshed. Figure 11.4.14.2-7 is a Google Earth visualization of the
30 SEZ (highlighted in orange) as seen from a jeep trail near the western
31 boundary of the SRMA, about 1.3 mi (2.1 km) southeast of the southernmost
32 tip of the SEZ. The viewpoint is less than 100 ft (30 m) higher in elevation
33 than the nearest point in the SEZ.

34
35 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, solar facilities
36 within the SEZ would stretch across most of the horizontal field of view.
37 Because the viewpoint is so close in elevation to the nearby SEZ, the vertical
38 angle of view between the viewpoint and the SEZ is very low, and the
39 collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen edge
40 on, which would reduce their apparent size, conceal their strong regular
41 geometry, and cause them to appear to repeat the strong horizon line, all of
42 which would tend to decrease visual contrasts. If facilities were located in the
43 closest parts of the SEZ, however, the array components could be so close to
44 the viewer that their individual forms could be apparent, and they might not
45 appear as a line against the horizon.



1

FIGURE 11.4.14.2-7 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Jeep Road in Western Portion of Chief Mountain SRMA

2

3

4

1 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, cooling
2 towers, and plumes (if present) would likely be visible projecting above the
3 collector/reflector arrays. The structural details of nearby facilities could be
4 evident. The ancillary facilities could create form and line contrasts with the
5 strongly horizontal, regular, and repeating forms and lines of the
6 collector/reflector arrays. Color and texture contrasts would also be likely, but
7 their extent would depend on the materials and surface treatments utilized in
8 the facilities.

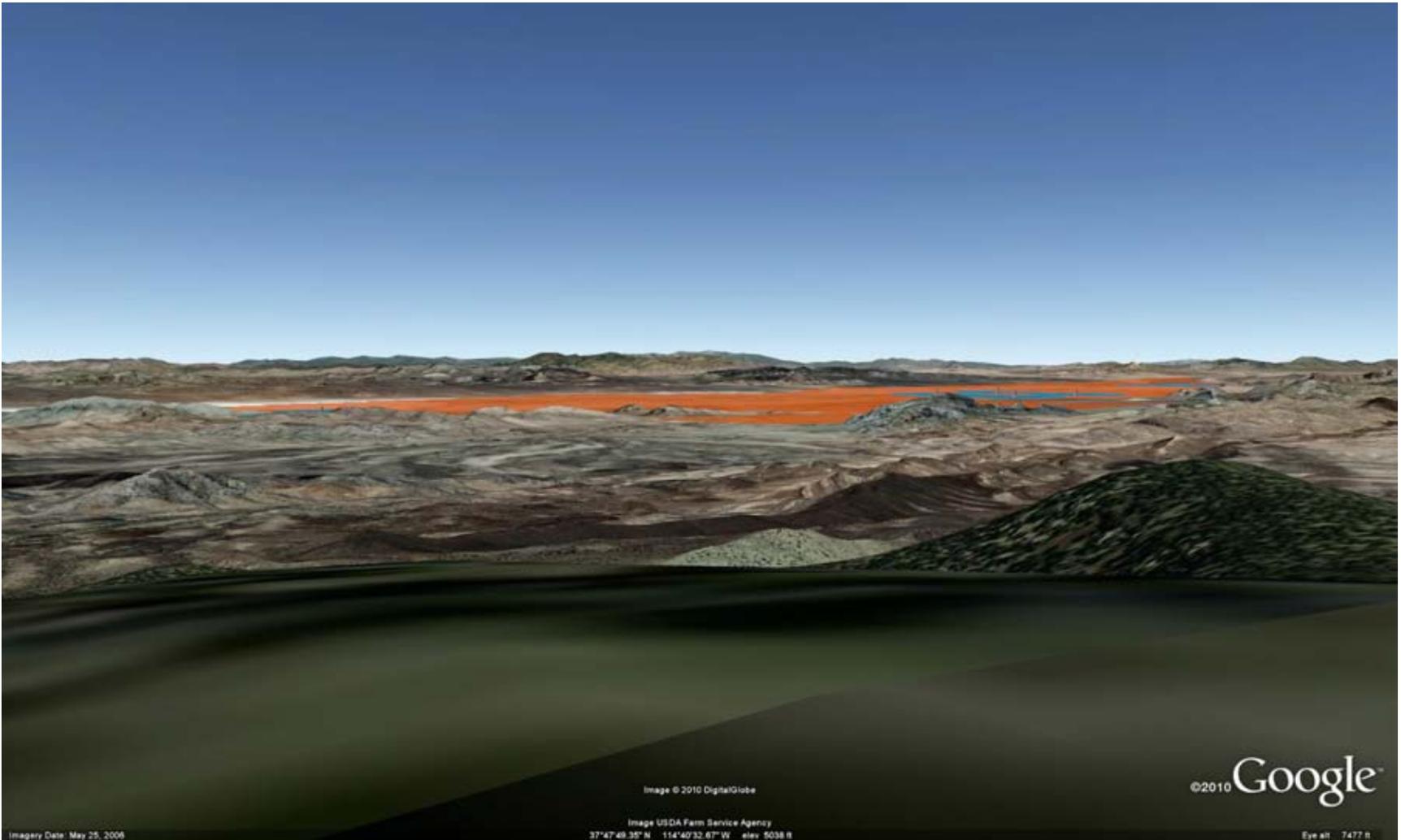
9
10 The receivers of operating power towers in the closest parts of the SEZ would
11 likely appear as brilliant white non-point light sources atop tower structures
12 with clearly discernable structural details, while those farther from the
13 viewpoint would have diminished brightness and less detail visible. Also,
14 under certain viewing conditions, sunlight on dust particles in the air might
15 result in the appearance of light streaming down from the tower(s). At night,
16 sufficiently tall power towers could have flashing red or white hazard lighting
17 that could be visible for long distances, and would likely be visually
18 conspicuous from this viewpoint, given the dark night skies of this remote
19 valley. Other light sources associated with the solar facilities within the SEZ
20 would likely be visible as well.

21
22 Because the SEZ would occupy most of the horizontal field of view, and
23 because of the potentially very close proximity of solar facilities to this
24 location, strong visual contrasts from solar energy development within the
25 SEZ would be expected at this viewpoint. However, the actual contrast levels
26 experienced would depend on project location within the SEZ, the types of
27 solar facilities and their designs, and other visibility factors.

28
29 Figure 11.4.14.2-8 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
30 orange) as seen from the summit of Chief Mountain, in the interior of the
31 SRMA, about 7.6 mi (12.2 km) southeast of the southern portion of the SEZ.
32 The viewpoint is 2,600 ft (790 m) higher in elevation than the SEZ.

33
34 Despite the greatly increased distance, under the 80% development scenario
35 analyzed in this PEIS, solar facilities within the SEZ would still stretch across
36 most of the horizontal field of view. Because the viewpoint is so much higher
37 in elevation than the SEZ, the vertical angle of view between the viewpoint
38 and the SEZ is high enough that the tops of collector/reflector arrays of solar
39 facilities within the SEZ would be visible, which would make their large areal
40 extent and strong regular geometry more apparent, which would tend to
41 increase visual contrasts.

42
43 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, cooling
44 towers, and plumes (if present) would likely be visible projecting above the
45 collector/reflector arrays. The structural details of nearby facilities could be
46 evident. The ancillary facilities could create form and line contrasts



1

FIGURE 11.4.14.2-8 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Summit of Chief Mountain in Chief Mountain SRMA

2

3

4

5

1 with the strongly horizontal, regular, and repeating forms and lines of the
2 collector/reflector arrays. Color and texture contrasts would also be likely, but
3 their extent would depend on the materials and surface treatments utilized in
4 the facilities.

5
6 The receivers of operating power towers in the closest parts of the SEZ would
7 likely appear as points of light atop barely discernable tower structures, while
8 those farther from the viewpoint would have diminished brightness and less
9 detail visible. At night, sufficiently tall power towers could have flashing red
10 or white hazard lighting that would likely be visible from this viewpoint, and
11 could be conspicuous, given the dark night skies of this remote valley.

12
13 Because the SEZ would occupy so much of the horizontal field of view and
14 because of the elevated viewpoint, strong visual contrasts from solar energy
15 development within the SEZ would be expected at this viewpoint. However,
16 the actual contrast levels experienced would depend on project location within
17 the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and their designs, and other visibility
18 factors.

19
20 At lower elevations in the interior of the SRMA screening would block most
21 or all of the SEZ from view, and much weak levels of visual contrast would be
22 expected; however, there are areas where gaps in the intervening mountain
23 ranges are sufficient that moderate levels of visual contrast might result.
24 Overall, under the 80% development scenario, weak to strong visual contrasts
25 would be expected from solar energy facilities within the SEZ, as viewed
26 from portions of the Chief Mountain SRMA within the SEZ viewshed. The
27 highest contrast levels would be expected at higher elevations in the western
28 portion of the SRMA, with lower levels of contrast expected for lower
29 elevations, particularly in the eastern and southern portions of the SRMA,
30 where the low elevations and proximity of intervening mountains would
31 decrease visibility of the SEZ.

- 32
33 • *North Delamar*—The 202,839 acre (820.860 km²) North Delamar SRMA is
34 located about 11 mi (18 km) south of the SEZ, and the far northwestern
35 portion of the SRMA is within the SEZ viewshed. The area of the SRMA
36 within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes 6,386 acres
37 (25.84 km²), or 3% of the total SRMA acreage. The area of the SRMA within
38 the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes 3,983 acres (16.12 km²), or
39 2% of the total SRMA acreage. The visible area extends from the point of
40 closest approach to 22 mi (35 km) into the SRMA from the southern boundary
41 of the SEZ.

42
43 As shown in Figure 11.4.14.2-2, scattered areas across the northern portion of
44 the SRMA are within the SEZ viewshed, with the main area having potential
45 visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ being the far northwest corner of
46 the SRMA, at a distance of about 11 mi (18 km). Views of the SEZ are nearly

1 completely screened by mountains in the Burnt Springs Range north of the
2 SRMA, but a very small portion of the southwest corner of the SEZ could be
3 seen from the SRMA. Because of the extensive screening of views toward the
4 SEZ, the SEZ would occupy a very small portion of the horizontal field of
5 view, and visual contrasts from solar facilities within the SEZ would be
6 expected to be weak for viewpoints within the North Delamar SRMA.
7

- 8 • *Pahranagat*—The 298,567-acre (1,208.26-km²) Pahranagat SRMA is located
9 approximately 11 mi (18 km) southwest of the SEZ at the point of closest
10 approach. The primary recreational values for Pahranagat SRMA include
11 heritage tourism and motorized recreation (BLM 2007e).
12

13 Approximately 8,403 acres (34.01 km²), or 3% of the SRMA, are within the
14 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ, and 6,397 acres (25.89 km²), 2% of
15 the SRMA, are within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. The portions of the
16 SRMA within the viewshed extend from 17 mi (27 km) southwest of the SEZ
17 to beyond 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ.
18

19 As shown in Figure 11.4.14.2-2, the eastern slopes and bajada of the South
20 Pahroc Range within the SRMA are within the SEZ viewshed. Lower
21 elevation views of the SEZ are largely screened by intervening hills; however,
22 the highest elevations in the South Pahroc Range have more open views of the
23 southern end of the SEZ, and from some locations, the SEZ would occupy a
24 moderate amount of the field of view. The distance to the SEZ is far enough
25 that despite elevated viewpoints, the vertical angle of view to the SEZ is quite
26 low, and collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities in the SEZ would be seen
27 edge-on which would reduce their apparent size, conceal their strong regular
28 geometry, and cause them to appear to repeat the strong line of the horizon,
29 substantially reducing visual contrasts. In general, visual contrasts associated
30 with solar facilities within the SEZ would depend on viewer location, the
31 numbers, types, sizes and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and other
32 project- and site-specific factors. Under the 80% development scenario
33 analyzed in the PEIS, because of the long distance to the SEZ, low angle of
34 view and partial screening of the SEZ, contrasts would be expected to be
35 minimal to weak for viewpoints in the Pahranagat SRMA.
36
37

38 *Scenic Highways*

- 39 • *Highway 93*—U.S. 93 is a Nevada State Scenic Byway that is within 8.1 mi
40 (13 km) east and south of the SEZ. It is 149 mi (240 km) long, with some of
41 the highlights located between Caliente and Crystal Springs.
42
43

44 Approximately 9.5 mi (15.3 km) of the byway are within the 650-ft (198.1-m)
45 viewshed of the SEZ, and 9.3 mi (15.0 km) are within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m)
46 viewshed. Solar facilities within the SEZ would be in full view from U.S. 93

1 as travelers approached from both directions. For travelers approaching the
2 SEZ from Caliente, southeast of the SEZ, the SEZ would come into view
3 briefly about 13 mi (21 km) west of Caliente, and about 9 mi (14 km) from the
4 SEZ, disappear from view briefly, then become visible again about 1 minute
5 later, at 10 mi (17 km) from Caliente, and would remain in view for about
6 10 minutes as travelers moved westward.
7

8 Figure 11.4.14.2-9 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in
9 orange) as seen from U.S. 93 at about 9.2 mi (14.8 km) south-southwest of the
10 southernmost point in the SEZ. Within the viewshed, U.S. 93 is at the same or
11 slightly higher elevation than the southern end of the SEZ, so the angle of
12 view between the highway and the SEZ is very low. The visualization
13 suggests that the SEZ would occupy a substantial portion of the horizontal
14 field of view, but because of the low viewing angle, the SEZ would appear as
15 a very narrow band just under the line of mountains north and east of the SEZ.
16 Solar facilities located within the SEZ would be seen edge on and would
17 repeat the line of the horizon, which would tend to reduce visual contrast.
18

19 Facilities utilizing STGs might have plumes and other infrastructure
20 projecting above the arrays, and transmission lines and associated
21 infrastructure would be visible above the array as well. If power tower
22 facilities were located within the southern portion of the SEZ, the tower
23 structures and light sources atop the towers would be visible. The light from
24 the power tower receivers would likely appear as bright starlike points of light
25 against the backdrop of the distant mountain slopes. At night, if more than
26 200 ft (61 m) tall, power towers would have navigation warning lights that
27 would likely be visible from the roadway. Other lighting associated with solar
28 facilities could be visible as well.
29

30 Travelers approaching the SEZ from the west would have similar visual
31 experiences to those just described for westbound travelers; however, the SEZ
32 would come into view about 19 mi (31 km) east of the intersection of U.S. 93
33 and State Route 375 south of Hiko, 12 mi (19 km) southwest of the SEZ.
34 Under the 80% development scenario, up to moderate levels of visual contrast
35 would be expected from solar facilities within the SEZ, as seen from U.S. 93.
36

- 37 • *Silver State Trail*—Silver State Trail is a congressionally and BLM-designated
38 scenic byway that encircles much of the SEZ, in some areas at less than 3 mi
39 (5 km) from the SEZ. Approximately 100 mi (160 km) of the byway are
40 within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ, and about 75 mi (120 km)
41 are within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. About 35 mi of the trail are within
42 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ, while the farthest point on the trail within the SEZ
43 25 mi (40 km) viewshed are about 20 mi (32 km) from the SEZ, thus contrast
44 levels associated with solar facilities in the SEZ would vary widely, with
45 strong contrasts at the closest distances, especially where the trail was
46



FIGURE 11.4.14.2-9 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models, as Seen from Viewpoint on U.S. 93, 9.2 mi South of the SEZ

1 elevated with respect to the SEZ, and minimal to weak contrasts at the longest
2 distances.

3
4 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, at or near the
5 points on the trail closest to the SEZ, solar facilities within the SEZ would
6 stretch across most or all of the horizontal field of view. In many places, the
7 SEZ would be too large to be encompassed in one view, and viewers would
8 need to turn their heads to scan across the whole SEZ. Because the viewpoints
9 would be close in elevation to the nearby SEZ, the vertical angle of view
10 between the viewpoint and the SEZ would be low, and the collector/reflector
11 arrays of solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen edge on, which would
12 reduce their apparent size, conceal their strong regular geometry, and cause
13 them to appear to repeat the strong horizon line, all of which would tend to
14 decrease visual contrasts. In some locations, however, if facilities were
15 located in the closest parts of the SEZ, however, the array components could
16 be so close to the viewer that their individual forms could be apparent, and
17 they might not appear as a line against the horizon.

18
19 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, cooling
20 towers, and plumes (if present) would likely be visible projecting above the
21 collector/reflector arrays. The structural details of nearby facilities could be
22 evident. The ancillary facilities could create form and line contrasts with the
23 strongly horizontal, regular, and repeating forms and lines of the collector/
24 reflector arrays. Color and texture contrasts would also be likely, but their
25 extent would depend on the materials and surface treatments utilized in the
26 facilities.

27
28 From many points on the trail, the receivers of operating power towers in the
29 closest parts of the SEZ would likely appear as brilliant white non-point light
30 sources atop tower structures with clearly discernable structural details, while
31 those farther from the viewpoint would have diminished brightness and less
32 detail visible. Also, under certain viewing conditions, sunlight on dust
33 particles in the air might result in the appearance of light streaming down
34 from the tower(s). At night, sufficiently tall power towers could have flashing
35 red or white hazard lighting that could be visible for long distances, and would
36 likely be very conspicuous from many points on the trail, given the dark night
37 skies of this remote valley. Other light sources associated with the solar
38 facilities within the SEZ would likely be visible as well.

39
40 Because the SEZ would occupy most or all of the horizontal field of view, and
41 because of the potentially very close proximity of solar facilities to the trail,
42 strong visual contrasts from solar energy development within the SEZ would
43 be expected for many locations in the portions of the trail closest to the SEZ.
44 However, the actual contrast levels experienced would depend on project
45 location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and their designs, and
46 other visibility factors.

1 For those portions of the trail much farther from the SEZ (especially north of
2 the SEZ) the SEZ would occupy less of the horizontal field of view, but in
3 general, only for those portions of the trail north of the SEZ would contrasts
4 fall to weak levels, and for much of the trail, contrasts would not be expected
5 to fall to even moderate levels.
6

7 Additional scenic resources exist at the national, state, and local levels, and impacts may
8 occur on both federal and nonfederal lands, including sensitive traditional cultural properties
9 important to Tribes. Note that in addition to the resource types and specific resources analyzed
10 in this PEIS, future site-specific NEPA analyses would include state and local parks, recreation
11 areas, other nonfederal sensitive visual resources, and communities close enough to the proposed
12 project to be affected by visual impacts. Selected nonfederal lands and resources are included in
13 the discussion below.
14

15 In addition to impacts associated with the solar energy facilities themselves, sensitive
16 visual resources could be affected by facilities that would be built and operated in conjunction
17 with the solar facilities. With respect to visual impacts, the most important associated facilities
18 would be access roads and transmission lines, the precise location of which cannot be determined
19 until a specific solar energy project is proposed. Currently a 69-kV transmission line is located
20 within the proposed SEZ, so construction and operation of a transmission line outside the
21 proposed SEZ would not be required; however, within the SEZ, transmission lines would have
22 to be constructed to connect facilities to the existing line. For this analysis, the impacts of
23 construction and operation of transmission lines outside of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming
24 that the existing 69-kV transmission line might be used to connect some new solar facilities to
25 load centers, and that additional project-specific analysis would be done for new transmission
26 construction or line upgrades.
27

28 Depending on project- and site-specific conditions, visual impacts associated with access
29 roads, and particularly transmission lines, could be large. Detailed information about visual
30 impacts associated with transmission lines is presented in Section 5.12.1. A detailed site-specific
31 NEPA analysis would be required to determine visibility and associated impacts precisely for
32 any future solar projects, based on more precise knowledge of facility location and
33 characteristics.
34
35

36 *Other impacts.* In addition to the impacts described for the resource areas above, nearby
37 residents and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities
38 located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) from their
39 residences, or as they travel area roads. The range of impacts experienced would be highly
40 dependent on viewer location, project types, locations, sizes, and layouts, as well as the presence
41 of screening, but under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, from some
42 locations, strong visual contrasts from solar development within the SEZ could potentially be
43 observed.
44
45
46

1 **11.4.14.2.3 Summary of Visual Resource Impacts for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley**
2 **North SEZ**
3

4 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, the SEZ would contain
5 multiple solar facilities utilizing differing solar technologies, as well as a variety of roads and
6 ancillary facilities. The array of facilities could create a visually complex landscape that would
7 contrast strongly with the strongly horizontal landscape of the flat valley in which the SEZ is
8 located. Large visual impacts on the SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed would
9 be associated with solar energy development because of major modification of the character of
10 the existing landscape. There is the potential for additional impacts from construction and
11 operation of transmission lines and access roads within the SEZ.
12

13 The SEZ is in an area of low scenic quality, with some cultural disturbances already
14 present. Local residents, workers, and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from
15 solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and
16 transmission lines) as they travel area roads.
17

18 Large segments of the Silver State Trail Scenic Byway are within the viewshed of the
19 SEZ at distances less than 5 mi (8 km), and therefore would be subject to strong visual contrasts
20 associated with the development of solar facilities in the SEZ under the 80% development
21 scenario analyzed in this PEIS. No other highly sensitive visual resource areas are located within
22 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ. However, utility-scale solar energy development within the proposed
23 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is likely to result in strong visual contrasts for some viewpoints
24 within the Big Rocks and Weepah Spring WAs and the Chief Mountain SRMA. Moderate visual
25 contrasts would be expected for some viewpoints along U.S. 93, a state-designated scenic
26 byway. Weak visual contrasts would be expected for other highly sensitive visual resource areas
27 within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ.
28
29

30 **11.4.14.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
31

32 No SEZ-specific design features have been identified to protect visual resources for the
33 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. As noted in Section 5.12, the presence and operation of
34 large-scale solar energy facilities and equipment would introduce major visual changes into non-
35 industrialized landscapes and could create strong visual contrasts in line, form, color, and texture
36 that could not easily be mitigated substantially. Implementation of design features intended to
37 reduce visual impacts (described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, of this PEIS) would be expected
38 to reduce visual impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy development within the SEZ;
39 however, the degree of effectiveness of these design features could be assessed only at the site-
40 and project-specific level. Given the large-scale, reflective surfaces, strong regular geometry of
41 utility-scale solar energy facilities, and the lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the
42 SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities away from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive
43 viewing areas is the primary means of mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other
44 visual impact mitigation measures would generally be limited.
45

1 **11.4.15 Acoustic Environment**

2
3
4 **11.4.15.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located in southeastern Nevada, in the north
7 central portion of Lincoln County. Neither the State of Nevada nor Lincoln County has
8 established quantitative noise-limit regulations.
9

10 U.S. 93 runs east–west as close as about 8 mi (13 km) to the south and runs south–north
11 as close as about 8 mi (13 km) to the east of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. State
12 Route 318 runs south–north as close as 8 mi (13 km) to the west of the SEZ. Numerous dirt roads
13 cross the SEZ or access livestock facilities in the area. The nearest railroad runs about 14 mi
14 (23 km) southeast of the SEZ. Nearby airports include Lincoln County Airport in Panaca and
15 Alamo Landing Field in Alamo, which are about 13 mi (21 km) south–southeast of and 35 mi
16 (56 km) southwest of the SEZ. No industrial activities except grazing are located around the
17 SEZ. Large-scale irrigated agricultural lands are situated around the SEZ but more than 12 mi
18 (19 km) from the SEZ boundary. Private land on the east central side of the SEZ has a few ranch
19 buildings. No sensitive receptors (e.g., hospitals, schools, or nursing homes) exist around the
20 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. No human receptors are located around the SEZ. The
21 closest communities include Caselton and Prince, about 10 mi (16 km) east of the SEZ. The
22 nearby population centers with schools are Pioche, about 12 mi (19 km) east of the SEZ; Panaca,
23 about 14 mi (23 km) east–southeast; and Caliente, about 14 mi (23 km) southeast. Accordingly,
24 noise sources around the SEZ include road traffic, aircraft flyover, and cattle grazing. Other
25 noise sources are associated with current land use around the SEZ, including outdoor recreation
26 and OHV use. The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is isolated and undeveloped, the
27 overall character of which is considered wilderness to rural. To date, no environmental noise
28 survey has been conducted around the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. On the basis of the
29 population density, the day-night average noise level (L_{dn} or DNL) is estimated to be 18 dBA for
30 Lincoln County, well below the range of 33 to 47 dBA L_{dn} typical of a rural area (Eldred 1982;
31 Miller 2002).¹²
32
33

34 **11.4.15.2 Impacts**

35
36 Potential noise impacts associated with solar projects in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
37 would occur during all phases of the projects. During the construction phase, potential noise
38 impacts associated with operation of heavy equipment on the nearest residences at Caselton and
39 Prince (about 10 mi [16 km] to the east of the SEZ boundary) would be anticipated to be minimal
40 because of considerable separation distances. During the operations phase, potential noise
41 impacts on the nearest residences would be anticipated to be minimal as well. However, if the
42 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ were fully developed, potential noise impacts on residences along

¹² Rural and undeveloped areas have sound levels in the range of 33 to 47 dBA as L_{dn} (Eldred 1982). Typically, the nighttime level is 10 dBA lower than the daytime level, and it can be interpreted as 33 to 47 dBA (mean 40 dBA) during daytime hours and 23 to 37 dBA (mean 30 dBA) during nighttime hours.

1 the roads would likely be due to commuter, visitor, support, and delivery vehicular traffic to and
2 from the SEZ. Noise impacts shared by all solar technologies are discussed in detail in
3 Section 5.13.1, and technology-specific impacts are presented in Section 5.13.2. Impacts specific
4 to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are presented in this section. Any such impacts
5 would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design features
6 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any additional SEZ-specific design features
7 applied (see Section 11.4.15.3). This section primarily addresses potential noise impacts on
8 humans, although potential impacts on wildlife at nearby sensitive areas are discussed.
9 Additional discussion on potential noise impacts on wildlife is presented in Section 5.10.2.

11.4.15.2.1 Construction

10
11
12
13
14 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ has a relatively flat terrain; thus, minimal site
15 preparation activities would be required, and associated noise levels would be lower than those
16 during general construction (e.g., erecting building structures and installing equipment, piping,
17 and electrical).

18
19 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, the highest construction noise
20 levels would occur at the power block area where key components (e.g., steam turbine/generator)
21 needed to generate electricity are located; a maximum of 95 dBA at a distance of 50 ft (15 m) is
22 assumed, if impact equipment such as pile drivers or rock drills is not being used. Typically, the
23 power block area is located in the center of the solar facility, at a distance of more than 0.5 mi
24 (0.8 km) from the facility boundary. Noise levels from construction of the solar array would be
25 lower than 95 dBA. When geometric spreading and ground effects are considered, as explained
26 in Section 4.13.1, noise levels would attenuate to about 40 dBA at a distance of 1.2 mi (1.9 km)
27 from the power block area. This noise level is typical of daytime mean rural background levels.
28 In addition, mid- and high-frequency noise from construction activities is significantly attenuated
29 by atmospheric absorption under the low-humidity conditions typical of an arid desert
30 environment and by temperature lapse conditions typical of daytime hours; thus noise attenuation
31 to a 40-dBA level would occur at distances somewhat shorter than 1.2 mi (1.9 km). If a 10-hour
32 daytime work schedule is considered, the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential
33 areas (EPA 1974) would occur about 1,200 ft (370 m) from the power block area, which would
34 be well within the facility boundary. For construction activities occurring near the southeastern
35 SEZ boundary, estimated noise levels at the nearest residences would be about 16 dBA,¹³ which
36 is well below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. In addition, an
37 estimated 40-dBA L_{dn} ¹⁴ at these residences (i.e., no contribution from construction activities) is
38 well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.

39
40

¹³ Although high mountain ranges are located between the SEZ and the nearest residences, it is conservatively assumed that these are located on a flat terrain.

¹⁴ For this analysis, background levels of 40 and 30 dBA for daytime and nighttime hours, respectively, are assumed, which result in a day-night average noise level (L_{dn}) of 40 dBA.

1 It is assumed that a maximum of three projects would be developed at any one time for
2 SEZs greater than 30,000 acres (121.4 km²), such as the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. If three
3 projects were to be built in the eastern portion of the SEZ near the closest residences, noise levels
4 would be about 5 dBA higher than the above-mentioned values. These levels would still be well
5 below the typical daytime mean rural background level, and thus their contribution to the
6 existing L_{dn} would be minimal.

7
8 There is one specially designated area within a 5-mi (8-km) range from the Dry Lake
9 Valley North, which is the farthest distance that noise, except extremely loud noise, would be
10 discernable. The Chief Mountains SRMA, adjacent to the southern SEZ, is managed primarily
11 for motorized OHV recreation, and thus noise is not likely to be an issue at this SRMA. No noise
12 impact analysis for other specially designated areas farther than 5 mi (8 km) was made.

13
14 Depending on soil conditions, pile driving might be required for installation of solar dish
15 engines. However, the pile drivers used, such as vibratory or sonic drivers, would be relatively
16 small and quiet, in contrast to the impulsive impact pile drivers frequently used at large-scale
17 construction sites. Potential impacts on the nearest residences would be anticipated to be
18 negligible, considering the distance (about 10 mi [16 km] from the SEZ boundary).

19
20 It is assumed that most construction activities would occur during the day, when noise is
21 better tolerated than at night because of the masking effects of background noise. In addition,
22 construction activities for a utility-scale facility are temporary in nature (typically a few years).
23 Construction within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ would cause minimal unavoidable
24 but localized short-term noise impacts on neighboring communities, even when construction
25 activities would occur near the southeastern SEZ boundary, close to the nearest residences.

26
27 Construction activities could result in various degrees of ground vibration, depending
28 on the equipment used and construction methods employed. All construction equipment causes
29 ground vibration to some degree, but activities that typically generate the most severe vibrations
30 are high-explosive detonations and impact pile driving. As is the case for noise, vibration would
31 diminish in strength with distance. For example, vibration levels at receptors beyond 140 ft
32 (43 m) from a large bulldozer (87 VdB at 25 ft [7.6 m]) would diminish below the threshold of
33 perception for humans, which is about 65 VdB (Hanson et al. 2006). During the construction
34 phase, no major construction equipment that can cause ground vibration would be used, and no
35 residences or sensitive structures are close. Therefore, no adverse vibration impacts are
36 anticipated from construction activities, including pile driving for dish engines.

37
38 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
39 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 69-kV transmission line might
40 be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-specific
41 analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However, some
42 construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ. Potential noise impacts on nearby
43 residences would be a negligible component of construction impacts and would be temporary in
44 nature.

1 **11.4.15.2.2 Operations**

2
3 Noise sources common to all or most types of solar technologies include equipment
4 motion from solar tracking, maintenance and repair activities (e.g., washing mirrors or replacing
5 broken mirrors) at the solar array area, commuter/visitor/support/delivery traffic within and
6 around the solar facility, and control/administrative buildings, warehouses, and other auxiliary
7 buildings/structures. Diesel-fired emergency power generators and firewater pump engines
8 would be additional sources of noise, but their operations would be limited to several hours per
9 month (for preventive maintenance testing).

10
11 With respect to the main solar energy technologies, noise-generating activities in the
12 PV solar array area would be minimal, related mainly to solar tracking, if used. On the other
13 hand, dish engine technology, which employs collector and converter devices in a single unit,
14 generally has the strongest noise sources.

15
16 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, most noise sources during
17 operations would be in the power block area, including the turbine generator (typically in an
18 enclosure), pumps, boilers, and dry- or wet-cooling systems. The power block is typically
19 located in the center of the facility. On the basis of a 250-MW parabolic trough facility with a
20 cooling tower (Beacon Solar, LLC 2008), simple noise modeling indicates that noise levels
21 around the power block would be more than 85 dBA, but about 51 dBA at the facility boundary,
22 about 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from the power block area. For a facility located near the southeastern
23 SEZ boundary, the predicted noise level would be about 22 dBA at the nearest residences, about
24 10 mi (16 km) from the SEZ boundary, which is much lower than the typical daytime mean rural
25 background level of 40 dBA. If TES were not used (i.e., if the operation were limited to daytime,
26 12 hours only¹⁵), the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA (as L_{dn} for residential areas) would occur at
27 about 1,370 ft (420 m) from the power block area and thus would not be exceeded outside of the
28 proposed SEZ boundary. At the nearest residences, about 40 dBA L_{dn} (i.e., no contribution from
29 facility operation) would be estimated, which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for
30 residential areas. As for construction, if three parabolic trough and/or power tower facilities were
31 operating around the nearest residences, combined noise levels would be about 5 dBA higher
32 than the above-mentioned values. These levels are still well below the typical daytime mean
33 rural background level of 40 dBA, and their contribution to existing L_{dn} level would be minimal.
34 However, day-night average noise levels higher than those estimated above by using simple
35 noise modeling would be anticipated if TES were used during nighttime hours, as explained
36 below and in Section 4.13.1.

37
38 On a calm, clear night typical of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ setting, the
39 air temperature would likely increase with height (temperature inversion) because of strong
40 radiative cooling. Such a temperature profile tends to focus noise downward toward the ground.
41 There would be little, if any, shadow zone¹⁶ within 1 or 2 mi (1.6 or 3 km) of the noise source in
42 the presence of a strong temperature inversion (Beranek 1988). In particular, such conditions

15 Maximum possible operating hours at the summer solstice, but limited to 7 to 8 hours at the winter solstice.

16 A shadow zone is defined as the region in which direct sound does not penetrate because of upward diffraction.

1 add to the effect of noise being more discernable during nighttime hours, when the background
2 noise levels are lowest. To estimate the day-night average noise level (L_{dn}), 6-hour nighttime
3 generation with TES is assumed after 12-hour daytime generation. For nighttime hours under
4 temperature inversion, 10 dB is added to noise levels estimated from the uniform atmosphere
5 (see Section 4.13.1). On the basis of these assumptions, the estimated nighttime noise level at the
6 nearest residences (about 10 mi [16 km] from the SEZ boundary) would be 32 dBA, which is a
7 little higher than the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. However, the
8 noise level would be much lower than this value if an air absorption algorithm, among other
9 attenuation mechanisms, were considered. The day-night average noise level is estimated to be
10 about 41 dBA L_{dn} , which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.
11 The assumptions are conservative in terms of operating hours, and no credit was given to other
12 attenuation mechanisms, so it is likely that noise levels would be lower than 41 dBA L_{dn} at the
13 nearest residences, even if TES were used at a solar facility. Consequently, operating parabolic
14 trough or power tower facilities using TES and located near the southeastern SEZ boundary
15 could result in minimal adverse noise impacts on the nearest residences, depending on
16 background noise levels and meteorological conditions.

17
18 The solar dish engine is unique among CSP technologies because it generates electricity
19 directly and does not require a power block. A single, large solar dish engine has relatively low
20 noise levels, but a solar facility might employ tens of thousands of dish engines, which would
21 cause high noise levels around such a facility. For example, the proposed 750-MW SES Solar
22 Two dish engine facility in California would employ as many as 30,000 dish engines (SES Solar
23 Two, LLC 2008). At the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, on the basis of the assumption of
24 dish engine facilities of up to 6,833-MW total capacity (covering 80% of the total area, or
25 61,499 acres [248.9 km²]), up to 273,330 25-kW dish engines could be employed. For a large
26 dish engine facility, several thousand step-up transformers would be embedded in the dish engine
27 solar field, along with a substation; however, the noise from these sources would be masked by
28 dish engine noise.

29
30 The composite noise level of a single dish engine would be about 88 dBA at a distance of
31 3 ft (0.9 m) (SES Solar Two, LLC 2008). This noise level would be attenuated to about 40 dBA
32 (typical of the mean rural daytime environment) within 330 ft (100 m). However, the combined
33 noise level from hundreds of thousands of dish engines operating simultaneously would be high
34 in the immediate vicinity of the facility, for example, about 52 dBA at 1.0 mi (1.6 km) and
35 50 dBA at 2 mi (3 km) from the boundary of the square-shaped dish engine solar field; both
36 values are higher than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. However,
37 these levels would occur at somewhat shorter distances than the aforementioned distances,
38 considering noise attenuation by atmospheric absorption and temperature lapse during daytime
39 hours. To estimate noise levels at the nearest residences, it was assumed dish engines were
40 placed all over the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ at intervals of 98 ft (30 m). Under these
41 assumptions, the estimated noise level at the nearest residences, about 10 mi (16 km) from the
42 SEZ boundary, would be about 39 dBA, which is below the typical daytime mean rural
43 background level of 40 dBA. On the basis of 12-hr daytime operation, the estimated 41 dBA L_{dn}
44 at these residences is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. On the
45 basis of other noise attenuation mechanisms, noise levels at the nearest residences would be

1 lower than the values estimated above, and thus potential impacts on nearby residences would be
2 anticipated to be minimal.

3
4 During operations, no major ground-vibrating equipment would be used. In addition,
5 no sensitive structures are located close enough to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ to
6 experience physical damage. Therefore, during operation of any solar facility, potential vibration
7 impacts on surrounding communities and vibration-sensitive structures would be negligible.
8

9 Transformer-generated humming noise and switchyard impulsive noises would be
10 generated during the operation of solar facilities. These noise sources would be located near the
11 power block area, typically near the center of a solar facility. Noise from these sources would
12 generally be limited within the facility boundary and not be heard at the nearest residences,
13 assuming a 10.5-mi (16.8-km) distance (at least 0.5 mi [0.8 km] to the facility boundary and
14 10 mi [16 km] to the nearest residences). Accordingly, potential impacts of these noise sources
15 on the nearest residences would be negligible.
16

17 For impacts from transmission line corona discharge noise during rainfall events
18 (discussed in Section 5.13.1.5), the noise level at 50 ft (15 m) and 300 ft (91 m) from the
19 center of 230-kV transmission line towers would be about 39 and 31 dBA (Lee et al. 1996),
20 respectively, typical of daytime and nighttime mean background noise levels in rural
21 environments. Corona noise includes high-frequency components, considered to be more
22 annoying than low-frequency environmental noise. However, corona noise would not likely
23 cause impacts unless a residence was close to it (e.g., within 500 ft [152 m] of a 230-kV
24 transmission line). The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located in an arid desert
25 environment, and incidents of corona discharge are infrequent. Therefore, potential impacts
26 on nearby residences from corona noise along transmission lines within the SEZ would be
27 negligible.
28
29

30 ***11.4.15.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation***

31
32 Decommissioning/reclamation requires many of the same procedures and equipment
33 used in traditional construction. Decommissioning/reclamation would include dismantling of
34 solar facilities and support facilities such as buildings/structures and mechanical/electrical
35 installations, disposal of debris, grading, and revegetation as needed. Activities for
36 decommissioning would be similar to those for construction but more limited. Potential noise
37 impacts on surrounding communities would be correspondingly lower than those for
38 construction activities. Decommissioning activities would be of short duration, and their
39 potential impacts would be minimal and temporary in nature. The same mitigation measures
40 adopted during the construction phase could also be implemented during the decommissioning
41 phase.
42

43 Similarly, potential vibration impacts on surrounding communities and vibration-
44 sensitive structures during decommissioning of any solar facility would be lower than those
45 during construction and thus negligible.
46
47

1 **11.4.15.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
4 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for noise impacts from
5 development and operation of solar energy facilities. Due to the considerable separation
6 distances, activities within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ during construction and
7 operation would be anticipated to cause only minimal increases in noise levels at the nearest
8 residences and specially designated areas. Accordingly, SEZ-specific design features are not
9 required.

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1 **11.4.16 Paleontological Resources**

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3
4 **11.4.16.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The surface geology of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is predominantly
7 composed of thick alluvial deposits (more than 100 ft [30 m] thick) ranging in age from the
8 Pliocene to Holocene with some playa deposits of similar age in the southern portion of the SEZ.
9 The total acreage of the alluvial deposits within the SEZ is 69,760 acres (282 km²), or nearly
10 91% of the SEZ; 9% of the SEZ is composed of 7,114 acres (29 km²) playa deposits. In the
11 absence of a PFYC map for Nevada, a preliminary classification of PFYC Class 3b is assumed
12 for the playa deposits. Class 3b indicates that the potential for the occurrence of significant
13 fossil materials is unknown and needs to be investigated further (see Section 4.8 for a discussion
14 of the PFYC system). A preliminary classification of PFYC Class 2 is assumed for the young
15 Quaternary alluvial deposits, similar to that assumed for the Amargosa Valley SEZ
16 (Section 11.1.16). Class 2 indicates that the potential for the occurrence of significant fossil
17 material is low.
18

19
20 **11.4.16.2 Impacts**

21
22 Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely to occur in 91%
23 of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological
24 deposits of the SEZ is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted. If the
25 geological deposits are determined to be as described above and are classified as PFYC Class 2,
26 further assessment of paleontological resources in most of the SEZ is not likely to be necessary.
27 Important resources could exist; if identified, they would need to be managed on a case-by-case
28 basis. The potential for impacts on significant paleontological resources in the remaining 9% of
29 the SEZ is unknown. A more detailed investigation of the playa deposits is needed prior to
30 project approval. A paleontological survey will likely be needed following consultation with the
31 BLM. The appropriate course of action would be determined as established in BLM IM2008-009
32 and IM2009-011 (BLM 2007d, 2008b). Section 5.14 discusses the types of impacts that could
33 occur on any significant paleontological resources found to be present within the Dry Lake
34 Valley North SEZ. Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
35 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
36

37 Indirect impacts on paleontological resources outside of the SEZ, such as through looting
38 or vandalism, are unknown but unlikely because any such resources would be below the surface
39 and not readily accessed. Programmatic design features for controlling water runoff and
40 sedimentation would prevent erosion-related impacts on buried deposits outside of the SEZ.
41

42 Approximately 8 mi (13 km) of access road is anticipated to connect to U.S. 93, south of
43 the SEZ resulting in approximately 58 acres (0.23 km²) of disturbance in areas predominantly
44 composed of alluvial sediments (preliminarily classified as PFYC Class 2). Direct impacts
45 during construction are not anticipated in PFYC Class 2 areas. Although it is assumed elsewhere
46 in this PEIS that 7 mi (11.3 km) of access road is assumed to connect to State Route 318 instead

1 of U.S. 93, this alternative route would result in a greater potential for impacts on paleontological
2 resources. The amount of disturbance is less (51 acres [0.21 km²]), but the disturbance would
3 occur in both alluvial sediments (PFYC Class 2) and areas of residual deposits in carbonate rocks
4 (preliminarily classified as PFYC Class 3b areas). Direct impacts during construction are not
5 anticipated in PFYC Class 2 areas, but could occur in PFYC Class 3b areas. A more detailed
6 investigation of residual deposits would be needed prior to project approval. No new
7 transmission lines are currently anticipated for the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ,
8 assuming existing lines would be used. Impacts on paleontological resources related to the
9 creation of new corridors not assessed in this PEIS would be evaluated at the project-specific
10 level if new road or transmission construction or line upgrades are to occur.

11
12 A programmatic design feature requiring a stop-work order in the event of an inadvertent
13 discovery of paleontological resources would reduce impacts by preserving some information
14 and allowing excavation of the resource, if warranted. Depending on the significance of the find,
15 it could also result in some modification to the project footprint. Since the SEZ is located in an
16 area partially classified as PFYC Class 3b, a stipulation would be included in permitting
17 documents to alert solar energy developers of the possibility of a delay if paleontological
18 resources were uncovered during surface-disturbing activities.

19 20 21 **11.4.16.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

22
23 Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic
24 design features, including a stop-work stipulation in the event that paleontological resources are
25 encountered during construction, as described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.

26
27 If the geological deposits are determined to be as described above and are classified as
28 PFYC Class 2, mitigation of paleontological resources within 91% of the proposed Dry Lake
29 Valley North SEZ would not likely be necessary. The need for and the nature of any SEZ-
30 specific design features for the remaining 9% of the SEZ would depend on the results of future
31 paleontological investigations.

1 **11.4.17 Cultural Resources**

2
3
4 **11.4.17.1 Affected Environment**

5
6
7 **11.4.17.1.1 Prehistory**

8
9 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located in the Great Basin region. The
10 earliest known use of the area was likely during the Paleoindian Period, sometime between
11 12,000 and 10,000 B.P. Surface finds of Paleoindian fluted projectile points, the hallmark of the
12 Clovis culture, have been found in the area, but no sites with any stratigraphic context have been
13 excavated. The Clovis culture is characterized by the aforementioned fluted projectile point and
14 a hunting and gathering subsistence economy that followed migrating herds of Pleistocene
15 mega fauna. The ambiguity of Paleoindian occupation in the Great Basin has given rise to the
16 assumption that the people of this time period may have been inclined to subsist off of the lake
17 and marsh habitats provided by the ancient Pleistocene pluvial lakes that occupied a large portion
18 of the Great Basin; consequently, these sites are difficult to find because they have been buried
19 by the ebb and flow of the pluvial lakes. The cultural material associated with the pluvial lake
20 habitations is referred to as the Western Pluvial Lakes Tradition. It is likely that these people did
21 not rely entirely on the marshland habitats, but were nomadic hunters and gatherers who relied
22 on both the wetland resources and those resources located away from the pluvial lakes. The
23 archaeological assemblage associated with this cultural tradition is characterized by stemmed
24 projectile points, leaf-shaped bifaces, scrapers, crescents, and in some cases ground stone tools
25 for milling plant material. Often, projectile points and tools were made from locally procured
26 obsidian, sources of which are not far from the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, and
27 include Kane Springs Wash and Meadow Valley Wash about 30 mi (48 km) to the southeast,
28 South Pahroc about 10 mi (16 km) to the southwest, Modena about 40 mi (64 km) east, and
29 Pierson Summit about 35 mi (56 km) northeast. Exploiting these sources of obsidian and
30 collecting raw materials for tool manufacture were a part of a larger resource exploitation
31 system, in which groups moved in seasonal rounds to take advantage of resources in different
32 localities (Haarklau et al. 2005; Fowler and Madsen 1986; Hockett et al. 2008).

33
34 The Archaic Period in the region began with the recession of most of the pluvial lakes in
35 the area, about 8,000 to 6,000 B.P., and extended to about 4,000 B.P. Archaic Period groups
36 likely still congregated around marsh areas, but also used the vast caves that can be found in the
37 mountains of the Great Basin. The settlement system in some areas was likely based around a
38 central base camp, with temporary camps located on the margins of their territory to exploit
39 resources that were not in the immediate vicinity of the base camp. Some of the key Archaic
40 Period sites in the area located near the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are Stuart
41 Rockshelter in the lower Meadow Valley Wash area, and Etna Cave, Conway Shelter, and
42 O'Malley Shelter in the upper portions of the Meadow Valley Wash area just east of the SEZ.
43 The Lake Lahontan Basin, a large Pleistocene pluvial lake that was located northeast of the SEZ,
44 was also a place where several early Archaic period sites have been documented; the Archaic
45 archaeological assemblage from these sites maintains some cultural continuity with the previous

1 period, consisting of large notched points, leaf-shaped bifaces, scrapers, drills, graters, and
2 manos and metates (Fowler and Madsen 1986; Neusius and Gross 2007).

3
4 During the Middle Archaic Period, 4,000 to 1,500 B.P., there was a climatic shift known
5 as the Little Pluvial, a wetter and cooler climate that caused some of the pluvial lakes to fill back
6 up. The cultural material of this time period is similar to the Early Archaic, with an increased
7 concentration of milling stones, mortars and pestles, and the appearance of normally perishable
8 items that become well preserved in the arid Great Basin climate, such as wicker baskets, split-
9 twig figurines, duck decoys, and woven sandals (Neusius and Gross 2007).

10
11 In the vicinity of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, the Late Archaic period
12 began around 1,500 B.P., and extended until about 800 B.P. This period saw major technological
13 shifts, evidenced by smaller projectile points that were more useful because groups began using
14 bow-and-arrow technology instead of the atlatl and dart technology, and changes in subsistence
15 techniques, particularly in the use of horticulture. In some areas, the Formative Era began around
16 1,500 B.P., and the proposed SEZ is situated in an area that borders both the formative Fremont
17 and Virgin Anasazi cultures. In areas where these Formative cultures were not present, the Late
18 Archaic lifeways persisted. A temporary camp, a resource procurement and workshop site
19 (Site LN2698) from the Middle to Late Archaic Period, was documented associated with the dry
20 lake in the southern portion of the SEZ. The Fremont culture was located in most of Utah, north
21 of the Colorado, Escalante, and Virgin Rivers, and in portions of eastern Nevada and western
22 Colorado. The culture is characterized by the use of agricultural and hunting and gathering
23 subsistence practices, distinctive gray ware pottery, rod-and-bundle basketry, anthropomorphic
24 rock art, and leather moccasins. A site with diagnostic Fremont-style pottery of the Sevier
25 Fremont branch was documented at a site in the southern portion of the proposed Dry Lake
26 Valley North SEZ related to dry lake resource procurement and processing (Site LN2691). The
27 Virgin Anasazi culture was an extension of the Puebloan groups from the American Southwest
28 into the Great Basin region. These groups brought with them the knowledge of horticulture,
29 which they used on the floodplains of the river valleys which they inhabited. Pueblo Grande de
30 Nevada, located south of the SEZ near Overton, Nevada, is a prime example of the extensive
31 settlements of the Virgin Anasazi culture in the vicinity. Characteristic of this period are gray
32 ware ceramics (sometimes decorated), rock art and intaglios, bedrock milling features, and
33 turquoise mining. Both the Fremont and Virgin Anasazi groups had left the region by about 800
34 to 1000 B.P., at which time the Numic-speaking groups migrated into the region; however, the
35 exact timing of these events is unclear and is a subject for further research in the region. These
36 Numic-speaking people were the descendents of the Southern Paiute, and the archaeological
37 assemblage associated with this time period consists of Desert Series projectile points, brown
38 ware ceramics, unshaped manos and millstones, incised stones, mortars, pestles, and shell
39 beads. The following section describes the cultural history of the time period in greater detail.

40 41 42 ***11.4.17.1.2 Ethnohistory***

43
44 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located within the traditional use area of the
45 Southern Paiute. Southern Paiute groups tended to be wide ranging and often shared resources.
46 The SEZ lies at the western edge of the core area of the Panaca Band, which stretched from the

1 Indian Peaks Range, northwest of Cedar City, Utah, to the Pahroc Range in Nevada (Kelly 1934;
2 Kelly and Fowler 1986). Near the northern limits of Southern Paiute territory, the SEZ may have
3 been known to Western Shoshone, who reportedly camped in the Pioche Hills (Stoffle and
4 Dobyns 1983).

7 **Southern Paiute**

9 The Southern Paiute appear to have moved into southern Nevada and southwestern Utah
10 about A.D. 1150 (Euler 1964). Most of the territory occupied by the Southern Paiute lies within
11 the Mojave Desert, stretching from the high Colorado Plateaus westward through canyon country
12 and southwestward following the bend in the Colorado River through the Basin and Range
13 geologic province into southeastern California. The territory includes several different vegetation
14 zones reflected in corresponding differences in Southern Paiute subsistence practices. There is
15 some evidence that before the arrival of Euro-American colonists, the Southern Paiute may have
16 been organized on a tribal level under the ritual leadership of High Chiefs, and that their territory
17 was bound together by a network of trails used by specialist runners (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983).
18 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ falls within *Paranayi*, the western subdivision of the
19 Southern Paiute Nation (Stoffle et al. 1997).

21 When first described by ethnographers, Southern Paiute groups had survived a 75%
22 reduction in population resulting from the spread of European diseases, Ute slave raids, and
23 displacement from high-quality resource areas by Euro-American settlers. They did not maintain
24 any overall tribal organization; territories were self-sufficient economically; and the only known
25 organizations were kin-based bands, often no larger than that of a nuclear family (Kelly and
26 Fowler 1986). The Southern Paiute practiced a mixed subsistence economy. They maintained
27 floodplain and irrigated agricultural fields and husbanded wild plants through transplanting,
28 pruning, burning, and irrigation. They supplemented their food supply by hunting and fishing
29 (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). The Panaca Band is reported to have maintained gardens on the
30 margins of seasonal lakes (Kelly and Fowler 1986) and along Meadow Valley Wash (Stoffle and
31 Dobyns 1983). The diet of the Southern Paiute was varied, but the harsh climate of the area at
32 times made subsistence precarious. They made use of a wide variety of indigenous plants.
33 Botanical knowledge was maintained primarily by the women, and this knowledge of seasonal
34 plant exploitation meant that at times the agricultural fields would have been little maintained
35 while groups were away from their base camp gathering resources (Stoffle et al. 1999). The
36 Southern Paiute maintained dwellings to match the seasons. In the summer, they constructed sun
37 shades and windbreaks. After the fall harvest, they resided in conical or subconical houses or in
38 caves. It was not until the late 19th century that teepees and sweathouses were adopted from the
39 Utes. Basketry was one of the most important crafts practiced by the Southern Paiute. Conical
40 burden baskets, fan-shaped trays for winnowing and parching, seed beaters, and water jugs were
41 made from local plants. The annual cycle of seasonal plant exploitation required great mobility
42 on the part of the Southern Paiute, and consequently gatherers often used lightweight burden
43 baskets. The Panaca also made conical, sun-dried pottery vessels (Kelly and Fowler 1986).

45 The Southern Paiute were not a warlike group, and consequently they were often the
46 target of raids by their more aggressive neighbors. Despite the Ute aggression, the Southern

1 Paiute were on friendly terms with most of the other groups north of the Colorado River; they
2 would visit, trade, hunt, or gather in each other's territory and occasionally intermarry.
3

4 The arrival of Europeans in the New World had serious consequences for the Southern
5 Paiute. Even before direct contact occurred, the spread of European diseases and the slave trade
6 implemented by Utes and Navajo for the Spanish colonial markets in New Mexico, Sonora, and
7 California resulted in significant depopulation. The Southern Paiutes retreated from areas where
8 there was an increased presence of Euro-American travelers, such as along the Old Spanish Trail.
9 They were further displaced by Euro-American settlers in Utah and Nevada, who sought the
10 same limited water supplies that the Southern Paiute relied on. Dependence on wild plant
11 resources increased during this time, as the Southern Paiute withdrew into more remote areas
12 away from the intruding Euro-Americans. The Southern Paiute traditionally farmed along
13 Meadow Valley Wash just over the mountains east of the SEZ. In the 1860s, there was an influx
14 of miners. Communities such as Panaca were established to supply the mines, most notably at
15 Pioche. They deprived the Paiutes of their traditional water sources and reduced the game and
16 other wild foods they depended on. As Euro-American settlements grew, the Southern Paiute
17 were drawn into the new economy, often serving as transient wage labor. Tribal settlements or
18 colonies of laborers grew up around Euro-American settlements, farms, and mines, often
19 including individuals from across the Southern Paiute homeland (Kelly and Fowler 1986). A
20 community of Paiute wage laborers referred to as the Panaca Band formed around the town of
21 Panaca (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983).
22

23 In 1865, an initial attempt by the U.S. Government to settle the Southern Paiutes in
24 northeastern Utah with their traditional enemies, the Utes, failed. The Moapa River Reservation
25 was established in 1875. Initially, it was intended for all Southern Paiutes from across their
26 range, but the original reservation as authorized by President Ulysses S. Grant was severely
27 reduced by Congress to 1,000 acres (4 km²) of mostly un-irrigable land, and many Southern
28 Paiutes preferred to remain in their home ranges or to seek wage labor employment elsewhere.
29 Some of the Panaca Band eventually settled on the Indian Peaks Reservation, established in Utah
30 in 1915, while others migrated to Cedar City or the Moapa River Reservation. On the Indian
31 Peaks Reservation they subsisted on gardens and a few cattle, becoming part of the Indian Peaks
32 Band. By 1935 the reservation had been largely abandoned and it, along with the other Southern
33 Paiute Reservations in Utah, was terminated from federal control in 1954. The Indian Peaks
34 Band sold their lands to establish themselves at Cedar City and other locations. In 1965, the
35 Southern Paiutes were awarded a judgment by the Indian Claims Commission of over
36 \$8,000,000 in compensation for the loss of their aboriginal lands. In 1980, the Paiute Indian
37 Tribe of Utah, including the Indian Peaks Band, was restored to a federal trust relationship. By
38 1984, the Indian Peaks Band had begun to reacquire a land base (Kelly and Fowler 1986; Stoffle
39 and Dobyns 1983).
40
41

42 **Western Shoshone**

43

44 The Western Shoshone are ethnically similar Central Numic speakers who traditionally
45 occupied the northwestern flank of Southern Paiute territory—stretching from eastern California
46 through central Nevada into northwestern Utah and southern Idaho (Thomas et al. 1986).

1 Moving primarily in small groups, depending on the abundance of resources available, they
2 pursued a mobile subsistence strategy following a seasonal round, gathering a wide variety of
3 plant resources (Stoffle et al. 1990) supplemented by hunting. Pinenuts, available in the
4 mountains of eastern Nevada and western Utah, were a storable staple, which may have attracted
5 them to Meadow Valley. Pronghorn antelope and bighorn sheep were among the large game
6 animals they hunted, but smaller game, including rodents, birds, and, where available, fish,
7 provided more protein. Groups, often identified by their home territory, varied in size and
8 composition with the seasons. The largest groups gathered for the pine nut harvest, which may
9 have included a rabbit or antelope drive as well. Winter villages, consisting of conical structures
10 overlaid with juniper bark, were usually close to stores of pine nuts. They interacted peacefully
11 with the Southern Paiutes, with whom they were on good terms (Thomas et al. 1986) and
12 camped with them in Meadow Valley just across the Highland Range from the SEZ (Stoffle and
13 Dobyns 1983). Any of the Western Shoshone bands in the southeastern part of their range could
14 have and probably did interact with the Southern Paiutes in Meadow Valley.

15
16 Their first recorded contact with Euro-Americans was with the trapper Jedediah Smith in
17 1827. The Western Shoshone were heavily affected by the Mormon migration to the Valley of
18 the Great Salt Lake beginning in 1847 and the onslaught of prospectors seeking gold and other
19 mineral wealth in California and Nevada beginning in 1849. The Shoshone were occasionally
20 hostile to miners and those traveling trails to the west, and attempts were made to negotiate
21 treaties and set up reservations beginning in 1860 (Rusco 1992). Never actually surrendering
22 their lands (the Western Shoshone were not willing to give up their mobile lifestyle), the Treaty
23 of Ruby Valley, in eastern Nevada, and the Treaty of Tooele Valley, in western Utah, were
24 signed in 1863. Reserves or “farms” were set aside for the Western Shoshone beginning in the
25 late 1850s; however, it was not until after 1900 that federal lands were set aside for Western
26 Shoshone “colonies.” The Ely Colony and Duckwater Reservation are the closest to the proposed
27 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (Thomas et al. 1986).

30 ***11.4.17.1.3 History***

31
32 The Great Basin was one of the last areas of the continental United States to be fully
33 explored. The harsh and rugged landscape deterred most European and American explorers until
34 the late 18th century. The earliest documented European presence in the Great Basin region was
35 the Dominguez-Escalante Expedition that began in July of 1776. Two Catholic priests, Fathers
36 Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante, were looking for a route from
37 the Spanish capital city of Santa Fe to the Spanish settlement of Monterey on the California
38 coast. The group did not end up completing their intended journey due to poor weather, but their
39 maps and journals describing their travels and encounters would prove valuable to later explorers
40 who traversed the area, such as Spanish/New Mexican traders and Anglo-American fur trappers
41 traveling the Old Spanish Trail in the 1820s and 1830s (BLM 1976).

42
43 Further exploration of the Great Basin occurred in 1826 with fur-trapping expeditions,
44 one conducted by Peter Ogden of the Hudson Bay Company, the other by Jedediah Smith of the
45 Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Both men were seeking new beaver fields; Ogden took a more
46 northerly route through Elko, Pershing, and Humbolt Counties, and Smith entered near the

1 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ at Mesquite and traveled into California. When Smith
2 entered California he was detained by Mexican authorities and ordered to go back the way he
3 came; however, he decided instead to travel farther north in California and cut across central
4 Nevada, further exploring the Nevada region. Fur trapping never became a lucrative enterprise in
5 Nevada; however, these trailblazers paved the way for later explorers and mappers, such as John
6 C. Frémont. Frémont was a member of the Topographical Engineers, and was commissioned to
7 map and report on the Great Basin area in 1843 and 1844. The results of his work gained wide
8 circulation and were of great importance in understanding the topography of the Great Basin,
9 both for official use and by those moving westward to seek new homes and fortunes
10 (Elliott 1973).

11
12 Nevada and the larger Great Basin region have provided a corridor of travel for those
13 seeking to emigrate west. Several heavily traveled trails crossed the region, although none were
14 particularly close to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. The Old Spanish Trail was an
15 evolving trail system generally established in the early 19th century, but it tended to follow
16 earlier established paths used by earlier explorers and Native Americans. The 2,700-mi
17 (4,345-km) network of trails passes through six states, beginning in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and
18 ending in Los Angeles, California. The closest portion of the congressionally designated Old
19 Spanish National Historic Trail to the proposed SEZ is where it follows the Virgin River, about
20 70 mi (113 km) to the southeast. Mormons also frequently used the Old Spanish Trail in
21 emigrating farther west to Nevada, Arizona, and California, and often the trail is referred to as
22 the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road. Other notable trails that crossed Nevada were the
23 California Trail, a trail that followed portions of the notable Oregon Trail farther east of Nevada,
24 and then broke off from that trail and continued through the northern portion of Nevada along the
25 Humbolt River until it reached California. The Pony Express Trail, a mail route that connected
26 Saint Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California, entered Nevada northeast of Ely and exited
27 just south of Lake Tahoe (von Till Warren 1980).

28
29 With the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 closing out the
30 Mexican-American War, the area came under American control. In 1847, the first American
31 settlers arrived in the Great Basin, among them Mormon immigrants under the leadership of
32 Brigham Young, who settled in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. They sought to bring
33 the entire Great Basin under their control, establishing an independent State of Deseret. From its
34 center in Salt Lake City, the church sent out colonizers to establish agricultural communities in
35 surrounding valleys and missions to acquire natural resources such as minerals and timber.
36 Relying on irrigation to support their farms, the Mormons often settled in the same places as the
37 Fremont and Virgin Anasazi centuries before. The result was a scattering of planned agricultural
38 communities from northern Arizona to southern Idaho and parts of Wyoming, Nevada, and
39 southern California. Mormon settlements near the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ were
40 located at Crystal Springs, about 20 mi (32 km) to the west, and Clover Valley, about 40 mi
41 (64 km) to the southeast (Paher 1970; Fehner and Gosling 2000).

42
43 Nevada's nickname is the "Silver State," so named for the Comstock Lode strike in 1859
44 in Virginia City about 400 mi (640 km) to the west of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.
45 This was the first major silver discovery in the United States, and with the news of the strike
46 hopeful prospectors flocked to the area in an effort to capitalize on the possible wealth under the

1 surface of the earth. The discovery of the Comstock Lode led to the creation of Virginia City and
2 other nearby towns that served the burgeoning population influx. The population increase due to
3 mining was so dramatic that in the 1850 census there were less than a dozen non-native persons
4 in the territory of Nevada; by 1860 there were 6,857, and by 1875 an estimated 75,000 people
5 had settled within the boundaries of the Nevada territory. The Comstock Lode strike is important
6 to the history of Nevada, not just because of the population growth and significant amount of
7 money that was consequently brought into the area, but also because of the technological
8 innovations that were created and employed in the mines, such as the use of square-set
9 timbering. This technique kept loose soil from collapsing on miners, a concept that was
10 eventually employed in other mines around the world (Paher 1970).

11
12 Mining for valuable deposits occurred in all regions of the state of Nevada, including in
13 the vicinity of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. The most notorious mining district in
14 Lincoln County was Pioche, located on the east side of the Highland Range, 15 mi (24 km) from
15 the SEZ. Pioche was a violent, Wild West town that was one of the most prosperous districts in
16 the county. The closest mining district to the proposed SEZ was the Highland Mine, a short-lived
17 silver mine that operated from 1868 to 1870. The still-producing mine of Bristol is located just
18 north of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Originally opened in 1870, this mine
19 produced silver that was smelted in large charcoal kilns at a location just west of Bristol, named
20 Bristol Wells. The charcoal kilns are still standing and are located about 5 mi (8 km) to the
21 northeast of the SEZ. Other mines close to the proposed SEZ are Jackrabbit Mine, just northeast
22 of the SEZ; Silverhorn Mine, a short-lived silver mine north of the SEZ; Delamar Mine, a
23 prosperous gold mine 25 mi (40 km) south of the SEZ; and Bullionville, a site with 5 mills that
24 crushed the ore from Pioche that arrived via a railroad. Native Americans in the area were often
25 aware of the location of mineral deposits and informed the prospective miners as to the location
26 of the deposits. The Native Americans themselves did some mining, mainly for turquoise and
27 garnet, minerals used for decorative, pottery-tempering, or healing purposes, although
28 occasionally their services were enlisted in the mines or in processing the material for the white
29 miners too (Pogue 1912; Paher 1970). A cinder cone, said to be a source of garnets, was
30 observed to the west of the SEZ during a preliminary site visit.

31
32 The construction of railroads in Nevada was often directly related to the mining activities.
33 It was necessary to construct intrastate rail lines to move ore from mines to mills; the Pioche to
34 Bullionville Railroad is the closest line to the proposed SEZ, but interstate railroads were also
35 critical to the development of the economy. The San Pedro–Los Angeles–Salt Lake Railroad
36 was constructed in 1905, connecting two of the most populous cities in the American West. This
37 still-used rail line is located to the east of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, a spur of
38 which passes within 2 mi (3 km) north of Pioche, and continues on to Caliente, on its way south
39 towards Las Vegas. The infamous Transcontinental Railroad was constructed between 1863 and
40 1869, connecting Sacramento, California, and Omaha, Nebraska, passing through the Nevada
41 towns of Reno, Wadsworth, Winnemucca, Battle Mountain, Elko, and Wells on its way to
42 changing the manner in which people traversed the United States.

43
44 Nevada's desert-mountain landscape has made it a prime region for use by the
45 U.S. military for several decades. Beginning in October of 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt
46 established the Las Vegas Bombing and Gunnery Range, a 3.5-million-acre (14,164-km²) parcel

1 of land northwest of Las Vegas, near Indian Springs, Nevada. The main purpose of the range was
2 to serve as air-to-air gunnery practice, but at the end of WWII the gunnery range was closed. It
3 was reopened at the start of the Cold War in 1948 and was re-commissioned as the Las Vegas
4 Air Force Base, and renamed Nellis Air Force Base in 1950 (Fehner and Gosling 2000).

5
6 Prior to the dropping of the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and
7 Hiroshima, the only testing of nuclear weapons on U.S. soil was at the Trinity site, at the White
8 Sands Missile Range, near Los Alamos Laboratory in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Tests of
9 nuclear weapons had been conducted at the newly acquired Marshall Islands in the Pacific, but
10 due to logistical constraints, financial expenditures, and security reasons, a test site for nuclear
11 weapons was needed in a more convenient region. Project Nutmeg was commenced in 1948 as
12 a study to determine the feasibility and necessity of a test site in the continental United States.
13 It was determined that due to the public relations issues and radiological safety and security
14 issues, a continental test site should only be pursued in the event of a national emergency. In
15 1949, that emergency occurred when the Soviet Union conducted their first test of a nuclear
16 weapon, and the Korean War started in the summer of 1950. Five initial test sites were
17 proposed, Alamogordo/White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico, Camp LeJeune in North
18 Carolina, the Las Vegas–Tonopah Bombing and Gunnery Range in Nevada, a site in central
19 Nevada near Eureka, and Utah’s Dugway Proving Ground/Wendover Bombing Range. Several
20 factors were considered when making the final decision, such as fallout patterns, prevailing
21 winds and predictability of weather, terrain, downwind populations, security, and public
22 awareness and relations. The Las Vegas–Tonopah Bombing and Gunnery Range was chosen
23 as the NTS by President Truman in December of 1950.

24
25 Covering 1,375 mi² (3,561 km²), the NTS is a part of the Las Vegas–Tonopah Bombing
26 and Gunnery Range, and it stretches from Mercury, Nevada, in the southeast to Pahute Mesa in
27 the northwest. The first set of nuclear tests was conducted in January of 1951. Originally named
28 FAUST (First American Drop United States Test) and later renamed Ranger, these bombs were
29 detonated over Frenchman Flat, an area about 90 mi (145 km) southwest of the proposed Dry
30 Lake Valley North SEZ. Tests were also later conducted at Yucca Flat, an area located northwest
31 of Frenchman Flat, in an effort to minimize the effect of the blasts on the population in Las
32 Vegas, which reported some disturbances (non-radiological in nature) from the series of tests
33 conducted at Frenchman Flat. Tests were also conducted at Jackass Flats, to the west of the
34 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, and Pahute Mesa, located to the north and west of the
35 SEZ. Nuclear tests were conducted in an effort to test new weapons concepts, proof test existing
36 weapons, and test the impact of nuclear weapons on manmade structures and the physical
37 environment. Experimental testing in search of possible peaceful uses, specifically the Pluto
38 ramjet, Plowshare, and Rover rocket programs, was also conducted. The Pluto ramjet project was
39 funded by the Air Force to design a system that could propel a vehicle at supersonic speeds and
40 low altitudes, while the Rover rocket was a design for a nuclear-powered rocket for space travel.
41 The Plowshare project was an attempt to show that nuclear weapons could be effective in
42 moving large amounts of earth for canal and harbor construction. None of these three projects
43 resulted in any sustained results in terms of the goals that they were seeking, yet they were
44 important in their contribution to the overall work done at the NTS. In the fall of 1958, President
45 Dwight Eisenhower declared a moratorium on nuclear testing, with the Soviet Union following
46 suit, until 1961 when testing resumed on both sides. However, this testing was performed mostly

1 underground at the NTS, with most atmospheric tests being conducted in the Pacific. The last
2 atmospheric test at the NTS was on July 17, 1962, with the Limited Test Ban Treaty being
3 signed by the U.S. and Soviet Union on August 5, 1963, ending nuclear testing in the
4 atmosphere, ocean, and space. The last underground nuclear detonation at the NTS was on
5 September 23, 1992, after which Congress declared a moratorium on nuclear testing. In 1996, a
6 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was proposed by an international organization, but it has yet to
7 be ratified by the U.S. Senate; however, nuclear tests have not been conducted since. In total,
8 1,021 of the 1,149 nuclear detonations that were detonated by the U.S. during the Cold War were
9 conducted at the NTS (Fehner and Gosling 2000).

11.4.17.1.4 *Traditional Cultural Properties—Landscape*

14 The Southern Paiutes have traditionally taken a holistic view of the world, in which the
15 sacred and profane are inextricably intertwined. According to their traditions, they were created
16 in their traditional use territory and have a divine right to the land, along with a responsibility to
17 manage and protect it. Within their traditional use area, landscapes as a whole are often
18 culturally important. Adverse effects to one part damages the whole (Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a).
19 From their perspective, landscapes include places of power. Among the most important of such
20 places are sources of water; peaks, mountains, and elevated features; caves; distinctive rock
21 formations; and panels of rock art. Places of power are important to the religious beliefs of the
22 Southern Paiute. They may be sought out for individual vision quests or healing and may
23 likewise be associated with culturally important plant and animal species. The view from such
24 a point of power or the ability to see from one important place to another can be an important
25 element of its integrity (Stoffle and Zedeño 2001b). Landscapes as a whole are tied together by
26 a network of culturally important trails (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983; Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a).

28 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is situated just over the mountains (about
29 12 mi, or 20 km) from Meadow Valley. Traditionally, the Southern Paiute farmed the banks of
30 Meadow Valley Wash and gathered high-quality pine nuts from Panaca Summit. Paiutes and
31 Shoshones camped in the canyons east of Pioche and in the Pioche Hills, where they harvested
32 pine nuts, berries, and wild grasses, and hunted deer and rabbits. Members of the Indian Peak
33 and Cedar Bands interviewed for a proposed power line to be built in Dry Lake Valley and
34 Meadow Valley expressed their greatest concern over burial sites, springs, and religious sites.
35 The important food-gathering sites they identified were largely in Meadow Valley and
36 surrounding mountains. However, the Black Canyon Range and the Burnt Springs Range
37 adjacent to the southern end of the SEZ were considered culturally important, as were the
38 Delamar Mountains 9 mi (15 km) to the south. Dry Lake Valley itself was considered to have a
39 somewhat lesser importance (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). However, a scattering of isolated stone
40 flakes indicates that over the years Dry Lake Valley has been the site of Native American
41 activities. Isolates and temporary campsites are more common in the southern part of the SEZ,
42 closer to Black Canyon and the Burnt Springs Range. A repeatedly used campsite is located
43 along the western side of the dry lake outside the SEZ.

1 ***11.4.17.1.5 Cultural Surveys and Known Archaeological and Historical Resources***
2

3 In the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, 19 surveys have been conducted within
4 the boundaries of the SEZ, covering approximately 2.8% of the SEZ, and 23 additional surveys
5 have been conducted within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ. Of the 19 surveys conducted within the
6 boundaries of the SEZ, 18 have been block surveys, 12 of which also had linear segments. Only
7 one survey was strictly linear, and one was strictly a block survey. A total of 53 sites (including
8 isolated artifacts) have been documented in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, 50 prehistoric sites
9 and 3 historic sites. Another 153 sites have been documented within 5 mi (8 km) of the proposed
10 SEZ; of these, 140 are prehistoric, and 13 are historic (de DuFour 2009).
11

12 The SEZ has potential to yield significant cultural resources, especially prehistoric sites
13 in the areas around the dry lake, at the south end of the SEZ, as well as in alluvial fans, fan
14 piedmonts, ridge tops, passes, and stream terraces, located on the outer portions of the SEZ
15 (Drews and Ingbar 2004). Around the dry lake in the SEZ are four sites that have significant
16 potential as to their eligibility for inclusion in the NRHP. These four sites are temporary camps
17 associated with the resource procurement and processing potential of the dry lake. Most of the
18 sites that have been documented in the SEZ are isolated lithic fragments, but some chipping
19 circles and lithic scatters have been documented as well, along with a few temporary camp sites.
20 A few of the isolates have had diagnostic material, a Pinto projectile point from the early
21 Archaic, an Elko series projectile point from the Middle to Late Archaic, and a Rose Spring
22 projectile point, a bow-and-arrow point used from the Late Archaic through the Formative
23 Period. Historic mining sites are likely to be located outside the boundaries of the SEZ, but
24 within the 5-mi (8-km) buffer of the SEZ a significant number of historic mining claims and
25 camps are in the mountains to the east and north of the SEZ.
26

27 The BLM has designated several locations within relatively close proximity to the SEZ as
28 ACECs because of their significant cultural value. The Pahroc Rock Art ACEC is located about
29 12 mi (19 km) to the southwest of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ at the southern end
30 of the North Pahroc Range. The Shooting Gallery ACEC is a culturally sensitive rock art area
31 located 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ, just west of Alamo. The name “Shooting Gallery”
32 was applied to the district as there is evidence that prehistoric people created hunting blinds and
33 a system of channels made of rocks to corral and hunt large game. The Mount Irish ACEC is
34 located 25 mi (40 km) to the west of the SEZ, near Hiko, and is noted for its rock art and
35 prehistoric camp sites. There are several other areas that contain culturally sensitive material and
36 meet the criteria for ACEC designation, but in the interest of protecting the resources the BLM
37 has not designated other ACECs, as it is presumed that the ACEC designation could bring
38 unwanted attention to the site, including an increased potential for vandalism.
39
40

41 ***National Register of Historic Places***
42

43 There are four sites within the boundaries of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
44 that have potential to be eligible for inclusion in the NRHP, as mentioned above, and all four are
45 associated with the dry lake area at the southern portion of the SEZ. Within 5 mi (8 km) of the
46 SEZ are 10 sites that exhibit potential significance for inclusion in the NRHP. Seven of these

1 sites are prehistoric cultural resources associated with the dry lake, consisting of heavy lithic
2 scatters, workshop sites, and resource processing areas. Three of the other potentially significant
3 sites are historic section markers from surveys conducted in the 1880s, reflecting the initial
4 mapping and exploration of the region. The Bristol Wells site is located about 5 mi (8 km) to the
5 north of the SEZ and was listed in the NRHP in 1972. Bristol Wells, a mining town associated
6 with the prosperous Bristol Mine, was the location where the ore was stamped and smelted; the
7 charcoal kilns used for the process are still standing today. In addition, nine other properties
8 within Lincoln County are listed in the NRHP. Three of these properties are prehistoric sites, the
9 White River Narrows Archaeological District, located about 10 mi (16 km) west of the proposed
10 SEZ; the Black Canyon Petroglyph Site in the Pahrnagat National Wildlife Refuge, south of
11 Alamo about 35 mi (56 km) south of the SEZ; and the Panaca Summit Archaeological District,
12 about 30 mi (48 km) east of the SEZ. The other properties listed in the NRHP in Lincoln County
13 are historic sites in the towns of Caliente and Pioche to the southeast and east of the SEZ.
14
15

16 **11.4.17.2 Impacts**

17

18 Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed Dry Lake
19 Valley North SEZ; however, further investigation is needed at the project-specific level. A
20 cultural resource survey of the entire area of potential effect, including consultation with affected
21 Native American Tribes, would first need to be conducted to identify archaeological sites,
22 historic structures and features, and traditional cultural properties, and an evaluation would need
23 to follow to determine whether any are eligible for listing in the NRHP as historic properties.
24 The Dry Lake Valley North SEZ has a high potential for containing prehistoric sites, especially
25 in the dry lake and dune areas at the southern end of the SEZ; a potential for historic sites also
26 exists in the area, but to a lesser degree. The largest potential for direct impacts on significant
27 cultural values is in the playa area to the south and alluvial fans, located on the outer portions
28 of the SEZ. At least 4 of the 53 sites recorded in this portion of the proposed Dry Lake Valley
29 North SEZ have been determined to be eligible for listing in the NRHP. Section 5.15 discusses
30 the types of impacts that could occur on any significant cultural resources found to be present
31 in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Impacts will be minimized through the implementation of
32 required programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Programmatic
33 design features assume that the necessary surveys, evaluations, and consultations will occur.
34

35 Indirect impacts on cultural resources resulting from erosion outside of the SEZ
36 boundary (including ROWs) are unlikely, assuming programmatic design features to reduce
37 water runoff and sedimentation are implemented (as described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2).
38

39 Approximately 8 mi (13 km) of access road is anticipated to connect to U.S. 93, south
40 of the SEZ, resulting in approximately 58 acres (0.23 km²) of disturbance. Impacts on cultural
41 resources are possible in areas related to the access ROW, as new areas of potential cultural
42 significance could be directly impacted by construction or opened to increased access from road
43 use. Indirect impacts, such as vandalism or theft, could occur if significant resources are located
44 in close proximity to the ROW. Programmatic design features assume that the necessary surveys,
45 evaluations, and consultation will occur for the ROW, as with the project footprint within the
46 SEZ. In this particular area, several surveys have been previously conducted, resulting in the

1 recordation of five isolated artifacts (four prehistoric and two historic) according to the NVCRIS
2 GIS, and no sites (de DuFour 2009). Although it is assumed elsewhere in this document that 7 mi
3 (11.3 km) of access road is assumed to connect to State Route 318 instead of U.S. 93, this
4 alternative route could result in a greater potential for impacts on cultural resources. The amount
5 of disturbance is less (51 acres [0.21 km²]), but the disturbance would occur in an area of higher
6 elevation and potentially higher cultural sensitivity. One small survey (of about 8 acres [0.03
7 km²]) has been previously conducted in this vicinity, in the lower elevation, resulting in the
8 recordation of an isolated flake; no other surveys have been conducted in the area
9 (de DuFour 2009). No needs for new transmission have currently been identified, assuming
10 existing lines would be used; therefore, no additional areas of cultural concern would be made
11 accessible as a result of transmission development within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North
12 SEZ. However, impacts on cultural resources related to the creation of new corridors not
13 assessed in this PEIS would be evaluated at the project-specific level if new road or transmission
14 construction or line upgrades are to occur.

15 16 17 **11.4.17.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

18
19 Programmatic design features to mitigate adverse effects on significant cultural
20 resources, such as avoidance of significant sites and features and cultural awareness training for
21 the workforce, are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.

22
23 SEZ-specific design features would be determined in consultation with the Nevada SHPO
24 and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations.
25
26

1 **11.4.18 Native American Concerns**

2
3 Native Americans share many environmental and socioeconomic concerns with other
4 ethnic groups. This section focuses on concerns that are specific to Native Americans or to which
5 Native Americans bring a distinct perspective. For a discussion of issues of possible Native
6 American concern shared with the population as a whole, several sections in this PEIS should be
7 consulted. General topics of concern are addressed in Section 4.16. Specifically for the proposed
8 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, Section 11.4.17 discusses archaeological sites, structures,
9 landscapes, and traditional cultural properties; Section 11.4.8 discusses mineral resources;
10 Section 11.4.9.1.3 discusses water rights and water use; Section 11.4.10 discusses plant species;
11 Section 11.4.11 discusses wildlife species, including wildlife migration patterns; Section 11.4.13
12 discusses air quality; Section 11.4.14 discusses visual resources; Sections 11.4.19 and 11.4.20
13 discuss socioeconomics and environmental justice, respectively; and issues of human health and
14 safety are discussed in Section 5.21.

15
16
17 **11.4.18.1 Affected Environment**

18
19 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ falls within the Tribal traditional use area
20 generally attributed to the Southern Paiute (Kelly and Fowler 1986), although the Paiutes shared
21 resources with the Western Shoshone. All federally recognized Tribes with Southern Paiute or
22 Western Shoshone roots have been contacted and provided an opportunity to comment or consult
23 regarding this PEIS. They are listed in Table 11.4.18.1-1. Details of government-to-government
24 consultation efforts are presented in Chapter 14; a listing of all federally recognized Tribes
25 contacted for this PEIS is found in Appendix K.

26
27
28 **11.4.18.1.1 Territorial Boundaries**

29
30
31 **Southern Paiutes**

32
33 The traditional territory of the Southern Paiutes lies mainly in the Mojave Desert,
34 stretching from California to the Colorado Plateau. It generally follows the right bank of the
35 Colorado River (heading downstream), including its tributary streams and canyons in southern
36 Nevada and Utah, including most of Clark and Lincoln Counties in Nevada and extending as far
37 north as Beaver County in Utah (Kelly and Fowler 1986). This area has been judicially
38 recognized as the traditional use area of the Southern Paiute by the Indian Claims Commission
39 (Clemmer and Stewart 1986; Royster 2008).

40
41
42 **Western Shoshone**

43
44 The Western Shoshone traditionally occupied a swath of the central Great Basin
45 stretching from Death Valley in California through central Nevada and northwestern Utah to
46 southeastern Idaho (Thomas et al. 1986). The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ lies within

TABLE 11.4.18.1-1 Federally Recognized Tribes with Traditional Ties to the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Tribe	Location	State
Chemehuevi Indian Tribe	Havasu Lake	California
Colorado River Indian Tribes	Parker	Arizona
Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation	Ibapah	Utah
Duckwater Shoshone Tribe	Duckwater	Nevada
Ely Shoshone Tribe	Ely	Nevada
Kaibab Paiute Tribe	Fredonia	Arizona
Las Vegas Paiute Tribe	Las Vegas	Nevada
Moapa Band of Paiutes	Moapa	Nevada
Pahrump Paiute Tribe	Pahrump	Nevada
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah	Cedar City	Utah
Cedar Band	Cedar City	Utah
Indian Peak Band	Cedar City	Utah
Kanosh Band	Kanosh	Utah
Koosharem Band	Cedar City	Utah
Shivwits Band	Ivins	Utah
San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe	Tuba City	Arizona
Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians	Grantsville	Utah

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the northern margins of Southern Paiute territory in an area of shared use (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983).

11.4.18.1.2 Plant Resources

The Southern Paiutes continue to make use of a wide range of indigenous plants for food, medicine, construction materials, and other uses. The vegetation present at the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is described in Section 11.4.10. The cover types present at the SEZ are all in the Inter-Mountain Basins series. Mixed Salt Desert Scrub predominates. There is a smaller, but substantial, area of Playa, and yet smaller areas of Greasewood Flat, Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe, and Big Sagebrush Shrubland (USGS 2005ab). The SEZ is sparsely vegetated with a pattern of braided drainage running generally north to south. As shown in Table 11.4.18.1-2, there are likely to be some plants used by Native Americans for food and/or medicinal purposes in the SEZ (Stoffle et al. 1999; Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Project-specific analyses will be needed to determine their presence at any proposed building site.

11.4.18.1.3 Other Resources

Southern Paiutes with ties to the area of the proposed SEZ indicate that springs are some of the most important cultural resources in their cultural landscape. Water is an essential prerequisite for life in the arid areas of the Great Basin. As a result, water holds a key place in

TABLE 11.4.18.1-2 Plant Species Important to Native Americans Observed or Likely To Be Present in the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Food		
Beavertail prickly pear	<i>Opuntia basilaris</i>	Observed
Desert trumpet (buckwheat)	<i>Eriogonum inflatum</i>	Observed
Cholla cactus	<i>Cylindropuntia</i> spp.	Observed
Dropseed	<i>Sporobolus</i> spp.	Observed
Greasewood	<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>	Likely
Indian rice grass	<i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>	Observed
Iodine bush	<i>Allenrolfea occidentalis</i>	Possible
Juniper	<i>Juniperus</i> spp.	Possible
Wolfberry	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	Possible
Medicine		
Greasewood	<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>	Likely
Mormon tea	<i>Ephedra</i> spp.	Observed
Sagebrush	<i>Artemisia tridentate</i>	Likely
Saltbush	<i>Atriplex</i> spp.	Observed

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005a); Stoffle and Dobyns (1983); Stoffle et al. (1999).

1
2
3 the religion of desert cultures. Great Basin cultures consider all water sacred and purifying.
4 Springs are often associated with powerful beings, and hot springs in particular figure in
5 Southern Paiute creation stories. Water sources are often associated with rock art. Water sources
6 are seen as connected, so damage to one damages all (Fowler 1991; Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a).
7 There are springs located on the west of the SEZ. Tribes are also sensitive to the use of scarce
8 local water supplies for the benefit of far distant communities and recommend that the
9 determination of adequate water supplies should be a primary consideration in determining
10 whether a site is suitable for the development of a utility-scale solar energy facility
11 (Moose 2009).

12
13 Wildlife likely to be found in the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is described in
14 Section 11.4.11. Deer and rabbit are the animals of most concern, as mentioned by Native
15 Americans with local ties (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). The SEZ provides suitable habitat for
16 mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), and desert
17 cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*). Other animals traditionally important to the Southern Paiute
18 include lizards, which are likely to occur in the SEZ, and the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*).
19 The SEZ falls within the range of the wide-ranging eagle (USGS 2005b). Common tribally
20 important animals that can be expected to be found in the proposed SEZ are listed in
21 Table 11.4.18.1-3.
22

TABLE 11.4.18.1-3 Animal Species Used by Native Americans as Food Whose Range Includes the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Mammals		
Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	All year
Black-tailed jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus.</i>	All year
Bobcat	<i>Lynx rufus</i>	All year
Chipmunk	<i>Tamias spp.</i>	All year
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	All year
Cottontail	<i>Silvilagus spp.</i>	All year
Gray fox	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	All year
Kangaroo rat	<i>Dipodomys spp.</i>	All year
Kit fox	<i>Vulpes macotis</i>	All year
Mule deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	All year
Pocket gopher	<i>Thomomys bottae</i>	All year
Pocket mouse	<i>Perognathus spp.</i>	All year
Porcupine	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>	All year
White-tailed antelope squirrel	<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>	All year
Woodrat	<i>Neotoma spp.</i>	All year
Birds		
Burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicular</i>	Summer
Common raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	All year
Gambel's quail	<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>	All year
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	All year
Great horned owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	All year
Great blue heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	All year
Mourning dove	<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>	All year
Northern mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	All year
Sage-grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	All year
Sandhill crane	<i>Grus Canadensis</i>	Spring/fall
Reptiles		
Desert horned-lizard	<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>	All year
Western rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus viridis</i>	All year
Large lizards	Various species	All year

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005b); Fowler (1986).

Other natural resources traditionally important to Native Americans include salt, clay for pottery, and naturally occurring mineral pigments for the decoration and protection of the skin (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Of these, clay beds are possible in the dry lake within the SEZ (see Section 11.4.7).

11.4.18.2 Impacts

In the past when energy projects have been proposed, Great Basin Native Americans have expressed concern over project impacts on a variety of resources. They tend to take a

1 holistic view of their traditional homeland. For them, cultural and natural features are
2 inextricably bound together. Effects on one part have ripple effects on the whole. Western
3 distinctions between the sacred and the secular have no meaning in their traditional worldview
4 (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). While no comments specific to the proposed Dry Lake Valley North
5 SEZ have been received from Native American Tribes to date, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah
6 has asked to be kept informed of PEIS developments. In the area, the Southern Paiute have
7 expressed concern over adverse effects on a wide range of resources. Geophysical features and
8 physical cultural remains are discussed in Section 11.4.17.1.4. Such features are often seen as
9 important because they are the location of or have ready access to a range of plant, animal, and
10 mineral resources (Stoffle et al. 1997). Resources considered important include food plants,
11 medicinal plants, plants used in basketry, plants used in construction, large game animals, small
12 game animals, birds, and sources of clay, salt, and pigments (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Those
13 likely to be found within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are discussed in Section 11.4.18.1.2.
14

15 Meadow Valley was an important farming and harvesting location for the northern bands
16 of Southern Paiutes. Dry Lake Valley is adjacent to Meadow Valley and was almost certainly
17 known by the bands that regularly camped in Meadow Valley. Although the SEZ is sparsely
18 vegetated, its proximity to a traditionally settled area that was a gathering place for the pine nut
19 harvest suggests that the area may be well known to modern Southern Paiutes, and that the
20 resources that do exist there may be exploited by the Southern Paiute, although Meadow Valley
21 and its surrounding mountains appear to hold more abundant resources. This should be
22 confirmed during consultation with the Tribes.
23

24 Development of the SEZ would result in the removal of plant species from the footprint
25 of the facility during construction. This would include some plants of cultural importance.
26 However, the primary species that would be affected are abundant in the region; thus the
27 cumulative effect would likely be small. Likewise, habitat for important species, such as the
28 black-tailed jackrabbit, would be reduced (See Sections 11.4.10 and 11.4.11). As consultation
29 with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it is also possible that
30 Native American concerns will be expressed over potential visual and other effects on specific
31 resources and any culturally important landscapes within or adjacent to the SEZ.
32

33 Implementation of programmatic design features, as discussed in Appendix A,
34 Section A.2.2, should eliminate impacts on Tribes' reserved water rights and the potential for
35 groundwater contamination issues.
36
37

38 **11.4.18.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness** 39

40 Programmatic design features to address impacts of potential concern to Native
41 Americans, such as avoidance of sacred sites, water resources, and tribally important plant
42 and animal species, are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Mitigation of impacts on
43 archaeological sites and traditional cultural properties is discussed in Section 11.4.17.3, in
44 addition to the design features for historic properties presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
45

1 The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features addressing issues of potential
2 concern would be determined during government-to-government consultation with the affected
3 Tribes listed in Table 11.4.18.1-1.
4
5

1 **11.4.19 Socioeconomics**

2
3
4 **11.4.19.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section describes current socioeconomic conditions and local community services
7 within the ROI surrounding the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. The ROI is a three-county
8 area comprising Clark and Nye Counties in Nevada and Iron County in Utah. It encompasses the
9 area in which workers are expected to spend most of their salaries and in which a portion of site
10 purchases and nonpayroll expenditures from the construction, operation, and decommissioning
11 phases of the proposed SEZ facility are expected to take place.

12
13
14 **11.4.19.1.1 ROI Employment**

15
16 In 2008, employment in the ROI stood at 944,909 (Table 11.4.19.1-1). Over the period
17 1999 to 2008, the annual average employment growth rate was higher in Lincoln County (5.1%)
18 than in Iron County (3.4%) or Clark County (3.2%). At 3.2%, growth rates in the ROI as a whole
19 was higher than the average rate for the state of Nevada (2.7%).

20
21 In the ROI in 2006, the services sector provided the highest percentage of employment
22 at 59.3%, followed by wholesale and retail trade at 14.9% and construction (11.7%)
23 (Table 11.4.19.1-2). Within the three counties in the ROI, the distribution of employment across
24 sectors is different than that of the ROI as a whole; employment in services (59.6%) higher
25 in Clark County than in the ROI as a whole, while employment in wholesale and retail trade
26 (14.8%), and agriculture (0.0%) were lower than in other counties in the ROI.

27
28 **TABLE 11.4.19.1-1 ROI Employment in the Proposed
Dry Lake Valley North SEZ**

Location	1999	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999–2008 (%)
Clark County, Nevada	675,693	922,878	3.2
Lincoln County, Nevada	1,114	1,731	5.1
Iron County, Utah	14,571	20,300	3.4
ROI	691,582	944,909	3.2
Nevada	978,969	1,282,012	2.7
Utah	1,080,441	1,336,556	2.1

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a,b).

TABLE 11.4.19.1-2 ROI Employment in the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ by Sector, 2006

Industry	Clark County, Nevada		Lincoln County, Nevada		Iron County, Utah		ROI	
	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total
Agriculture ^a	213	0.0	130	16.1	934	7.0	1,277	0.1
Mining	522	0.1	38	4.7	10	0.1	570	0.1
Construction	100,817	11.6	60	7.4	1,829	13.8	102,706	11.7
Manufacturing	25,268	2.9	0	0.0	1,732	13.1	27,000	3.1
Transportation and public utilities	38,529	4.4	70	8.7	363	2.7	38,962	4.4
Wholesale and retail trade	128,498	14.8	309	38.3	2,650	20.0	131,407	14.9
Finance, insurance, and real estate	56,347	6.5	24	3.0	646	4.9	57,044	6.5
Services	516,056	59.6	343	42.6	5,068	38.2	521,500	59.3
Other	105	0.0	0	0.0	10	0.1	115	0.0
Total	866,093		806		13,250		880,149	

^a Agricultural employment includes 2007 data for hired farmworkers.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a); USDA (2009a,b).

1 **11.4.19.1.2 ROI Unemployment**
 2

3 The average unemployment rate in Lincoln County over the period 1999 to 2008 was
 4 5.2%, slightly higher than the rate in Clark County (5.0%) and higher than the rate in Iron
 5 County (45.1%) (Table 11.4.19.1-3). The average rate in the ROI over this period was 5.0%,
 6 the same as the average rate for Nevada. Unemployment rates for the first 11 months of 2009
 7 contrast with rates for 2008 as a whole; in Clark County, the unemployment rate increased to
 8 11.1%, while the rate reached 8.0% in Lincoln County and 6.1% in Iron County. The average
 9 rates for the ROI (11.0%) and for Nevada as a whole (11.0%) were also higher for the first
 10 11 months of 2009 than the corresponding average rates for 2008.
 11

12
 13 **11.4.19.1.3 ROI Urban Population**
 14

15 The population of the ROI in 2008 was 57% urban. The largest city, Las Vegas, had an
 16 estimated 2008 population of 562,849; other large cities in Clark County include Henderson
 17 (253,693) and North Las Vegas (217,975) (Table 11.4.19.1-4). In addition, there are two smaller
 18 cities in the county, Mesquite (16,528) and Boulder City (14,954). A number of unincorporated
 19 urban areas in Clark County are not included in the urban population; that is, the percentage of
 20 the county population not living in urban areas is overstated. The largest urban area in Iron
 21 County, Cedar City, had an estimated 2008 population of 28,439; other urban areas in the county
 22 include Enoch (5,076) and Parowan (2,606) (Table 11.4.19.1-4). In addition, there are three other
 23 urban areas in the county, Paragonah (477), Kanaraville (314) and Brian Head (126). Most of
 24 these cities are less than 100 miles (161 km) from the site of the proposed SEZ.
 25
 26

**TABLE 11.4.19.1-3 ROI Unemployment Rates
 for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
 (%)**

Location	1999–2008	2008	2009 ^a
Clark County, Nevada	5.0	6.6	11.1
Lincoln County, Nevada	5.2	5.4	8.0
Iron County, Utah	4.1	4.2	6.4
ROI	5.0	6.5	11.0
Nevada	5.0	6.7	11.0
Utah	4.1	3.4	5.2

^a Rates for 2009 are the average for January through November.

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a–c).

TABLE 11.4.19.1-4 ROI Urban Population and Income for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

City	Population			Median Household Income (\$ 2008)		
	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000-2008 (%)	1999	2006-2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999 and 2006-2008 (%) ^a
Boulder City	14,966	14,954	0.0	65,049	NA ^b	NA
Brian Head	118	126	0.8	56,732	NA	NA
Caliente	1,123	1,191	0.7	33,260	NA	NA
Cedar City	20,527	28,439	4.2	41,719	41,318	-0.1
Enoch	3,467	5,076	4.9	48,112	NA	NA
Henderson	175,381	253,693	4.7	72,035	67,886	-0.7
Kanaraville	311	314	0.1	44,258	NA	NA
Las Vegas	478,434	562,849	2.1	56,739	55,113	-0.3
Mesquite	9,389	16,528	7.3	52,005	NA	NA
North Las Vegas	115,488	217,975	8.3	56,299	60,506	0.2
Paragonah	470	477	0.2	43,721	NA	NA
Parowan	2,565	2,606	0.2	41,749	NA	NA

^a Data are averages for the period 2006 to 2008.

^b NA = data not available.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b-d).

1
2
3 Population growth rates in the ROI have varied over the period 2000 to 2008
4 (Table 11.4.19.1-4). North Las Vegas grew at an annual rate of 8.3% during this period, with
5 higher than average growth also experienced in Mesquite (7.3%), Enoch (4.9%), and Henderson
6 (4.7%). The cities of Las Vegas (2.1%), Brian Head (0.8%), Caliente (0.7%), and others
7 experienced a lower growth rate between 2000 and 2008, while Boulder City (0.0%) experienced
8 a static growth rate during this period.

9
10
11 **11.4.19.1.4 ROI Urban Income**

12
13 Median household incomes vary across urban areas in the ROI. Data for the period 2006
14 to 2008 were available for only four cities. Henderson (\$67,886) and North Las Vegas (\$60,506)
15 had median incomes that were higher than the average for Nevada (\$56,348) and Utah (\$56,484),
16 while Las Vegas (\$55,113) and Cedar City (\$41,318) had median incomes slightly lower than
17 both state averages (Table 11.4.19.1-4).

18
19 Growth rates between 1999 and 2006 to 2008 were small in North Las Vegas (0.2%) and
20 negative in Henderson (-0.7%), Las Vegas (-0.3%), and Cedar City (-0.1%). The average
21 median household income growth rate over this period was -0.2% in Nevada and -0.5% in Utah.
22

1 **11.4.19.1.5 ROI Population**
 2

3 Table 11.4.19.1-5 presents recent and projected populations in the three counties, the
 4 ROI, and the two states as a whole. Population in the ROI stood at 1,927,930 in 2008, having
 5 grown at an average annual rate of 4.0% since 2000. The growth rate for the ROI was higher
 6 than that for the state of Nevada (3.4%).
 7

8 All three counties in the ROI experienced growth in population between 2000 and 2008;
 9 population in Clark County grew at an annual rate of 4.0%; in Iron County, 3.4%; and in Lincoln
 10 County, 1.4%. The ROI population is expected to increase to 2,782,449 by 2021 and to
 11 2,865,746 by 2023.
 12

13
 14 **11.4.19.1.6 ROI Income**
 15

16 Total personal income in the ROI stood at \$75.2 billion in 2007 and grew at an annual
 17 average rate of 4.9% over the period 1998 to 2007 (Table 11.4.19.1-6). Per-capita income also
 18 rose over the same period at a rate of 1.0%, increasing from \$36,099 to \$39,847. Per-capita
 19 incomes were higher in Clark County (\$40,307) than in Lincoln County (\$26,858) and Iron
 20 County (\$21,922) in 2007. Growth rates in total personal income have been higher in Clark
 21 County than in Iron County and Lincoln County. Personal income growth rates in the ROI
 22
 23

TABLE 11.4.19.1-5 ROI Population for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Location	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000–2008 (%)	2021	2023
Clark County, Nevada	1,375,765	1,879,093	4.0	2,710,303	2,791,161
Lincoln County, Nevada	4,165	4,643	1.4	5,350	5,412
Iron County, Utah	33,779	44,194	3.4	66,796	69,173
ROI	1,413,709	1,927,930	4.0	2,782,449	2,865,746
Nevada	1,998,257	2,615,772	3.4	3,675,890	3,779,745
Utah	2,233,169	2,727,343	2.5	3,546,228	3,666,248

24 Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009e,f); Nevada State Demographers Office (2008).

TABLE 11.4.19.1-6 ROI Personal Income for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Location	1998	2007	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1998–2007 (%)
Clark County, Nevada			
Total income ^a	45.7	74.1	5.0
Per-capita income	36,509	40,307	1.0
Lincoln County, Nevada			
Total income ^a	0.1	0.1	0.7
Per-capita income	24,711	24,121	-0.2
Iron County, Utah			
Total income ^a	0.7	0.9	3.5
Per-capita income	21,352	21,922	0.3
ROI			
Total income ^a	46.5	75.2	4.9
Per-capita income	36,099	39,847	1.0
Nevada			
Total income ^a	68.9	105.3	4.3
Per-capita income	37,188	41,022	1.0
Utah			
Total income ^a	61.9	82.4	2.9
Per-capita income	28,567	31,003	0.8

^a Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ billion 2008.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce (2009); U.S. Bureau of Census (2009e,f).

were higher than the rates for Nevada (4.3%) and Utah (2.9%), but per-capita income growth rates in Clark County were the same, while rates in Lincoln County and Iron County were lower than in Nevada as a whole (1.0%) and Utah (0.8%) as a whole.

Median household income in 2006 to 2008 varied from \$41,173 in Lincoln County, to \$42,687 in Iron County, to \$56,954 in Clark County (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009d).

11.4.19.1.7 ROI Housing

In 2007, more than 774,400 housing units were located in the three ROI counties; about 97% of these were in Clark County (Table 11.4.19.1-7). Owner-occupied units composed

**TABLE 11.4.19.1-7 ROI Housing Characteristics
for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ**

Parameter	2000	2007
Clark County, Nevada		
Owner-occupied	302,834	393,453
Rental	209,419	268,572
Vacant units	47,546	92,144
Seasonal and recreational use	8,416	NA ^a
Total units	559,799	754,169
Lincoln County, Nevada		
Owner-occupied	1,156	1,204
Rental	384	400
Vacant units	638	664
Seasonal and recreational use	305	NA
Total units	2,178	2,268
Iron County, Utah		
Owner-occupied	7,040	8,387
Rental	3,587	5,387
Vacant units	2,991	4,202
Seasonal and recreational use	1,986	NA
Total units	13,618	17,976
ROI		
Owner-occupied	311,030	403,044
Rental	213,390	274,359
Vacant units	51,175	97,010
Seasonal and recreational use	10,707	NA
Total units	575,595	774,413

^a NA = data not available.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009h-j).

1
2
3 approximately 60% of the occupied units in the two counties; rental housing made up 40% of the
4 total. Vacancy rates in 2007 were 29.3% in Lincoln County, 23.4% in Iron County, and 12.2% in
5 Clark County. With an overall vacancy rate of 12.5% in the ROI, there were 97,010 vacant
6 housing units in the ROI in 2007, of which 39,291 are estimated to be rental units that would be
7 available to construction workers. At the time of the 2000 Census, there were 10,707 units in
8 seasonal, recreational, or occasional use in the ROI; 1.5% of housing units in Clark County,
9 14.6% in Iron County, and 14.0% in Lincoln County were used for seasonal or recreational
10 purposes.

11
12 Housing stock in the ROI as a whole grew at an annual rate of 4.3% over the period
13 2000 to 2007, with 198,818 new units added to the existing housing stock (Table 11.4.19.1-7).
14

1 The median value of owner-occupied housing in 2006 to 2008 varied from \$80,300 in
 2 Lincoln County, to \$112,000 in Iron County, to \$139,500 in Clark County (U.S. Bureau of the
 3 Census 2009g).

4
 5
 6 **11.4.19.1.8 ROI Local Government Organizations**

7
 8 The various local and county government organizations in the ROI are listed in
 9 Table 11.4.19.1-8. In addition, three Tribal governments are located in the ROI, with
 10 members of other Tribal groups located in the county but whose Tribal governments
 11 are located in adjacent counties or states.

12
 13
 14 **11.4.19.1.9 ROI Community and Social Services**

15
 16 This section describes educational, health care, law enforcement, and firefighting
 17 resources in the ROI.

18
 19
 20 **Schools**

21
 22 In 2007, the three-county ROI had a total of 347 public and private elementary, middle,
 23 and high schools (NCES 2009). Table 11.4.19.1-9 provides summary statistics for enrollment
 24
 25

TABLE 11.4.19.1-8 ROI Local Government Organizations and Social Institutions in the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Governments	
City	
Boulder City	Kanaraville
Brian Head	Las Vegas
Caliente	Mesquite
Cedar City	North Las Vegas
Enoch	Paragonah
Henderson	Parowan
 County	
Clark County	Lincoln County
Lincoln County	
 Tribal	
Las Vegas Tribe of Paiute Indians of the Las Vegas Indian Colony, Nevada	
Moapa Band of Paiute Indians of the Moapa River Indian Reservation, Nevada	
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah	

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b); U.S. Department of the Interior (2010).

TABLE 11.4.19.1-9 ROI School District Data for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, 2007

Location	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Student-Teacher Ratio	Level of Service ^a
Clark County, Nevada	303,448	15,930	19.0	8.7
Lincoln County, Nevada	1,074	81	13.3	18.2
Iron County, Utah	8,522	402	21.2	9.1
ROI	313,044	16,413	19.1	8.7

^a Number of teachers per 1,000 population.

Source: NCES (2009).

1
2
3 and educational staffing and two indices of educational quality—student-teacher ratios and levels
4 of service (number of teachers per 1,000 population). The student-teacher ratio in Iron County
5 schools (21.2) is higher than that in Clark County (19.0) and Lincoln County schools (13.3),
6 while the level of service is much higher in Lincoln County (18.2) than elsewhere in the ROI,
7 where there are fewer teachers per 1,000 population (Iron County, 9.1; Clark County, 8.7).
8
9

10 **Health Care**

11
12 The total number of physicians (4,220) and the number of physicians per
13 1,000 population (2.3) are higher in Clark County than in Iron County (55; 1.2) and in
14 Lincoln County (2; 0.4) (Table 11.4.19.1-10).
15
16

TABLE 11.4.19.1-10 Physicians in the ROI for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, 2007

Location	Number of Primary Care Physicians	Level of Service ^a
Clark County, Nevada	4,220	2.3
Lincoln County, Nevada	2	0.4
Iron County, Utah	55	1.2
ROI	4,277	2.3

^a Number of physicians per 1,000 population.

Source: AMA (2009).

1 **Public Safety**

2
3 Several state, county, and local police departments provide law enforcement in the
4 ROI (Table 11.4.19.1-11). Lincoln County has 26 officers and would provide law enforcement
5 services to the SEZ. There are 3,214 officers in Clark County and 31 officers in Iron County.
6 Levels of service of police protection are 5.8 per 1,000 population in Lincoln County, 1.7 in
7 Clark County, and 0.7 in Iron County. Currently, there are 1,000 professional firefighters in the
8 ROI (Table 11.4.19.1-11).

9
10
11 **11.4.19.1.10 ROI Social Structure and Social Change**

12
13 Community social structures and other forms of social organization within the ROI are
14 related to various factors, including historical development, major economic activities and
15 sources of employment, income levels, race and ethnicity, and forms of local political
16 organization. Although an analysis of the character of community social structures is beyond the
17 scope of the current programmatic analysis, project-level NEPA analyses would include a
18 description of ROI social structures, contributing factors, their uniqueness, and consequently, the
19 susceptibility of local communities to various forms of social disruption and social change.

20
21 Various energy development studies have suggested that once the annual growth in
22 population is between 5 and 15% in smaller rural communities, alcoholism, depression, suicide,
23 social conflict, divorce, and delinquency would increase and levels of community satisfaction
24 would deteriorate (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996). Data on violent crime and property crime rates and
25 on alcoholism and illicit drug use, mental health, and divorce, which might be used as indicators
26 of social change, are presented in Tables 11.4.19.1-12 and 11.4.19-1.13, respectively.

27
28 **TABLE 11.4.19.1-11 Public Safety Employment in the ROI for the
Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ**

Location	Number of Police Officers ^a	Level of Service ^b	Number of Firefighters ^c	Level of Service
Clark County, Nevada	3,214	1.7	991	0.5
Lincoln County, Nevada	26	5.8	1	0.2
Iron County, Utah	31	0.7	8	0.2
ROI	3,271	1.7	1,000	0.5

^a 2007 data.

^b Number per 1,000 population.

^c 2008 data; number does not include volunteers.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2008); Fire Departments Network (2009).

TABLE 11.4.19.1-12 County and ROI Crime Rates for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ^a

Location	Violent Crime ^b		Property Crime ^c		All Crime	
	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate
Clark County, Nevada	15,505	8.0	66,905	34.5	82,410	42.5
Lincoln County, Nevada	6	1.3	34	7.3	40	8.6
Iron County, Utah	56	1.2	1,085	23.7	1,141	24.9
ROI	15,567	8.1	68,024	35.3	83,591	43.4

^a Rates are the number of crimes per 1,000 population.

^b Violent crime includes murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

^c Property crime includes burglary, larceny, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2009a,b).

1
2

TABLE 11.4.19.1-13 Alcoholism, Drug Use, Mental Health, and Divorce in the ROI for the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ^a

Geographic Area	Alcoholism	Illicit Drug Use	Mental Health ^b	Divorce ^c
Nevada Clark	8.2	2.7	10.5	— ^d
Nevada Rural (includes Lincoln County)	8.0	2.7	9.5	—
Utah Southwest Region (includes Iron County)	5.6	2.5	11.3	—
Nevada				6.5
Utah				3.6

^a Data for alcoholism and drug use represent percentage of the population over 12 years of age with dependence or abuse of alcohol, illicit drugs. Data are averages for 2004 to 2006.

^b Data for mental health represent percentage of the population over 18 years of age suffering from serious psychological distress. Data are averages for 2002 to 2004.

^c Divorce rates are the number of divorces per 1,000 population. Data are for 2007.

^d A dash indicates data not available.

Sources: SAMHSA (2009); CDC (2009).

3
4

1 There is some variation in the level of crime across the ROI, with higher rates of violent
2 crime in Clark County (8.0 per 1,000 population) than in Lincoln County (1.3) or Iron County
3 (1.2) (Table 11.4.19.1-12). Property-related crime rates are also higher in Clark County (34.5)
4 than in Iron County (23.7) or Lincoln County (7.3); overall crime rates in Clark County (42.5)
5 were higher than in Iron County (24.9) or Lincoln County (8.6).
6

7 Other measures of social change—alcoholism, illicit drug use, and mental health—are
8 not available at the county level and thus are presented for the SAMHSA region in which the
9 ROI is located. There is slight variation across the two regions in which the three counties are
10 located; rates for alcoholism and mental health are slightly higher in the region in which Clark
11 County is located (Table 11.4.19.1-13).
12

13 14 **11.4.19.1.11 ROI Recreation**

15
16 Various areas in the vicinity of the proposed SEZ are used for recreational purposes, with
17 natural, ecological, and cultural resources in the ROI attracting visitors for a range of activities,
18 including hunting, fishing, boating, canoeing, wildlife watching, camping, hiking, horseback
19 riding, mountain climbing, and sightseeing. These activities are discussed in Section 11.4.5.
20

21 Because the number of visitors using state and federal lands for recreational activities is
22 not available from the various administering agencies, the value of recreational resources in these
23 areas based solely on the number of recorded visitors is likely to be an underestimation. In
24 addition to visitation rates, the economic valuation of certain natural resources can also be
25 assessed in terms of the potential recreational destination for current and future users, that is,
26 their nonmarket value (see Section 5.17.1).
27

28 Another method is to estimate the economic impact of the various recreational activities
29 supported by natural resources on public land in the vicinity of the proposed solar development,
30 by identifying sectors in the economy in which expenditures on recreational activities occur. Not
31 all activities in these sectors are directly related to recreation on state and federal lands; some
32 activity occurs on private land (e.g., dude ranches, golf courses, bowling alleys, and movie
33 theaters). Expenditures associated with recreational activities form an important part of the
34 economy of the ROI. In 2007, 240,631 people were employed in the ROI in the various sectors
35 identified as recreation, constituting 26.1% of total ROI employment (Table 11.4.19.1-14).
36 Recreation spending also produced almost \$9,455 million in income in the ROI in 2007. The
37 primary sources of recreation-related employment were hotels and lodging places and eating
38 and drinking places.
39

40 41 **11.4.19.2 Impacts**

42
43 The following analysis begins with a description of the common impacts of solar
44 development, including common impacts on recreation and on social change. These impacts
45 would occur regardless of the solar technology developed in the SEZ. The impacts of
46 development employing various solar energy technologies are analyzed in detail in subsequent
47 sections.

TABLE 11.4.19.1-14 Recreation Sector Activity in the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ ROI, 2007

ROI	Employment	Income (\$ million)
Amusement and recreation services	4,681	147.6
Automotive rental	2,909	118.3
Eating and drinking places	105,589	3,230.5
Hotels and lodging places	116,751	5,620.2
Museums and historic sites	285	17.8
Recreational vehicle parks and campsites	352	10.1
Scenic tours	5,448	221.7
Sporting goods retailers	4,436	88.4
Total ROI	240,631	9,454.7

Source: MIG, Inc. (2009).

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11.4.19.2.1 Common Impacts

Construction and operation of a solar energy facility at the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ would produce direct and indirect economic impacts. Direct impacts would occur as a result of expenditures on wages and salaries, procurement of goods and services required for project construction and operation, and the collection of state sales and income taxes. Indirect impacts would occur as project wages and salaries, procurement expenditures, and tax revenues subsequently circulate through the economy of each state, thereby creating additional employment, income, and tax revenues. Facility construction and operation would also require in-migration of workers and their families into the ROI surrounding the site, which would affect population, rental housing, health service and public safety employment. Socioeconomic impacts common to all utility-scale solar energy developments are discussed in detail in Section 5.17. These impacts will be minimized through the implementation of programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.

Recreation Impacts

Estimating the impact of solar facilities on recreation is problematic, because it is not clear how solar development in the SEZ would affect recreational visitation and nonmarket values (i.e., the value of recreational resources for potential or future visits; see Section 5.17.1). While it is clear that some land in the ROI would no longer be accessible for recreation, the majority of popular recreational locations would be precluded from solar development. It is also possible that solar development in the ROI would be visible from popular recreation locations, and that construction workers residing temporarily in the ROI would occupy accommodation

1 otherwise used for recreational visits, thus reducing visitation and consequently affecting the
2 economy of the ROI.

3 4 5 **Social Change**

6
7 Although an extensive literature in sociology documents the most significant components
8 of social change in energy boomtowns, the nature and magnitude of the social impact of energy
9 development projects in small rural communities are still unclear (see Section 5.17.1.1.4). While
10 some degree of social disruption is likely to accompany large-scale in-migration during the boom
11 phase, there is insufficient evidence to predict the extent to which specific communities are
12 likely to be affected, which population groups within each community are likely to be most
13 affected, and the extent to which social disruption is likely to persist beyond the end of the boom
14 period (Smith et al. 2001). Accordingly, because of the lack of adequate social baseline data, it
15 has been suggested that social disruption is likely to occur once an arbitrary population growth
16 rate associated with solar energy development projects has been reached, with an annual rate of
17 between 5 and 10% growth in population assumed to result in a breakdown in social structures,
18 with a consequent increase in alcoholism, depression, suicide, social conflict, divorce,
19 delinquency, and deterioration in levels of community satisfaction (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996).

20
21 In overall terms, the in-migration of workers and their families into the ROI would
22 represent an increase of 0.1% in regional population during construction of the trough
23 technology, with smaller increases for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies, and
24 during the operation of each technology. While it is possible that some construction and
25 operations workers will choose to locate in communities closer to the SEZ, because of the lack of
26 available housing in smaller rural communities in the ROI to accommodate all in-migrating
27 workers and families and an insufficient range of housing choices to suit all solar occupations,
28 many workers are likely to commute to the SEZ from larger communities elsewhere in the ROI,
29 thereby reducing the potential impact of solar development on social change. Regardless of the
30 pace of population growth associated with the commercial development of solar resources and
31 the likely residential location of in-migrating workers and families in communities some distance
32 from the SEZ itself, the number of new residents from outside the ROI is likely to lead to some
33 demographic and social change in small rural communities in the ROI. Communities hosting
34 solar development projects are likely to be required to adapt to a different quality of life, with a
35 transition away from a more traditional lifestyle involving ranching and taking place in small,
36 isolated, close-knit, homogenous communities with a strong orientation toward personal and
37 family relationships, toward a more urban lifestyle, with increasing cultural and ethnic diversity
38 and increasing dependence on formal social relationships within the community.

39 40 41 **Livestock Grazing Impacts**

42
43 Cattle ranching and farming supported 95 jobs, and \$1.3 million in income in the ROI in
44 2007, (MIG, Inc. 2010). The construction and operation of solar facilities in the Dry Lake Valley
45 North SEZ could result in a decline in the amount of land available for livestock grazing,
46 resulting in total (direct plus indirect) impacts of the loss of less than one job and less than

1 \$0.1 million in income in the ROI. There would also be a decline in grazing fees payable to the
 2 BLM and to the USFS by individual permittees based on the number of AUMs required to
 3 support livestock on public land. Assuming the 2008 fee of \$1.35 per AUM, grazing fee losses
 4 would amount to \$6,614 annually on land dedicated to solar development in the SEZ.
 5
 6

7 **Access Road Impacts**

8
 9 The impacts of construction of an access road connecting the proposed SEZ could
 10 include the addition of 148 jobs in the ROI (including direct and indirect impacts) in the peak
 11 year of construction (Table 11.4.19.2-2). Construction activities in the peak year would
 12
 13

**TABLE 11.4.19.2-2 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts of an
 Access Road Connecting the Proposed Dry Lake Valley
 North SEZ^a**

Parameter	Construction	Operations
Employment (no.)		
Direct	85	<1
Total	148	<1
Income ^b		
Total	5.8	<0.1
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.2	<0.1
Income	<0.1	<0.1
In-migrants (no.)	0	0
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	0	0
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	0	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	0	0

^a Construction impacts assume 7 mi (8 km) of access road is required for the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Construction impacts are assessed for the peak year of construction. Although gravel surfacing might be used, the analysis assumes the access road will be paved.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside in Utah.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

1 constitute less than 1% of total ROI employment. Access road construction would also produce
2 \$5.8 million in ROI income. Direct sales taxes would be less than \$0.2 million; direct income
3 taxes in Utah, less than \$0.1 million.
4

5 Total operations (maintenance) employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
6 indirect impacts) of an access road would be less than 1 job during the first year of operation
7 (Table 11.4.19.2-2) and would also produce less than \$0.1 million in income. Direct sales taxes
8 would be less than \$0.1 million in the first year; direct income taxes, less than \$0.1 million.
9

10 Construction and operation of an access road would not require the in-migration of
11 workers and their families from outside the ROI; consequently, no impacts on housing markets
12 in the ROI would be expected, and no new community service employment would be required in
13 order to meet existing levels of service in the ROI.
14

15 16 **11.4.19.2.2 Technology-Specific Impacts** 17

18 The economic impacts of solar energy development in the proposed SEZ were measured
19 in terms of employment, income, state tax revenues (sales and income), population in-migration,
20 housing, and community service employment (education, health, and public safety). More
21 information on the data and methods used in the analysis are presented in Appendix M.
22

23 The assessment of the impact of the construction and operation of each technology was
24 based on SEZ acreage, assuming 80% of the area could be developed. To capture a range of
25 possible impacts, solar facility size was estimated on the basis of the land requirements of
26 various solar technologies, assuming that 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) would be required for
27 power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies and 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) for solar trough
28 technologies. Impacts of multiple facilities employing a given technology at each SEZ were
29 assumed to be the same as impacts for a single facility with the same total capacity. Construction
30 impacts were assessed for a representative peak year of construction, assumed to be 2021 for
31 each technology. Construction impacts assumed that a maximum of three projects could be
32 constructed within a given year, with a corresponding maximum land disturbance of up to
33 9,000 acres (36 km²). For operations impacts, a representative first year of operations was
34 assumed to be 2023 for trough and power tower, 2022 for the minimum facility size for dish
35 engine and PV, and 2023 for the maximum facility size for these technologies. The years of
36 construction and operations were selected as representative of the entire 20-year study period,
37 because they are the approximate midpoint; construction and operations could begin earlier.
38

39 40 **Solar Trough** 41

42
43 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
44 and indirect impacts) from the use of solar trough technologies would be up to 9,071 jobs
45 (Table 11.4.1.19.2-3). Construction activities would constitute 0.7% of total ROI employment.
46

TABLE 11.4.19.2-3 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ with Solar Trough Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	5,232	2,679
Total	9,071	4,126
Income ^b		
Total	554.2	155.3
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	3.5	0.5
Income	1.1	0.2
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA ^c	4.8
Capacity fee ^d	NA	80.8
In-migrants (no.)	2,229	341
Vacant housing ^e (no.)	1,114	307
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	20	3
Physicians (no.)	5	1
Public safety (no.)	5	1

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 1,800 MW (corresponding to 9,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 12,300 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside in Utah.

^c NA = not applicable.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

^e Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

1 A solar facility would also produce \$554.2 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
2 \$3.5 million; direct income taxes in Utah, \$1.1 million.

3
4 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
5 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
6 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
7 2,229 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
8 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
9 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
10 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
11 with 1,114 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
12 1.8% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

13
14 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
15 community service employment (education, health, and public safety). An increase in such
16 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
17 20 new teachers, 5 physicians, and 5 public safety employee (career firefighters and uniformed
18 police officers) would be required in the ROI. These increases would represent 0.1% of total ROI
19 employment expected in these occupations.

20
21
22 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
23 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using solar trough technologies would be 4,126 jobs
24 (Table 11.4.19.2-3). Such a solar facility would also produce \$155.3 million in income.
25 Direct sales taxes would be \$0.5 million; direct income taxes in Utah, \$0.2 million. Based on
26 fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), acreage-
27 related fees would be \$4.8 million, and solar generating capacity fees would total at least
28 \$80.8 million.

29
30 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
31 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
32 from outside the ROI would be required, with 341 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
33 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
34 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
35 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
36 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 307 owner-occupied units expected to be
37 occupied in the ROI.

38
39 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
40 community service (health, education, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
41 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the provision of these
42 services in the ROI. Accordingly, 3 new teachers, 1 physician, and 1 public safety employee
43 (career firefighters and uniformed police officers) would be required in the ROI.

1 **Power Tower**
2
3

4 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
5 and indirect impacts) from the use of power tower technologies would be up to 3,613 jobs
6 (Table 11.4.19.2-4). Construction activities would constitute 0.3% of total ROI employment.
7 Such a solar facility would also produce \$220.7 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
8 \$1.4 million; direct income taxes in Utah, \$0.4 million.
9

10 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
11 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
12 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
13 888 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
14 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
15 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
16 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
17 with 444 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
18 0.7% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
19

20 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
21 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
22 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly, 8 new
23 teachers, 2 physicians, and 2 public safety employees would be required in the ROI. These
24 increases would represent less than 0.1% of total ROI employment expected in these
25 occupations.
26

27
28 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
29 indirect impacts) of a build-out using power tower technologies would be 1,880 jobs
30 (Table 11.4.19.2-4). Such a solar facility would also produce \$65.0 million in income. Direct
31 sales taxes would be \$0.1 million; direct income taxes in Utah, \$0.1 million. Based on fees
32 established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), acreage-related
33 fees would be \$4.8 million, and solar generating capacity fees would total at least \$44.9 million.
34

35 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
36 operation of a solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their families from
37 outside the ROI would be required, with 176 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
38 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
39 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
40 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
41 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 159 owner-occupied units expected to be
42 required in the ROI.
43

44 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
45 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
46

TABLE 11.4.19.2-4 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ with Power Tower Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	2,084	1,384
Total	3,613	1,880
Income ^b		
Total	220.7	65.0
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	1.4	0.1
Income	0.4	0.1
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA ^c	4.8
Capacity fee ^d	NA	44.9
In-migrants (no.)	888	176
Vacant housing ^e (no.)	444	159
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	8	2
Physicians (no.)	2	0
Public safety (no.)	2	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 1,000 MW (corresponding to 9,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 6,833 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside in Utah.

^c NA = not applicable.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

^e Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

1 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly, 2 new
2 teachers would be required in the ROI.

3 4 5 **Dish Engine**

6
7
8 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
9 and indirect impacts) from the use of dish engine technologies would be up to 1,469 jobs
10 (Table 11.4.19.2-5). Construction activities would constitute 0.1% of total ROI employment.
11 Such a solar facility would also produce \$89.7 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
12 \$0.6 million; direct income taxes in Utah, \$0.2 million.

13
14 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
15 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
16 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
17 361 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
18 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
19 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
20 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
21 with 180 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
22 0.3% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

23
24 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
25 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
26 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly, 3 new
27 teachers, 1 physician, and 1 public safety employee would be required in the ROI. These
28 increases would represent less than 0.1% of total ROI employment expected in these
29 occupations.

30
31
32 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
33 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using dish engine technologies would be 1,827 jobs
34 (Table 11.4.19.2-5). Such a solar facility would also produce \$63.1 million in income.
35 Direct sales taxes would be \$0.1 million; direct income taxes in Utah, \$0.1 million. Based on
36 fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), acreage-
37 related fees would be \$4.8 million, and solar generating capacity fees would total at least
38 \$44.9 million.

39
40 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
41 operation of a dish engine solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their
42 families from outside the ROI would be required, with 171 persons in-migrating into the ROI.
43 Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number
44 of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile
45 home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-
46

TABLE 11.4.19.2-5 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ with Dish Engine Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	847	1,345
Total	1,469	1,827
Income ^b		
Total	89.7	63.1
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.6	0.1
Income	0.2	0.1
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA ^c	4.8
Capacity fee ^d	NA	44.9
In-migrants (no.)	361	171
Vacant housing ^e (no.)	180	154
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	3	2
Physicians (no.)	1	0
Public safety (no.)	1	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 1,000 MW (corresponding to 9,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 6,833 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside in Utah.

^c NA = not applicable.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

^e Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

1 occupied housing units would not be expected to be large, with 154 owner-occupied units
2 expected to be required in the ROI.

3
4 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
5 community service employment (education, health, and public safety). An increase in such
6 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly, 2 new
7 teachers would be required in the ROI.

8 9 10 **Photovoltaic**

11
12
13 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
14 indirect impacts) from the use of PV technologies would be up to 685 jobs (Table 11.4.19.2-6).
15 Construction activities would constitute less than 0.1 % of total ROI employment. Such a solar
16 development would also produce \$41.9 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
17 \$0.3 million; direct income taxes in Utah, \$0.1 million.

18
19 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
20 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
21 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
22 168 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
23 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
24 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
25 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
26 with 84 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
27 0.1% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

28
29 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
30 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
31 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly, 2 new
32 teachers would be required in the ROI. This increase would represent less than 0.1% of total ROI
33 employment expected in this occupation.

34
35
36 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
37 indirect impacts) of a build-out using PV technologies would be 182 jobs (Table 11.4.19.2-5).
38 Such a solar facility would also produce \$6.3 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
39 less than \$0.1 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be less than \$0.1 million. Based on fees
40 established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), acreage-related
41 fees would be \$4.8 million, and solar generating capacity fees would total at least \$35.9 million.

42
43 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
44 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
45 from outside the ROI would be required, with 17 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
46 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of

TABLE 11.4.19.2-6 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ with PV Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	395	134
Total	685	182
Income ^b		
Total	41.9	6.3
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.3	<0.1
Income	0.1	<0.1
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA ^c	4.8
Capacity fee ^d	NA	35.9
In-migrants (no.)	168	17
Vacant housing ^e (no.)	84	15
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	2	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	0	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 1,000 MW (corresponding to 9,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 6,833 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside in Utah.

^c Not applicable.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$5,256 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010h), assuming full build-out of the site.

^e Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect owner-occupied housing.

1 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
2 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
3 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 15 owner-occupied units expected to be
4 required in the ROI.

5
6 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
7 service in the ROI.

10 **11.4.19.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

11
12 No SEZ-specific design features addressing socioeconomic impacts have been identified
13 for the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features
14 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would
15 reduce the potential for socioeconomic impacts during all project phases.

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1 **11.4.20 Environmental Justice**

2
3
4 **11.4.20.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority
7 Populations and Low-Income Populations” (*Federal Register*, Volume 59, page 7629,
8 Feb. 11, 1994), formally requires federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice as part of
9 their missions. Specifically, it directs them to address, as appropriate, any disproportionately
10 high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their actions, programs, or policies on
11 minority and low-income populations.

12
13 The analysis of the impacts of solar energy projects on environmental justice issues
14 follows guidelines described in the CEQ’s *Environmental Justice Guidance under the National*
15 *Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997). The analysis method has three parts: (1) a description
16 of the geographic distribution of low-income and minority populations in the affected area is
17 undertaken; (2) an assessment is conducted to determine whether construction and operation
18 would produce impacts that are high and adverse; and (3) if impacts are high and adverse, a
19 determination is made as to whether these impacts disproportionately affect minority and
20 low-income populations.

21
22 Construction and operation of solar energy projects in the proposed Dry Lake Valley
23 North SEZ could affect environmental justice if any adverse health and environmental impacts
24 resulting from either phase of development are significantly high and if these impacts
25 disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations. If the analysis determines that
26 health and environmental impacts are not significant, there can be no disproportionate impacts
27 on minority and low-income populations. In the event impacts are significant, disproportionality
28 would be determined by comparing the proximity of any high and adverse impacts with the
29 location of low-income and minority populations.

30
31 The analysis of environmental justice issues associated with the development of solar
32 facilities considered impacts within the SEZ and an associated 50-mi (80-km) radius around the
33 boundary of the SEZ. A description of the geographic distribution of minority and low-income
34 groups in the affected area was based on demographic data from the 2000 Census (U.S. Bureau
35 of the Census 2009k,1). The following definitions were used to define minority and low-income
36 population groups:

- 37
38 • **Minority.** Persons who identify themselves as belonging to any of the
39 following racial groups: (1) Hispanic, (2) Black (not of Hispanic origin) or
40 African American, (3) American Indian or Alaska Native, (4) Asian, or
41 (5) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

42
43 Beginning with the 2000 Census, where appropriate, the census form allows
44 individuals to designate multiple population group categories to reflect their
45 ethnic or racial origins. In addition, persons who classify themselves as being
46 of multiple racial origins may choose up to six racial groups as the basis of

1 their racial origins. The term minority includes all persons, including those
2 classifying themselves in multiple racial categories, except those who classify
3 themselves as not of Hispanic origin and as White or “Other Race”
4 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009k).

5
6 The CEQ guidance proposed that minority populations be identified where
7 either (1) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50% or (2) the
8 minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater
9 than the minority population percentage in the general population or other
10 appropriate unit of geographic analysis.

11
12 This PEIS applies both criteria in using the Census data for census block
13 groups, wherein consideration is given to the minority population that is both
14 greater than 50% and 20 percentage points higher than in the state (the
15 reference geographic unit).

- 16
17 • **Low-Income.** Individuals who fall below the poverty line. The poverty line
18 takes into account family size and age of individuals in the family. In 1999,
19 for example, the poverty line for a family of five with three children below
20 the age of 18 was \$19,882. For any given family below the poverty line, all
21 family members are considered as being below the poverty line for the
22 purposes of analysis (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009l).

23
24 The data in Table 11.4.20.1-1 show the minority and low-income composition of the
25 total population in the proposed SEZ based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines.
26 Individuals identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino are included in the table as a separate
27 entry. However, because Hispanics can be of any race, this number also includes individuals
28 identifying themselves as being part of one or more of the population groups listed in the table.

29
30 Minority and low-income individuals are located in the 50-mi (80-km) area around the
31 boundary of the SEZ. Within the 50-mi (80-km) radius in Nevada, 18.5% of the population is
32 classified as minority, while 9.9% is classified as low-income. However, the number of minority
33 individuals does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area and does not exceed the state
34 average by 20 percentage points or more; thus, in aggregate, there is no minority population in
35 the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines. The number of low-income
36 individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more and does not
37 exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income
38 populations in the Nevada portion of the SEZ.

39
40 In the Utah portion of the 50-mi (80-km) radius, 9.2% of the population is classified as
41 minority, while 15.7% is classified as low-income. The number of minority individuals does not
42 exceed 50% of the total population in the area and does not exceed the state average by 20
43 percentage points or more; thus, in aggregate, there is no minority population in the SEZ area
44 based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines. The number of low-income individuals does not
45 exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more and does not exceed 50% of the total
46

TABLE 11.4.20.1-1 Minority and Low-Income Populations within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius Surrounding the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

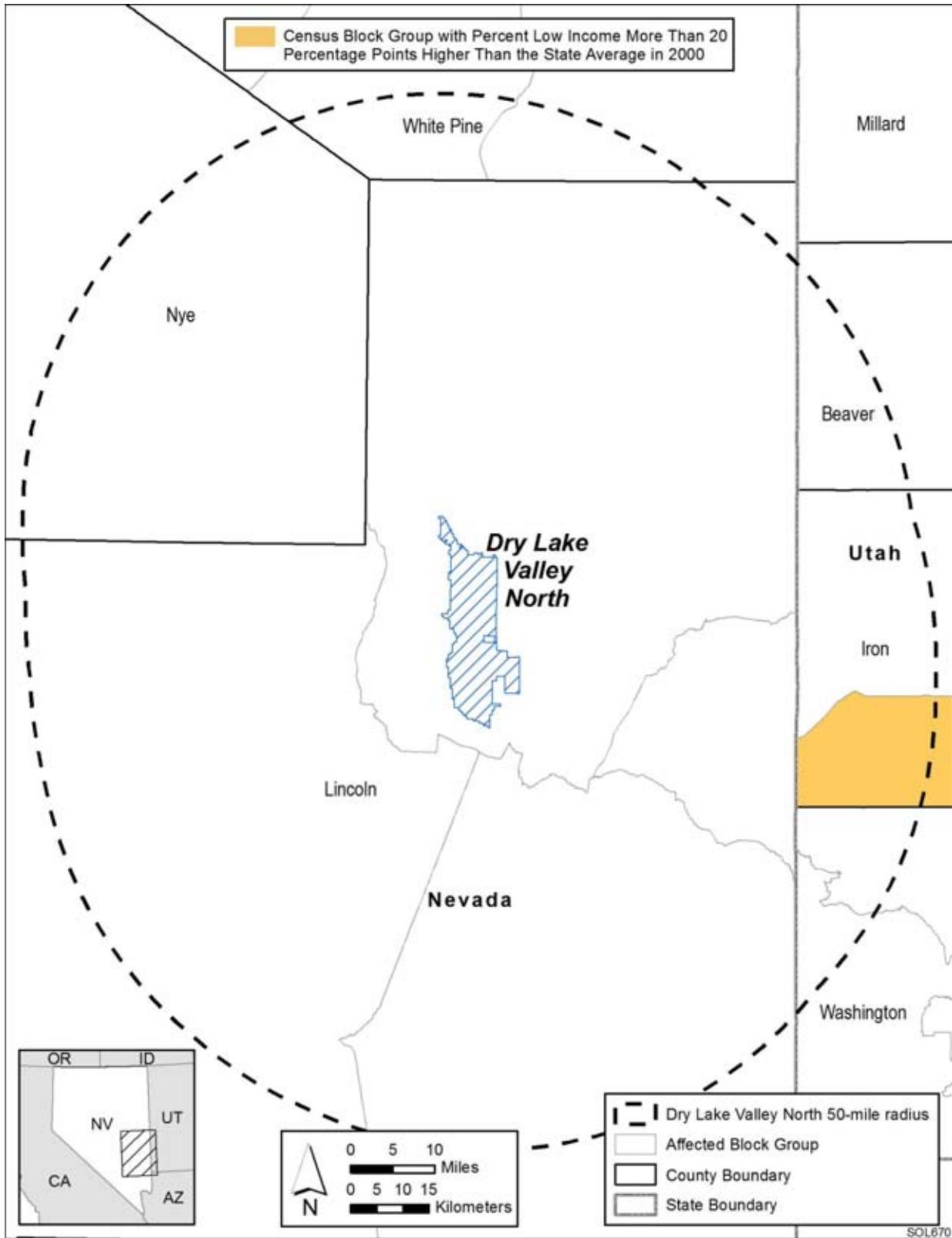
Parameter	Nevada	Utah
Total population	8,878	5,523
White, non-Hispanic	7,239	5,015
Hispanic or Latino	692	264
Non-Hispanic or Latino minorities	947	244
One race	767	185
Black or African American	428	8
American Indian or Alaskan Native	258	151
Asian	42	15
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	7	3
Some other race	32	8
Two or more races	180	59
Total minority	1,639	508
Low-income	883	865
Percentage minority	18.5	9.2
State percentage minority	17.2	15.9
Percentage low-income	9.9	15.7
State percentage low-income	10.5	9.4

Source: U.S Bureau of the Census (2009k,l).

1
2
3 population in the area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the Utah
4 portion of the SEZ.

5
6 Figure 11.4.20.1-1 shows the locations of the low-income population groups within the
7 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ.

8
9 At the individual block group level there are low-income populations in one census block
10 group, in Iron County west of Cedar City (including the towns of Newcastle and Modena), which
11 has a low-income population that is more than 20 percentage points higher than the state average.
12 There are no other block groups exceeding the 20% threshold in the 50-mi (80-km) area, and
13 there are no block groups with low income or minority populations that exceed 50% of the total
14 population in the block group, and the number of minority individuals does not exceed the state
15 average by 20 percentage points or more at the individual block group level.
16
17



1

2 **FIGURE 11.4.20.1-1 Low-Income Population Groups within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius**
 3 **Surrounding the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ**

1 **11.4.20.2 Impacts**
2

3 Environmental justice concerns common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities are
4 described in detail in Section 5.18. These impacts will be minimized through the implementation
5 of the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, which address the
6 underlying environmental impacts contributing to the concerns. The potentially relevant
7 environmental impacts associated with solar facilities within the proposed Dry Lake Valley
8 North SEZ include noise and dust during the construction; noise and EMF effects associated with
9 operations; visual impacts of solar generation and auxiliary facilities, including transmission
10 lines; access to land used for economic, cultural, or religious purposes; and effects on property
11 values as areas of concern that might potentially affect minority and low-income populations.
12

13 Potential impacts on low-income and minority populations could be incurred as a result
14 of the construction and operation of solar facilities involving each of the four technologies.
15 Although impacts are likely to be small, there are no minority populations defined by CEQ
16 guidelines (Section 11.4.20.1) within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ;
17 this means that any adverse impacts of solar projects could not disproportionately affect minority
18 populations. Because there are low-income populations within the 50-mi (80-km) radius, there
19 could be impacts on low-income populations.
20

21
22 **11.4.20.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
23

24 No SEZ-specific design features addressing environmental justice impacts have been
25 identified for the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design
26 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM’s Solar Energy
27 Program, would reduce the potential for environmental justice impacts during all project phases.
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1 **11.4.21 Transportation**
2

3 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is accessible by road with rail nearby. One
4 U.S. highway and one state highway serve the area as does a major railroad. Three small airports
5 are in the general area. General transportation considerations and impacts are discussed in
6 Sections 3.4 and 5.19, respectively.
7

8
9 **11.4.21.1 Affected Environment**
10

11 The closest major road, Nevada State Route 318 runs north–south approximately
12 7 to 8 mi (11 to 13 km) to the west of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ as shown in
13 Figure 11.4.21.1-1. To the east of the SEZ, U.S. 93 runs north–south with a closest approach
14 just more than 8 mi (13 km) away. The town of Pioche is situated due east of the central
15 portion of the SEZ along U.S. 93. The Las Vegas metropolitan area is approximately 140 mi
16 (24 km) to the south of the SEZ along State Route 318 to U.S. 93. Several local unimproved
17 dirt roads cross the SEZ from both State Route 318 and U.S. 93. As listed in Table 11.4.21.1-1,
18 the SEZ area and surrounding area have been designated as limited to travel on existing roads
19 and trails. State Route 318 and U.S. 93 each carry average traffic volumes of about 1,000
20 vehicles per day in the vicinity of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (NV DOT 2010).
21

22 The UP Railroad serves the region. The main line passes through Las Vegas on its way
23 between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. The railroad has a stop along this route in Caliente,
24 25 mi (40 km) south of Pioche on U.S. 93.
25

26 The nearest public airport is the Lincoln County Airport, a small local airport about a
27 10-mi (16-km) drive to the south of Pioche in Panaca. The airport has one asphalt runway
28 4,260-ft (1,408-m) long in fair condition (FAA 2009). Lincoln County Airport does not have
29 scheduled commercial passenger or freight service. The next two closest public airports, Alamo
30 Landing Field Airport (by Alamo on U.S. 93 south of the State Route 375 junction) and Currant
31 Ranch Airport (on U.S. 6 west of the State Route 318 junction), have dirt runways and are owned
32 by the BLM (FAA 2009). McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas, more than a 140-mi
33 (225-km) drive, is the nearest major airport to the SEZ.
34

35
36 **11.4.21.2 Impacts**
37

38 As discussed in Section 5.19, the primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be
39 from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day,
40 with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum) or possibly 6,000 vehicle trips per day
41 if three larger projects were to be developed at the same time. The volume of traffic on either
42 State Route 318 or U.S. 93 would represent an increase in traffic of about a factor of 2, 4, or
43 6 maximum in the area of the SEZ for one, two, or three projects, respectively. Because higher
44 traffic volumes would be experienced during shift changes, traffic on either State Route 318 or
45 U.S. 93 could experience moderate slowdowns during these time periods in the general area of
46

TABLE 11.4.21.1-1 AADT on Major Roads near the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ for 2009

Road	General Direction	Location	AADT (Vehicles)
U.S. 93	North–South	North of I-15 junction (I-15 Exit 64)	2,300
		South of State Route 318	1,600
		North of State Route 375	650
		South of State Route 317 by Caliente	740
		North of Caliente	1,400
		North of State Route 319	1,200
		South of Pioche	1,000
		North of Pioche	580
		North of road to Bristol Silver Mine (due east of northern tip of the SEZ)	500
		South of junction with U.S. 6/U.S. 50	300
State Route 318	North–South	West of junction with U.S. 93	1,100
		1.6 mi (2.6 km) north of junction with State Route 375	1,200
		Nye–White Pine County Line	1,000
		In Lund, Nevada	1,600
State Route 319	East–West	East of junction with U.S. 93 (toward Panaca)	1,800
State Route 322	North–South	East of junction with U.S. 93 in Pioche	250
State Route 375	East–West	West of junction with State Route 318	200

Source: NV DOT (2010).

the SEZ. Local road improvements would be necessary on State Route 318 or U.S. 93 near any site access point(s).

Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes designated open and available for public use. If there are any routes designated as open within the proposed SEZ, these routes crossing areas issued ROWs for solar facilities would be re-designated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for more details on how routes coinciding with proposed solar facilities would be treated).

11.4.21.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness

No SEZ-specific design features have been identified related to impacts on transportation systems around the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. The programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, including local road improvements, multiple site access locations, staggered work schedules, and ride-sharing, would all provide some relief to traffic congestion on local roads leading to the site. Depending on the location of solar facilities within the SEZ, more specific access locations and local road improvements could be implemented.

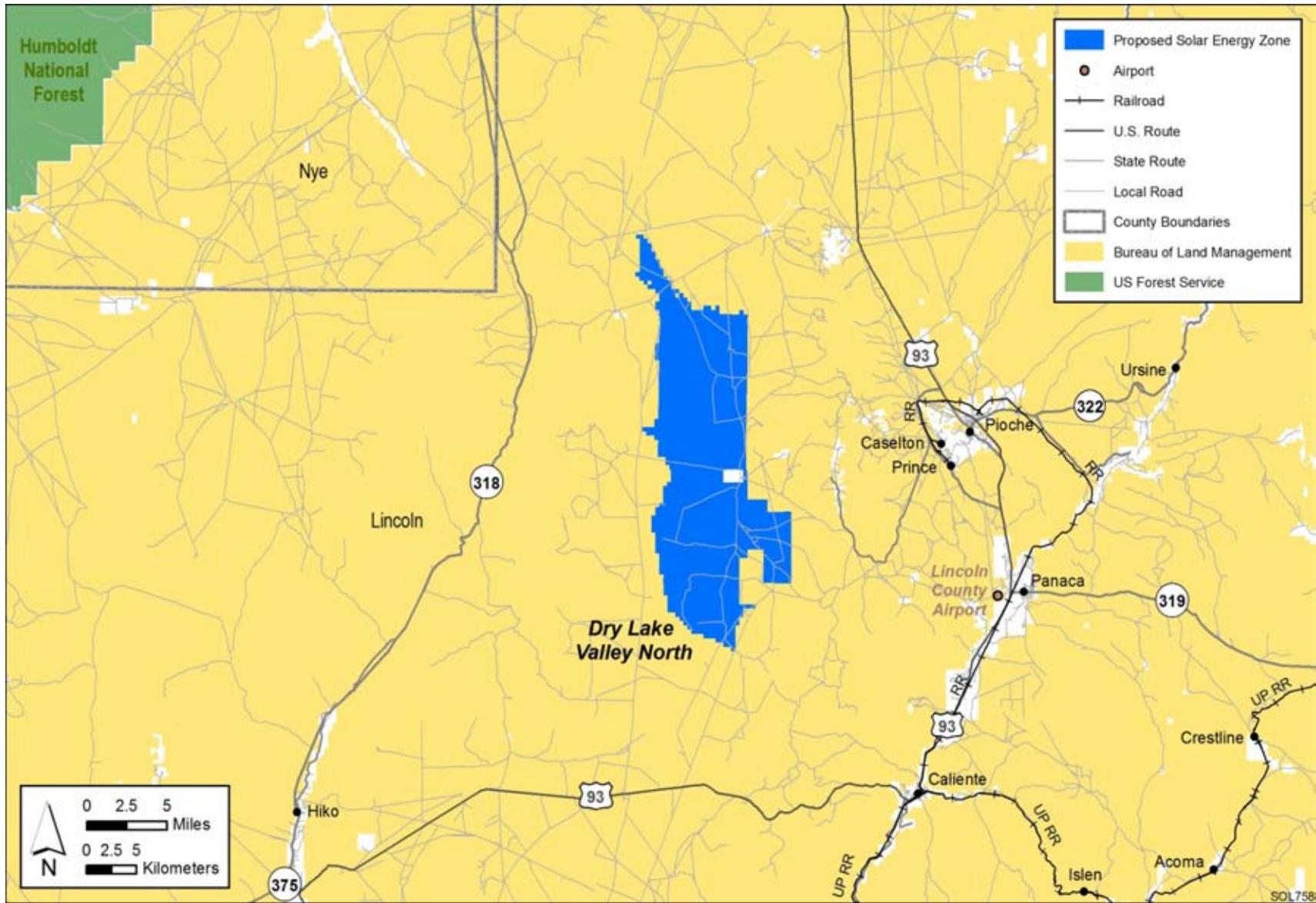


FIGURE 11.4.21.1-1 Local Transportation Network Serving the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

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1 **11.4.22 Cumulative Impacts**
2

3 The analysis presented in this section addresses the potential cumulative impacts in the
4 vicinity of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ in Lincoln County, Nevada. The CEQ
5 guidelines for implementing NEPA define cumulative impacts as environmental impacts
6 resulting from the incremental impacts of an action when added to other past, present, and
7 reasonably foreseeable future actions (40 CFR 1508.7). The impacts of other actions are
8 considered without regard to the agency (federal or nonfederal), organization, or person that
9 undertakes them. The time frame of this cumulative impacts assessment could appropriately
10 include activities that would occur up to 20 years in the future (the general time frame for PEIS
11 analyses), but little or no information is available for projects that could occur more than 5 to
12 10 years in the future.
13

14 The land surrounding the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is undeveloped, with
15 no permanent residents in the area. The nearest population centers are the small communities
16 of Caselton and Pioche (population 2,111), located about 13 mi (21 km) and 15 mi (24 km),
17 respectively, from the eastern boundary of the SEZ. The Pahrnagat NWR is about 45 mi
18 (72 km) southwest of the SEZ. The northeast boundary of the Desert National Wildlife Range is
19 located just under 50 mi (80 km) southwest of the SEZ. Two WAs are located near the proposed
20 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ: Big Rocks WA is southwest of the SEZ, and the Weepah Spring
21 WA is west of the SEZ. Portions of seven other WAs are within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ. The
22 BLM administers about 82% of the lands in the Ely District that contains the Dry Lake Valley
23 North SEZ. In addition, the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is located about 20 mi (32 km) to the
24 south of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, and for many resources, the geographic extent of
25 impacts of the two SEZs overlap.
26

27 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
28 resources near the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is identified in Section 11.4.22.1. An
29 overview of ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions is presented in Section 11.4.22.2.
30 General trends in population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate change are
31 discussed in Section 11.4.22.3. Cumulative impacts for each resource area are discussed in
32 Section 11.4.22.4.
33
34

35 **11.4.22.1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis**
36

37 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
38 resources evaluated near the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is provided in
39 Table 11.4.22.1-1. These geographic areas define the boundaries encompassing potentially
40 affected resources. Their extent may vary based on the nature of the resource being evaluated
41 and the distance at which an impact may occur (thus, for example, the evaluation of air quality
42 may have a greater regional extent of impact than visual resources). Most of the lands around the
43 SEZ are administered by the BLM, the USFWS, or the DoD. The BLM administers about 93.8%
44 of the lands within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ.
45
46

TABLE 11.4.22.1-1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis by Resource Area: Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Resource Area	Geographic Extent
Land Use	Central Lincoln County–Dry Lake Valley North
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Central Lincoln County
Rangeland Resources	
Grazing	Central Lincoln County
Wild Horses and Burros	A 50 mi (80 km) radius from the center of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
Recreation	Central Lincoln County
Military and Civilian Aviation	Central Lincoln County
Soil Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
Minerals	Central Lincoln County
Water Resources	
Surface Water	Dry Lake, Coyote Wash, Fairview Wash, Cherry Creek, and wetlands associated with Dry Lake
Groundwater	Dry Lake Valley and Delamar Valley groundwater basins and the White River flow system
Air Quality and Climate	A 31-mi (50-km) radius from the center of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
Vegetation, Wildlife, and Aquatic Biota, Special Status Species	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, including portions of Lincoln and Nye Counties in Nevada and Washington, Iron, and Beaver Counties in Utah
Visual Resources	Viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
Acoustic Environment (noise)	Areas adjacent to the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
Paleontological Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ
Cultural Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ for archaeological sites; viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ for other properties, such as traditional cultural properties.
Native American Concerns	Dry Lake Valley and surrounding mountains; viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.
Socioeconomics	Lincoln and Clark Counties in Nevada and Iron County in Utah
Environmental Justice	Lincoln County and Clark Counties in Nevada and Iron County in Utah
Transportation	U.S. Highway 93; State Route 318

1 **11.4.22.2 Overview of Ongoing and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions**
2

3 The future actions described below are those that are “reasonably foreseeable;” that is,
4 they have already occurred, are ongoing, are funded for future implementation, or are included
5 in firm near-term plans. Types of proposals with firm near-term plans are as follows:
6

- 7 • Proposals for which NEPA documents are in preparation or finalized;
- 8
- 9 • Proposals in a detailed design phase;
- 10
- 11 • Proposals listed in formal NOIs published in the Federal Register or state
12 publications;
- 13
- 14 • Proposals for which enabling legislations has been passed; and
- 15
- 16 • Proposals that have been submitted to federal, state, or county regulators to
17 begin a permitting process.
- 18

19 Projects in the bidding or research phase or that have been put on hold were not included in the
20 cumulative impact analysis.
21

22 The ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions described below are grouped
23 into two categories: (1) actions that relate to energy production and distribution, including
24 potential solar energy projects under the proposed action (Section 11.4.22.2.1); and (2) other
25 ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions, including those related to mining and mineral
26 processing, grazing management, transportation, recreation, water management, and
27 conservation (Section 11.4.22.2.2). Together, these actions have the potential to affect human
28 and environmental receptors within the geographic range of potential impacts over the next
29 20 years.
30
31

32 ***11.4.22.2.1 Energy Production and Distribution***
33

34 On February 16, 2007, Governor Jim Gibbons of Nevada signed an Executive Order to
35 encourage the development of renewable energy resources in the state (Gibbons 2007a). The
36 Executive Order requires all relevant state agencies to review their permitting processes to
37 ensure the timely and expeditious permitting of renewable energy projects. On May 9, 2007,
38 and June 12, 2008, the Governor signed Executive Orders creating the Nevada Renewable
39 Energy Transmission Access Advisory Committee Phase I and Phase II that will propose
40 recommendations for improved access to the grid system for renewable energy industries
41 (Gibbons 2007b, 2008). On May 28, 2009, the Nevada legislature passed a bill modifying the
42 Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards (Nevada Senate 2009). The bill requires that 25% of
43 the electricity sold be produced by renewable energy sources by 2025.
44

45 No existing or foreseeable energy production facilities are located within a 50-mi
46 (80-km) radius from the center of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, which includes

1 portions of Lincoln and Nye Counties in Nevada and Washington, Beaver and Iron Counties in Utah.
2 The closest renewable energy facility or project would be the 152-MW Spring Valley Wind
3 project, a fast-track wind project located about 80 mi (130 km) north of the SEZ. Reasonably
4 foreseeable future actions related to energy development and distribution are identified in
5 Table 11.4.22.2-1 and described in the following sections.

6 7 8 **Renewable Energy Development** 9

10 Renewable energy ROW applications are considered in two categories: fast-track and
11 regular-track applications. Fast-track applications, which apply principally to solar energy
12 facilities, are those applications on public lands for which the environmental review and public
13 participation process is underway, and the applications could be approved by December 2010.
14 A fast-track project would be considered foreseeable because the permitting and environmental
15 review processes would be under way. There are no fast-track projects with 50 mi (80 km) of the
16 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Regular-track proposals are considered potential future
17 projects but not necessarily foreseeable projects, since not all applications would be expected to
18 be carried to completion. These proposals are considered together as a general level of interest in
19 development of renewable energy in the region and are discussed in the following section.

20 21 22 **Pending Solar and Wind ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Lands.** 23

24 Applications for ROWs that have been submitted to the BLM include one pending solar
25 project, one pending authorization for wind site testing, six authorized for wind testing, and one
26 pending authorization for development of a wind facility that would be located within 50 mi
27 (80 km) of the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ (BLM 2009b). No applications for geothermal
28 projects have been submitted. Table 11.4.22.2-2 lists these applications and Figure 11.4.22.2-1
29 shows their locations.

30
31 The likelihood of any of the regular-track application projects actually being developed is
32 uncertain, but it is generally assumed to be less than that for fast-track applications. The number
33 and type of projects, listed in Table 11.4.22.2-2, are an indication of the level of interest in
34 development of renewable energy in the region. Some number of these applications would be
35 expected to result in actual projects. Thus, the cumulative impacts of these potential projects are
36 analyzed in general for their potential aggregate effects.

37
38 Wind testing would involve some relatively minor activities that could have some
39 environmental effects, mainly the erection of meteorological towers and monitoring of wind
40 conditions. These towers may or may not employ guy wires and may be 200 ft (60 m) high.

41 42 43 **Energy Transmission and Distribution Projects** 44

45 The following proposed transmission line projects, which would run through or near the
46 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, are considered reasonably foreseeable projects.

TABLE 11.4.22.2-1 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions Related to Energy Development and Distribution near the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
<i>Renewable Energy Development</i>			
None			
<i>Transmission and Distribution Systems</i>			
Southwest Intertie Project	FONSI issued July 30, 2008 In-service in 2010	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes through the SEZ
One Nevada Transmission Line Project	Draft Supplemental EIS Nov. 30, 2009	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes through the SEZ
Zephyr and Chinook Transmission Line Project	Permit Applications in 2011/2012	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes near or through the SEZ

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Southwest Intertie Project (SWIP). The SWIP is a 520-mi (830-km) long, single-circuit, overhead 500-kV transmission line project. The first phase, the Southern Portion, is a 264-mi (422-km) long transmission line that begins at the existing Harry Allen Substation located in Dry Lake, Nevada, and extends north to a proposed substation about 18 mi (29 km) northwest of Ely, Nevada. The transmission line will pass through the SEZ. It will consist of self-supporting, steel-lattice and steel-pole H-frame structures placed 1,200 to 1,500 ft (366 to 457 m) apart. The SWIP is expected to be completed in 2010. Construction could have potential impacts on the Mojave desert tortoise (BLM 2007a).

One Nevada Transmission Line Project. NV Energy proposes to construct and operate a 236-mi (382-km) long 500-kV transmission line with fiber optic telecommunication and appurtenant facilities in White Pine, Nye, Lincoln, and Clark Counties. It will consist of self-supporting, steel-lattice and steel-pole H-frame structures placed 900 to 1,600 ft (274 to 488 m) apart. The width of the ROW is 200 ft (61 m). The proposed action includes new substations outside the ROI of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. The transmission line would be within the SWIP utility corridor that passes through the SEZ. Construction could have potential impacts on the Mojave Desert Tortoise (BLM 2009a).

Zephyr and Chinook Transmission Line Project. TransCanada is proposing to construct two 500-kV high-voltage direct current transmission lines. The Zephyr project would originate in southeastern Wyoming. The Chinook project would originate in south central Montana. Both would travel along the same corridor from northern Nevada, passing near or through the SEZ,

TABLE 11.4.22.2-2 Pending Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Land within 50 mi (80 km) of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ^{a,b}

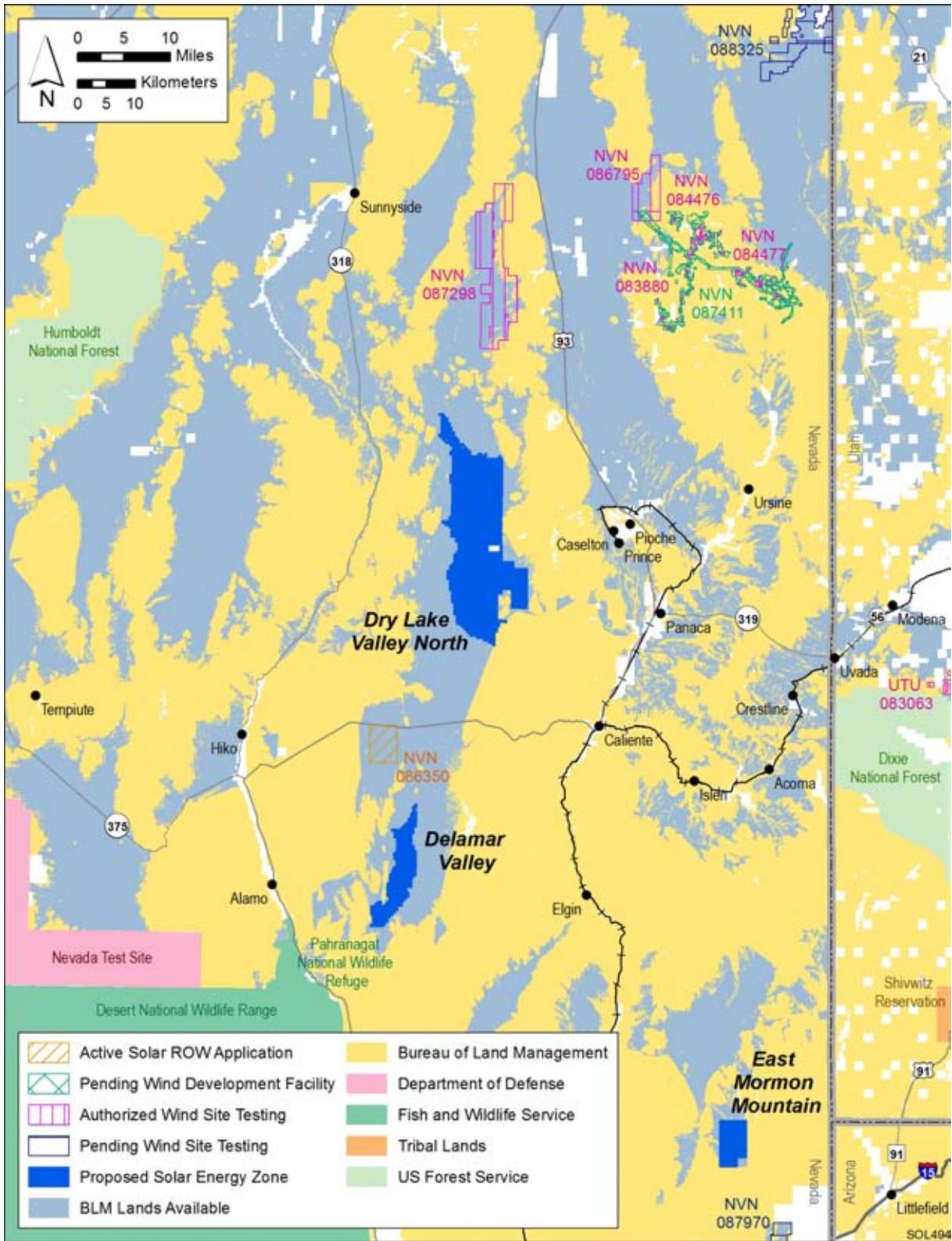
Serial Number	Applicant	Application Received	Size (acres) ^c	MW	Technology	Status	Field Office
Solar Applications							
NVN 86350	Solar Reserve LLC	Oct. 2, 2008	7,680	180	Power tower	Pending	Caliente
Wind Applications							
NVN 88325	— ^d	—	—	—	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Schell
NVN 86795	Windlab Developments USA, Ltd.	Feb. 25, 2009	—	—	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Schell
NVN 87298	Windlab Developments USA, Ltd.	March 9, 2009	—	—	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Schell
NVN 84477	Nevada Wind	Feb. 25, 2008	5,030	—	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Schell
NVN 83880	Nevada Wind	June 27, 2008	9,020	—	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Schell
NVN 84476	Nevada Wind	Sept. 24, 2008	2,950	—	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Schell
UTU 83063	—	—	—	—	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Cedar City
NVN 87411	—	—	—	—	Wind	Pending wind facilities development	Schell

^a Source: BLM (2009b).

^b Information for pending solar energy projects (BLM and USFS 2010c) and pending wind energy projects (BLM and USFS 2010d) was downloaded from GeoCommunicator.

^c To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d A dash indicates data not available.



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.4.22.2-1 Locations of Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on Public Land**
 3 **within a 50-mi (80-km) Radius of the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ**

1 and terminate in the El Dorado Valley south of Las Vegas. Construction is expected to be
2 complete in 2015 or 2016 (TransCanada 2010).

3 4 5 **11.4.22.2.2 Other Actions**

6
7 Other major ongoing and foreseeable actions identified within 50 mi (80 km) of the
8 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are listed in Table 11.4.22.2-3 and described in the
9 following subsections.

10 11 12 **Other Ongoing Actions**

13
14
15 **Arizona Nevada Tower Corporation (ANTC).** ANTC has constructed seven cellular
16 telephone signal relay towers in Lincoln County along the U.S. 93 corridor between Coyote
17 Springs Valley and the town of Pioche. One site is just east of the SEZ; the others are south and
18 southwest of the site SEZ. Four of the seven sites are 100-ft × 100-ft (30.5-m × 30.5-m) parcels.
19 The remaining three are 50 ft × 100 ft (15.7 m × 30.5 m), 50 ft × 120 ft (15.7 m × 36.6 m) and
20 100 ft × 200 ft (30.5 m × 61.0 m). Utility corridors were extended to six of the sites to supply
21 electricity. Solar cells are the primary source of power for the Alamo Peak site, with wind
22 generation as the backup. The towers are steel lattice, three-sided, and free standing, and each
23 tower base is a 30-ft (9-m) square concrete slab. The towers at Alamo Peak and Highland Peak
24 are 125 ft (38.1 m) high, and the other five are 195 ft (59.4 m) high (BLM 2007b).

25
26
27 **Patriot Communications Exercise in Lincoln Count.** The U.S. Air Force at Nellis Air
28 Force Base has acquired a 15-year communications use lease to support ground-based
29 radar/communications exercises at fourteen 5.7-acre (0.023-km²) sites. A maximum of five
30 exercises would be conducted annually for a period of 15 years. One site is just east of the SEZ.
31 Three of the sites are along U.S. 93 about 15 mi (24 km) south of the SEZ. The remainder are
32 20 to 40 mi (32 to 64 km) west of the SEZ (BLM 2008c).

33 34 35 **Other Foreseeable Actions**

36
37
38 **Caliente Rail Alignment.** The DOE proposes to construct and operate a railroad for the
39 shipment of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste to the geologic repository at
40 Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The rail line would begin near Caliente, Nevada and extend north,
41 then turn in a westerly direction, passing through the SEZ, to a location near the northwest corner
42 of the Nevada Test and Training Range, and then continue south-southwest to Yucca Mountain.
43 The rail line would range in length from approximately 328 mi (528 km) to 336 mi (541 km),
44 depending upon the exact location of the alignment. The rail line would be restricted to DOE
45 shipments. Over a 50-year period, 9,500 casks containing spent nuclear fuel and high-level

TABLE 11.4.22.2-3 Other Major Actions near the Proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ^a

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
Arizona Nevada Tower Corporation Communication Sites	EA issued April 2007	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, cultural resources	East, west, and southwest of the SEZ
Patriot Communication Exercises in Lincoln County	DEA April 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, soils	East, south, and west of the SEZ
Caliente Rail Realignment	FEIS June 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources	Passes through the SEZ
Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project	DEIS expected in March 2011	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, groundwater	Within the SEZ
Lincoln County Land Act Groundwater Development and Utility ROW	FEIS issued May 2009 ROD Jan. 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, groundwater	Southeast of the SEZ
Alamo Industrial Park and Community Expansion	Preliminary Design Report Jan. 2000; FEIS issued Jan. 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, socioeconomics	35 mi (56 km) southwest of the SEZ
Meadow Valley Industrial Park	FEIS issued Jan. 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, socioeconomics	14 mi (22 km) southeast of the SEZ
NV Energy Microwave and Mobile Radio Project	Preliminary EA March 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources	Two of the sites are 40 mi (64 km) west of SEZ; one site is 50 mi (80 km) northwest of SEZ
U.S. Highway 93 Corridor Wild Horse Gather	EA issued Dec. 28, 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	East of the SEZ
Silver King Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather	Preliminary EA issued June 10, 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	In and around the SEZ
Eagle Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather	Preliminary EA issued Dec. 17, 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	East of the SEZ
Ash Canyon Sagebrush Restoration and Fuels Reduction Project	Preliminary EA issued May 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	25 mi (40 km) southeast of the SEZ
Pioche/Casleton Wildland Urban Interface Project	Preliminary EA issued May 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	East of the SEZ

1 radioactive waste, and approximately 29,000 rail cars of other materials, including construction
2 materials, would be shipped to the repository. An average of 17 one-way trains per week would
3 travel along the rail line. Construction of support facilities - interchange yard, staging yard,
4 maintenance-of-way facility, rail equipment maintenance yard, cask maintenance facility, and
5 Nevada Rail Control Center and National Transportation Operation Center would also be
6 required. Construction would take 4 to 10 years and cost \$2.57 billion. Construction activities
7 would occur inside a 1000 ft (300 m) wide right-of-way for a total footprint of 40,600 acres
8 (164 km²) (DOE 2008).

9
10
11 ***Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project.*** The
12 Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) proposes to construct a groundwater development
13 project that would transport approximately 122,755 ac-ft/yr (151 million m³/yr) of groundwater
14 under existing water rights and applications from several hydrographic basins in eastern Nevada
15 and western Utah. The proposed facilities include production wells, 306 mi (490 km) of buried
16 water pipelines, 5 pumping stations, 6 regulating tanks, 3 pressure reducing stations, a buried
17 storage reservoir, a water treatment facility, and about 323 mi (517 km) of 230 kV overhead
18 power lines, and 2 primary and 5 secondary substations. A portion of the project will be located
19 in the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. The project would develop groundwater in the following
20 amounts in two hydraulically connected valleys that would supply groundwater to the Dry Lake
21 Valley North SEZ: Dry Lake Valley (11,584 ac-ft/yr [14.3 million m³/yr]) and Delamar Valley
22 (2,493 ac-ft/yr [3.1 million m³/yr]). In addition, an undetermined amount of water could be
23 developed and transferred from Coyote Spring Valley, which is south of the SEZ and
24 downgradient of the other two basins (SNWA 2010).

25
26
27 ***Lincoln County Land Act (LCLA) Groundwater Development and Utility ROW.*** This
28 project involves the construction of the infrastructure required to pump and convey groundwater
29 resources in the Clover Valley and Tule Desert Hydrographic Areas. The construction includes
30 75 mi (122 km) of collection and transmission pipeline, 30 wells, 5 storage tanks, water pipeline
31 booster stations, transmission lines and substations, and a natural gas pipeline. A total of
32 240 acres (0.97 km²) will be permanently disturbed, and 1,878 acres (7.6 km²) temporarily
33 disturbed. The closest approach to the SEZ is about 30 mi (48 km) southeast (USFWS 2009b).

34
35
36 ***Alamo Industrial Park and Community Expansion.*** The BLM is planning to transfer
37 four parcels, consisting of 855 acres (3.46 km²) to Lincoln County. Parcel A, consisting of
38 approximately 217 acres (0.88 km²), is intended to be used for light industrial use. It is assumed
39 that the industrial park structures would require 117 acres (0.47 km²) with parking, roads and
40 support infrastructure on another 100 acres (0.40 km²). The remaining parcels would be used for
41 community expansion and would be developed primarily for residential purposes. Housing units
42 limited to about 3 units per acre would be built over a 20-year period. The site, about 0.1 mi
43 (0.16 km) southeast of the Town of Alamo along U.S. 93, is about 35 mi (56 km) southwest of
44 the SEZ (Agra Infrastructures, Inc. 2000, BLM 2007f; USFWS 2010b).

1 **Meadow Valley Industrial Park.** The BLM is planning to transfer a 103-acre (0.42-km²)
2 parcel to the City of Caliente, Nevada, for the construction of the Meadow Valley Industrial
3 Park. The site is located on a previously disturbed area used for agriculture and recreation at the
4 intersection of U.S. 93 and State Route 317, about 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the SEZ.
5 Improvements to the site would include construction of a rail spur, access roads, and water and
6 sewer extensions (USFWS 2010b).

7
8
9 **NV Energy Microwave and Mobile Radio Project.** NV Energy is proposing the
10 installation of a new microwave and radio communications network at 13 sites. Two sites are
11 within about 10 mi (16 km) of the SEZ and another is about 45 mi (72 km) south of the SEZ.
12 The two closest sites are small, occupying about 0.6 acre (0.0024 km²). The more distant site is
13 0.6 acre (0.0024 km²) but requires 57 acres (0.23 km²) of land disturbance for access and power
14 line ROW. Each site would include a communication shelter, two or three propane tanks, and a
15 generator. Two of the sites would each have an 80-ft (24-m) self-supporting lattice tower, and
16 one would have a 200-ft (60-m) tower (BLM 2010a).

17
18
19 **U.S. Highway 93 Corridor Wild Horse Gather.** The BLM Schell Field Office plans to
20 gather and remove about 50 excess wild horses residing outside the wild horse herd management
21 areas. The horses are considered to pose a safety hazard on U.S. 93 (BLM 2009c).

22
23
24 **Silver King Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather.** The BLM Schell and Caliente
25 Field Offices propose to gather and remove 445 excess wild horses from within and outside the
26 Silver King HMA. The Silver King HMA is 606,000 acres (2,452 km²) in size and is located
27 16 mi (26 km) north of Caliente, Nevada (BLM 2010b).

28
29
30 **Eagle Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather.** The BLM Schell Field Office
31 proposes to gather and remove 545 excess wild horses from within and outside the Eagle HMA.
32 The Eagle HMA is 670,000 acres (2,710 km²) in size and is located 20 mi (32 km) northeast of
33 Caliente, Nevada (BLM 2009d).

34
35
36 **Ash Canyon Sagebrush Restoration and Fuels Reduction Project.** The BLM Caliente
37 Field Office is proposing to conduct a sagebrush improvement and fuels reduction project
38 adjacent to Ash Canyon, about 5 mi (8 km) southeast of Caliente, Nevada, and about 25 mi
39 (40 km) southeast of the SEZ. The size of the project area is 870 acres (3.5 km²). The goal is to
40 reduce pinyon and juniper in order to achieve a desired state where sagebrush is present along
41 with an understory of perennial species; to reduce risk of wild fires by reducing fuel loading; to
42 restore the historic disturbance regime; and to improve the available habitat for resident wildlife
43 (BLM 2010d).

1 ***Pioche/Caselton Wildland Urban Interface Project.*** The BLM is proposing to conduct a
2 wildland urban interface project near Pioche and Caselton, Nevada, east of the SEZ. About
3 3,246 to 4,711 acres (13.1 to 19.1 km²) is planned for treatment. The goal is to reduce the threat
4 of wildfire to Pioche and Caselton through implementation of fuel reduction treatments; to
5 reduce the risk of large, uncontrolled wildfires by reducing fuel loading; and to restore the
6 historic disturbance regime within the project area. The treatment would include reduction of
7 canopy cover and fuel continuity of single-leaf pinyon, Utah juniper, and shrub species to
8 prevent crown fire potential (BLM 2010e).

9
10
11 **Grazing**
12

13 The BLM Ely District in which the proposed SEZ is located has a total of 242 grazing
14 allotments under its administration. There are 139 individual permittees, of which 129 are cattle
15 operators and 10 are sheep operators (BLM 2010f). In Grazing Year 2009 (March 1, 2009 to
16 February 2, 2010) grazing permits were issued for a total of 131,901 AUMs of forage
17 (BLM 2009e).

18
19
20 **Mining**
21

22 The only active mining in the Ely District is at Bald Mountain Mine and Mooney Basin
23 Mine, which are more than 100 mi (162 km) north the SEZ. The Meadow Valley Gypsum
24 Project is proposing to mine gypsum on 21.2 acres (0.086 km²) of public land more than 50 mi
25 (80 km) south of the SEZ. A total of 46.7 acres (0.19 km²) would be disturbed during the 10-year
26 lifetime of the project. A 1.5-mi (2.5-km) long access road and a 1.8-acre (0.007-km²) railroad
27 siding would be constructed (BLM 2007c).

28
29
30 **11.4.22.3 General Trends**
31

32 General trends of population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate
33 change for the proposed Dry Lake Valley SEZ are presented in this section. Table 11.4.22.3-1
34 lists the relevant impacting factors for the trends.

35
36
37 **11.4.22.3.1 Population Growth**
38

39 Over the period 2000 to 2008, population grew by 1.4% in Lincoln County, 4.0%
40 in Clark County, and 1.4% in Iron County Utah, the ROI for the Dry Valley North SEZ
41 (see Section 11.4.19.1.5). The population of the ROI in 2008 was 1,927,930. The growth
42 rate for the state of Nevada as a whole was 3.4%, and for Utah was 2.5%.

TABLE 11.4.22.3-1 General Trends Relevant to the Proposed SEZs in Nevada

General Trend	Impacting Factors
Population growth	Urbanization Increased use of roads and traffic Land use modification Employment Education and training Increased resource use (e.g., water and energy) Tax revenue
Energy demand	Increased resource use Energy development (including alternative energy sources) Energy transmission and distribution
Water availability	Drought conditions and water loss Conservation practices Changes in water distribution
Climate change	Water cycle changes Increased wildland fires Habitat changes Changes in farming production and costs

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11.4.22.3.2 Energy Demand

The growth in energy demand is related to population growth through increases in housing, commercial floorspace, transportation, manufacturing, and services. Given that population growth is expected in seven SEZ areas in Nevada between 2006 and 2016, an increase in energy demand is also expected. However, the EIA projects a decline in per-capita energy use through 2030, mainly because of improvements in energy efficiency and the high cost of oil throughout the projection period. Primary energy consumption in the United States between 2007 and 2030 is expected to grow by about 0.5% each year, with the fastest growth projected for the commercial sector (at 1.1% each year). Transportation, residential, and industrial energy consumption are expected to grow by about 0.5, 0.4, and 0.1% each year, respectively (EIA 2009).

11.4.22.3.3 Water Availability

As described in Section 11.4.9.1, the perennial yield of the Dry Lake Valley basin is equal to 12,700 ac-ft/yr (16 million m³/yr). Approximately 1,009 ac-ft/yr (1.2 million m³/yr) (for irrigation) of water rights are permitted in the basin, and an additional 57 ac-ft/year (70,300 m³/yr) (about 30% for mining, the rest for stock watering) of water rights are certified (i.e., the well was previously permitted, beneficial use was subsequently demonstrated, and a

1 certificate of water right was issued) In July 2008, the State Engineer (NDWR 2008) granted
2 11,584 ac-ft/yr (14 million m³/yr) in water rights in the Dry Lake Valley groundwater basin to
3 the SNWA for use in a project that would convey water to Las Vegas (SNWA 2010). However,
4 the allocations are under review by the Nevada Supreme Court and the water rights applications
5 have been opened up by the NDWR to public comment. Concerned parties could present new
6 information about the groundwater basin, and thus the NDWR could alter its previous
7 assessment of water availability in the basin.
8

9 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Lincoln County
10 were 57,100 ac-ft/yr (70 million m³/yr), 11% of which came from surface waters and 89% from
11 groundwater. The largest water use category was irrigation, at 55,100 ac-ft/yr (68 million m³/yr).
12 Public supply/domestic water uses accounted for 1,300 ac-ft/yr (1.6 million m³/yr), with
13 livestock and mining water uses on the order of 230 ac-ft/yr (280,000 m³/yr) and 450 ac-ft/yr
14 (560,000 m³/yr), respectively (Kenny et al. 2009).
15
16

17 ***11.4.22.3.4 Climate Change*** 18

19 Governor Jim Gibbons' Nevada Climate Change Advisory Committee (NCCAC)
20 conducted a study of climate change and its effects on Nevada (NCCAC 2008). The committee's
21 report summarized the present scientific understanding of climate change and its potential
22 impacts on the state. A report on global climate change in the United States prepared by the
23 U.S. Global Change Research Program (GCRP 2009) documents current temperature and
24 precipitation conditions and historic trends. Excerpts of the conclusions from these reports
25 indicate:
26

- 27 • Decreased precipitation with a greater percentage of that precipitation coming
28 from rain, which will result in a greater likelihood of winter and spring
29 flooding and decreased stream flow in the summer.
30
- 31 • The average temperature in the southwest has already increased by about
32 1.5°F (0.8°C) compared to a 1960 to 1979 baseline, and by the end of the
33 century, the average annual temperature is projected to rise 4° to 10°F
34 (2.2° to 5.5°C).
35
- 36 • Warming climate and related reduction in spring snowpack and soil moisture
37 have increased the length of the wildfire season and intensity of forest fires.
38
- 39 • Later snow and less snow coverage in ski resort areas could force ski areas to
40 shut down before the season would otherwise end.
41
- 42 • Much of the Southwest has experienced drought conditions since 1999. This
43 represents the most severe drought in the last 110 years. Projections indicate
44 an increasing probability of drought in the region.
45

- 1 • As temperatures rise, landscape will be altered as species shift their ranges
2 northward and upward to cooler climates.
- 3
- 4 • Temperature increases, when combined with urban heat island effects for
5 major cities such as Las Vegas, present significant stress to health, electricity
6 and water supply.
- 7
- 8 • Increased minimum temperatures and warmer springs extend the range and
9 lifetime of many pests that stress trees and crops, and lead to northward
10 migration of weed species.
- 11
- 12

13 **11.4.22.4 Cumulative Impacts on Resources**

14
15 This section addresses potential cumulative impacts in the proposed Dry Lake Valley
16 North SEZ on the basis of the following assumptions: (1) because of the large size of the
17 proposed SEZ (more than 30,000 acres [121 km²]), up to three projects could be constructed at a
18 time, and (2) maximum total disturbance over 20 years would be about 61,499 acres (249 km²)
19 (80% of the entire proposed SEZ). For purposes of analysis, it is also assumed that no more than
20 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) would be disturbed per project annually and 250 acres (1.01 km²)
21 monthly on the basis of construction schedules planned in current applications. Since an existing
22 69-kV transmission line intersects the southeastern corner of the SEZ, no analysis of impacts has
23 been conducted for the construction of a new transmission line outside of the SEZ that might be
24 needed to connect solar facilities to the regional grid (see Section 11.4.1.2). Regarding site
25 access, the nearest major road is State Route 318, which extends north-south and lies about 7 mi
26 (11 km) west of the SEZ. It is assumed that an access road would be constructed to this existing
27 route to support solar development in the SEZ.

28
29 Cumulative impacts in each resource area that would result from the construction,
30 operation, and decommissioning of solar energy development projects within the proposed SEZ
31 when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions described in the
32 previous section are discussed below. At this stage of development, because of the uncertain
33 nature of the future projects in terms of size, number, and location within the proposed SEZ, and
34 the types of technology that would be employed, the impacts are discussed qualitatively or semi-
35 quantitatively, with ranges given as appropriate. More detailed analyses of cumulative impacts
36 would be performed in the environmental reviews for the specific projects in relation to all other
37 existing and proposed projects in the geographic areas.

38 39 **11.4.22.4.1 Lands and Realty**

40
41
42 The area covered by the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is largely isolated and
43 undeveloped. In general, the area surrounding the SEZ is rural in nature. An existing dirt road
44 from State Route 318 provides access to the northern portion of the SEZ, and a dirt road from
45 U.S. 93 provides access to the southern portions of the SEZ. Numerous dirt ranch roads provide
46 access throughout the SEZ (Section 11.4.2.1).

1 Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish a large
2 industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in
3 perpetuity. Access to such areas by both the general public and much wildlife would be
4 eliminated. Traditional uses of public lands would no longer be allowed. Utility-scale solar
5 energy development would be a new and discordant land use in the area.
6

7 As shown in Table 11.4.22.2-2 and Figure 11.4.22.2-1, there is one pending solar
8 development ROW application, six authorized and one pending wind site testing applications,
9 and one pending wind development application on BLM administered land within a 50-mi
10 (80-km) radius of the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. There are currently no solar
11 applications within the SEZ. The lone solar application lies about 13 mi (21 km) southwest of
12 the SEZ, while five of the wind applications lie generally northeast and one lies east in Utah. In
13 addition, the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ is about 20 mi (32 km) south. While not all of these
14 proposed solar and wind projects would likely be built, the number of applications indicates a
15 fairly strong interest in the development of wind energy in particular northeast of the proposed
16 SEZ.
17

18 An additional foreseeable project of note is the proposed Groundwater Development
19 Project discussed in Section 11.4.22.2.2. This project would include the construction of a water
20 pipeline and other water conveyance facilities as well as a parallel electrical transmission line
21 extending north-south through the Dry Lake Valley (SNWA 2010).
22

23 The development of utility-scale solar projects on public lands in combination with
24 ongoing, foreseeable, and potential actions within the geographic extent of effects, nominally
25 within 50 mi (80 km), could have small cumulative effects on land use in the vicinity of the
26 proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ. Most other actions outside of the proposed SEZ are wind
27 energy projects, which would allow many current land uses to continue, including grazing.
28 However, the number and size of such projects could result in cumulative effects, especially if
29 the SEZ is fully developed with solar projects.
30

31 32 ***11.4.22.4.2 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics*** 33

34 Fourteen specially designated areas are within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Dry Lake
35 Valley North SEZ (Section 11.4.3.1). Potential exists for cumulative visual impacts on these
36 areas from the construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the SEZ and the
37 construction of transmission lines outside the SEZ. The exact nature of cumulative visual
38 impacts on the users of these areas would depend on the specific solar technologies employed in
39 the SEZ and the locations selected within the SEZ for solar facilities and outside the SEZ for
40 transmission lines. Currently proposed solar and wind projects lie far enough away from the SEZ
41 that sensitive areas would not likely be cumulatively affected by facilities within the geographic
42 extent of effects. However, facilities and associated roads and transmission lines would add to
43 the visual clutter of the area.
44
45
46

1 **11.4.22.4.3 Rangeland Resources**
2

3 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ contains large acreages of three perennial
4 grazing allotments (Section 11.4.4.1.1). If utility-scale solar facilities were constructed on the
5 SEZ, those areas occupied by the solar projects would be excluded from grazing. The effects of
6 other renewable energy projects within the geographic extent of effects, including pending solar
7 and wind applications within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ, that are ultimately developed would not
8 likely result in cumulative impacts on grazing because of the small number and distance of the
9 proposed facilities from Dry Lake Valley North and the generally low impact of wind facilities
10 on grazing.
11

12 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ would encompass about 32,440 acres
13 (131.3 km²) of the 606,000-acre (2,452.4-km²) Silver King HMA (Section 11.4.4.2.2). Wild
14 horses would be excluded from areas where utility-scale facilities may be constructed on the
15 SEZ. The BLM already had plans to remove 445 of the 505 (88.1%) of the wild horses from the
16 HMA. This would offset the loss of up to 5.4% of the HMA by solar energy development within
17 the SEZ. The effects of other renewable energy projects within the geographic extent of effects,
18 including pending solar and wind applications within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ that are
19 ultimately developed, would not likely result in cumulative impacts on wild horses because of
20 the small number and distance of the proposed facilities from Dry Lake Valley North and the
21 generally low impact of wind facilities on wild horses. The wild and horse and burro territories
22 administered by the USFS are located more than 50 mi (80 km) from the Dry Lake Valley North
23 SEZ. Thus, solar energy development within the SEZ would not directly affect wild horses and
24 burros managed by the USFS and would not contribute to cumulative effects on wild horses and
25 burros managed by the USFS.
26
27

28 **11.4.22.4.4 Recreation**
29

30 Limited outdoor recreation (e.g., backcountry driving, OHV use, and some camping and
31 hunting) occurs on or in the immediate vicinity of the SEZ. Construction of utility-scale solar
32 projects on the SEZ would preclude recreational use of the affected lands for the duration of the
33 projects. Road closures and access restrictions within the proposed SEZ would affect OHV use
34 in particular. Foreseeable and potential actions, primarily potential solar and wind projects,
35 would similarly affect areas of low recreational use, but cumulative impacts on recreation within
36 the geographic extent of effects would be small because of the small number and distance from
37 the SEZ of potential developments.
38
39

40 **11.4.22.4.5 Military and Civilian Aviation**
41

42 Portions of the proposed Dry Valley Lake North SEZ are covered by two aircraft MTRs
43 and a major SUA. The military has expressed serious concern over possible solar energy
44 facilities within the SEZ. Nellis Air Force Base and NTTR have each indicated that facilities of
45 over 50 ft (15 m) tall may be incompatible with their respective missions (Section 11.4.6.2).
46 Additional solar and particularly wind facilities northeast of the SEZ could present additional

1 concerns for military aviation, depending on the eventual location of such facilities with respect
2 to training routes and, thus, could result in cumulative impacts on military aviation. The closest
3 civilian municipal airports located in St. George and Cedar City, Utah, 75 mi (120 km) and 85 mi
4 (137 km) southeast of the SEZ, respectively, are unlikely to be impacted by developments in
5 the SEZ.
6
7

8 ***11.4.22.4.6 Soil Resources*** 9

10 Ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling) during the
11 construction phase of a solar project, including the construction of any associated transmission
12 line connections and new roads, would contribute to soil loss due to wind erosion. Road use
13 during construction, operations, and decommissioning of the solar facilities would further
14 contribute to soil loss. Programmatic design features would be employed to minimize erosion
15 and loss. Residual soil losses with mitigations in place would be in addition to losses from
16 construction of other renewable energy facilities, recreational uses, and agriculture. Overall, the
17 cumulative impacts on soil resources would be small, however, because of the small number of
18 currently foreseeable projects within the geographic extent of effects. The number of pending
19 solar and wind applications in this area suggests that future impacts could increase somewhat
20 over that from any development in the SEZ, but would be expected to remain small.
21

22 Landscaping of solar energy facility areas in the SEZ could alter drainage patterns and
23 lead to increased siltation of surface water streambeds, in addition to that from other solar and
24 wind developments and other activities, e.g., OHV use, outside the SEZ. However, with the
25 programmatic design features in place, cumulative impacts would be small.
26
27

28 ***11.4.22.4.7 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)*** 29

30 As discussed in Section 11.4.8, currently six oil and gas leases, all classified as
31 nonproducing, are within the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ; no mining claims or
32 proposals for geothermal energy development are pending. Because of the generally low level of
33 mineral production in the proposed SEZ and surrounding area and the expected low impact on
34 mineral accessibility of other foreseeable actions within the geographic extent of effects, no
35 cumulative impacts on mineral resources are expected.
36
37

38 ***11.4.22.4.8 Water Resources*** 39

40 Section 11.4.9.2 describes the water requirements for various technologies if they were
41 to be used to develop utility-scale solar energy facilities on the SEZ. The amount of water
42 needed during the peak construction year for all evaluated solar technologies would be 2,946 to
43 4,220 ac-ft (3.6 million to 5.2 million m³). During operations, with full development of the
44 SEZ over 80% of its available land area, the amount of water needed for all evaluated solar
45 technologies would range from 349 to 184,605 ac-ft/yr (430,000 to 228 million m³/yr). The

1 amount of water needed during decommissioning would be similar to or less than the amount
2 used during construction.

3
4 As discussed in Section 11.4.22.2.3, water withdrawals in 2005 in Lincoln County were
5 57,100 ac-ft/yr (70 million m³/yr), of which 11% came from surface waters and 89% came from
6 groundwater. The largest water use category was irrigation, at 55,100 ac-ft/yr (68 million m³/yr).
7 Therefore, cumulatively the additional water resources needed for solar facilities in the SEZ
8 during operations would constitute from a relatively small (0.6%) to a very large (320%)
9 increment (the ratio of the annual operations water requirement to the annual amount withdrawn
10 in Lincoln County), depending on the solar technology used (PV technology at the low end and
11 the wet-cooled parabolic trough technology at the high end). However, as discussed in
12 Section 11.4.9.1.3, the estimated perennial yield for the Dry Lake Valley basin is only an
13 estimated 12,700 ac-ft/yr (15.7 million m³/yr), of which 1,065 ac-ft/yr (1.3 million m³/yr) has
14 been appropriated and 11,584 ac-ft/yr (14 million m³/yr) are under review by the NDWR for
15 SNWA for municipal use. If granted the water rights, the SNWA has committed to providing up
16 to 1,500 ac-ft/yr (1.3 million m³/yr) of water rights to Lincoln County (Section 11.4.9.1.3). Thus,
17 even if water rights were available, water requirements for solar developments on the SEZ would
18 have the potential to far exceed the physically available groundwater in the basin and even
19 within Lincoln County using wet-cooling, while full development with dry-cooled solar trough
20 technologies could exceed the current estimate of the perennial yield (Section 11.4.9.2.2).

21
22 While solar development of the proposed SEZ with water-intensive technologies would
23 likely be infeasible due to impacts on groundwater supplies and restrictions on water rights,
24 withdrawals at or above currently appropriated levels could result in impacts on groundwater
25 levels in the Dry Lake Valley basin, which, in turn, could lead to declines in water availability in
26 the adjacent Delamar Valley, which receives outflow from the Dry Lake Valley groundwater
27 basin (Section 11.4.9.2.2). Thus, a significant increase in groundwater withdrawals for
28 development within the proposed SEZ could result in a major impact on groundwater in the Dry
29 Lake Valley. Further cumulative impacts could occur if these withdrawals were combined with
30 other future uses in the valley or on the Delamar Valley basin from solar developments in both
31 the proposed Dry Lake Valley North and in the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, located 20 mi
32 (32 km) to the south. Another foreseeable action with groundwater demands within in the central
33 portion of the White River groundwater flow system, which is described in Section 11.4.22.2.2,
34 is the Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project, which could
35 withdraw 14,000 ac-ft/yr (17.3 million m³/yr) from the Dry Lake and Delamar Valley
36 groundwater basins.

37
38
39 Small quantities of sanitary wastewater would be generated during the construction and
40 operation of the potential utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount generated from solar
41 facilities would be in the range of 28 to 212 ac-ft (34,000 to 274,000 m³) during the peak
42 construction year and would range from less than 7.7 up to 172 ac-ft/yr (up to 212,000 m³/yr)
43 during operations. Because of the small quantity, the sanitary wastewater generated by the solar
44 energy facilities would not be expected to put undue strain on available sanitary wastewater
45 treatment facilities in the general area of the SEZ. For technologies that rely on conventional
46 wet-cooling systems, there would also be from 1,940 to 3,493 ac-ft/yr (2.4 to 4.3 million m³/yr)

1 of blowdown water from cooling towers. Blowdown water would need to be either treated
2 on-site or sent to an off-site facility. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure
3 that treatment ponds were effectively lined in order to prevent contamination of groundwater.
4 Thus, blowdown water would not contribute to cumulative effects on treatment systems or on
5 groundwater.

6 7 8 **11.4.22.4.9 Vegetation** 9

10 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located within the Shadscale-Dominated
11 Saline Basins ecoregion, which primarily supports shadscale low scrub community
12 (Section 11.4.10.1). The southwestern portion of the SEZ is located within the Salt Deserts
13 ecoregion, and the southeastern portion is within the Carbonate Sagebrush Valleys ecoregion.
14 Surrounding lands also include the Carbonate Woodland Zone ecoregion. If utility-scale solar
15 energy projects were to be constructed within the SEZ, all vegetation within the footprints of
16 the facilities would likely be removed during land-clearing and land-grading operations. Full
17 development of the SEZ over 80% of its area would result in large impacts on Inter-Mountain
18 Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub, Inter-Mountain Basins Playa, Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-
19 Desert Grassland, Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Steppe, and Undifferentiated Barren
20 Land cover types and moderate impacts on Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe
21 and Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat cover types (Section 11.4.10.2.1).
22

23 Two mapped wetlands and numerous smaller playa areas that are not mapped, as well as
24 numerous dry washes, are located within the proposed SEZ. Any wetland or riparian habitats
25 within or outside of the SEZ that are supported by groundwater discharge could be affected by
26 hydrologic changes resulting from project activities.
27

28 The fugitive dust generated during the construction of the solar facilities could increase
29 the dust loading in habitats outside a solar project area, in combination with that from other
30 construction, agriculture, recreation, and transportation activities in the area. The cumulative
31 dust loading could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition.
32 Similarly, surface runoff from project areas after heavy rains could increase sedimentation and
33 siltation in areas downstream. Programmatic design features would be used to reduce the impacts
34 from solar energy projects and thus reduce the overall cumulative impacts on plant communities
35 and habitats. The primary plant community types within the proposed SEZ are relatively
36 common in the SEZ region. Ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions would have
37 cumulative effects on both abundant and rare community types. Such effects could be moderate
38 with full build-out of the SEZ, but would likely fall to small for foreseeable development due to
39 the abundance of the primary species and the relatively small number of foreseeable actions
40 within the geographic extent of effects. Cumulative effects on wetland species could occur from
41 water use, drainage modifications, and stream sedimentation from development in the region.
42 The magnitude of such effects is difficult to predict at the current time.
43
44
45

1 **11.4.22.4.10 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota**
2

3 Amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal wildlife species could potentially be affected by
4 the development of utility-scale solar energy facilities in the proposed SEZ. The construction of
5 utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ and any associated transmission lines and roads in
6 or near the SEZ would have an impact on wildlife through habitat disturbance (i.e., habitat
7 reduction, fragmentation, and alteration), wildlife disturbance, and wildlife injury or mortality.
8 In general, species with broad distributions and a variety of habitats would be less affected than
9 species with a narrowly defined habitat within a restricted area. The use of programmatic design
10 features would reduce the severity of impacts on wildlife. These design features would include
11 pre-disturbance biological surveys to identify key habitat areas used by wildlife, followed by
12 avoidance or minimization of disturbance to those habitats.
13

14 As noted in Section 11.4.22.2, other ongoing, reasonably foreseeable and potential future
15 actions within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ include a groundwater transfer project, one
16 pending solar application, and eight pending wind applications in various stages of approval
17 (Figure 11.4.22.2-1). While impacts from full build-out over 80% of the proposed SEZ would
18 result in small to moderate impacts on some wildlife species (Section 11.4.11), impacts from
19 foreseeable development within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects would be small.
20 Many of the wildlife species present within the proposed SEZ that could be affected by other
21 actions have extensive available habitat within the region, while no foreseeable solar or wind
22 projects have been firmly identified within the geographic extent of effects. Some number of the
23 pending solar and wind applications in the region could contribute to small cumulative effects,
24 however, as would the foreseeable groundwater transfer project.
25

26 No surface water bodies or perennial streams occur within the proposed Dry Lake Valley
27 North SEZ, washes are typically dry and flow only after precipitation, and an unnamed dry lake
28 and associated wetlands rarely contain water. Thus, no standing aquatic communities are likely
29 to be present in the proposed SEZ. However, aquatic communities do exist within the 50-mi
30 (80-km) geographic extent of effects, including in the White River (Section 11.4.11.4).
31 Nonetheless, potential contributions to cumulative impacts on aquatic biota and habitats resulting
32 from groundwater drawdown or soil transport to surface streams from solar facilities within the
33 SEZ and within the geographic extent of effects are low. Potentially affected habitats are
34 generally too far away to be affected by groundwater use in the proposed SEZ, while there is
35 little foreseeable development within the geographic extent of effects. The magnitude of any
36 cumulative impacts on aquatic species that might occur would depend on the extent of eventual
37 solar and other development in the region and on cooling technologies employed by solar
38 facilities.
39

40
41 **11.4.22.4.11 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive,**
42 **and Rare Species)**
43

44 On the basis of recorded occurrences or suitable habitat, as many as 22 special status
45 species could occur within the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ or could be affected by groundwater
46 use there. Three of these species have been recorded within or near the SEZ: Blaine fishhook

1 cactus, Eastwood milkweed, and Desert Valley kangaroo mouse. The Mojave population of the
2 desert tortoise—listed as threatened under the ESA—is not likely to occur in the area of direct
3 effects based upon the lack of suitable habitat and information provided by the USFWS.
4 Numerous other species that may occur on or in the vicinity of the SEZ are protected by the state
5 of Nevada or listed as a sensitive species by the BLM (Section 11.4.12.1).
6

7 Design features to be used to reduce or eliminate the potential for effects on special status
8 species from the construction and operation of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZs and
9 related developments (e.g., access roads and transmission line connections) outside the SEZ
10 include avoidance of occupied or unique habitats and minimization of erosion, sedimentation,
11 and dust deposition. Ongoing effects on special status species include those from roads,
12 transmission lines, and recreational activities in the area. However, since the amount of
13 foreseeable development within the geographic extent of effects is low – including only potential
14 solar and wind projects, a groundwater transfer pipeline, and several transmission line projects –
15 the likelihood of cumulative impacts on protected species is relatively low. Actual impacts would
16 depend on the number, location, and cooling technologies of projects that are actually built.
17 Projects would employ mitigation measures to limit effects.
18

19 20 ***11.4.22.4.12 Air Quality and Climate*** 21

22 While solar energy generates minimal emissions compared with fossil fuels, the site
23 preparation and construction activities associated with development of solar energy facilities
24 would be responsible for some amount of air pollutants. Most of the emissions would be
25 particulate matter (fugitive dust) and emissions from vehicles and construction equipment. When
26 these emissions are combined with those from other nearby projects outside the proposed SEZ or
27 when they are added to natural dust generation from winds and windstorms, the air quality in the
28 general vicinity of the projects could be temporarily degraded. For example, the maximum
29 24-hour PM₁₀ concentration at or near the SEZ boundaries could at times exceed the applicable
30 standard of 150 µg/m³. Dust generation from construction activities could be controlled by
31 implementing aggressive dust control measures, such as increased watering frequency or road
32 paving or treatment.
33

34 Because the area proposed for the SEZ is rural and undeveloped land, no significant
35 industrial sources of air emissions occur in the area. The only type of air pollutant of concern is
36 dust generated by winds. Because the number of other foreseeable and potential actions that
37 could produce fugitive dust emissions is small and because such projects are unlikely to overlap
38 in both time and affected area, cumulative air quality effects due to dust emissions during any
39 construction periods would be small.
40

41 Over the long term and across the region, the development of solar energy may have
42 beneficial cumulative impacts on the air quality and atmospheric values by offsetting the need
43 for energy production that results in higher levels of emissions, such as use of coal, oil, and
44 natural gas to produce energy. As discussed in Section 11.4.13.2.2, air emissions from operating
45 solar energy facilities are relatively minor, while the displacement of criteria air pollutants,
46 VOCs, TAPs, and GHG emissions currently produced from fossil fuels could be significant. For

1 example, if the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ was fully developed (80% of its acreage) with solar
2 facilities, the quantity of pollutants avoided could be as large as 57% of all emissions from the
3 current electric power systems in Nevada.
4

6 **11.4.22.4.13 Visual Resources**

7

8 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is located in the central portion of the broad
9 and flat Dry Lake Valley. The valley is bounded by mountain ranges on the east and west, with
10 more open views to the north and south (Section 11.4.14.1). The area is sparsely inhabited,
11 remote, and rural in character.
12

13 The VRI values for the SEZ and immediate surroundings are VRI Class IV, indicating
14 low relative visual values. Currently, there is a low level of cultural disturbance, including from
15 OHV use and from roads, fences, livestock ponds, and a transmission line.
16

17 Construction of utility-scale solar facilities on the SEZ and associated transmission lines
18 outside the SEZ would significantly alter the natural scenic quality of the area. Because of the
19 large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat, open nature of the
20 proposed SEZ, some lands outside the SEZ would also be subjected to visual impacts related to
21 the construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities. Potential
22 impacts would include night sky pollution, including increased skyglow, light spillage, and glare.
23 Other potential solar and wind projects and related roads and transmission lines outside the
24 proposed SEZ would cumulatively affect the visual resources in the area.
25

26 Visual impacts resulting from solar energy development within the SEZ would be in
27 addition to impacts caused by other potential projects in the area. Currently there are one pending
28 solar application and eight wind applications in various stages of approval on public lands within
29 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ, which represent additional potential developments
30 (Figure 11.4.22.2-1). In addition, several new electric transmission projects and a groundwater
31 transfer pipeline project represent foreseeable developments that would pass through or near the
32 proposed SEZ, as discussed in Section 11.4.22.2. While the contribution to cumulative impacts
33 in the area of these potential projects would depend on the number and location of facilities that
34 are actually built, it may be concluded that the general visual character of the landscape within
35 this distance could be altered from what is currently rural desert by the presence of solar
36 facilities, transmission lines, and other new infrastructure. Because of the topography of the
37 region, such developments, located in basin flats, would be visible at great distances from
38 surrounding mountains, which include sensitive viewsheds. Given the cluster of pending wind
39 applications to the northeast, it is possible that two or more facilities might be viewable from a
40 single location. In addition, facilities would be located near major roads and thus would be
41 viewable by motorists, who would also be viewing transmission line corridors, towns, and other
42 infrastructure, as well as the road system itself.
43

44 As additional facilities were added, several projects might become visible from one
45 location, or in succession, as viewers moved through the landscape, as by driving on local roads.
46 In general, the new developments would not be expected to be consistent in terms of their

1 appearance and, depending on the number and type of facilities, the resulting visual disharmony
2 could exceed the visual absorption capability of the landscape and add significantly to the
3 cumulative visual impact. Considering the above in light of the fact that only potential solar and
4 wind developments have been identified, small cumulative visual impacts could occur within the
5 geographic extent of effects from future solar, wind, and other existing and future developments.
6
7

8 ***11.4.22.4.14 Acoustic Environment*** 9

10 The areas around the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ are relatively quiet. The
11 existing noise sources around the SEZ include road traffic, aircraft flyover, and cattle grazing.
12 Other noise sources are associated with current land use around the SEZ, including outdoor
13 recreation and OHV use. The construction of solar energy facilities could increase the noise
14 levels periodically for up to 3 years per facility, but there would be little or no noise during
15 operation of solar facilities, even from solar dish engine facilities and from parabolic trough or
16 power tower facilities using TES, which could also minimally affect nearby residences due to
17 considerable separation distances.
18

19 Other ongoing and reasonably foreseeable and potential future activities in the general
20 vicinity of the SEZs are described in Section 11.4.22.2. Because proposed projects and nearest
21 residents are relatively far from the SEZ with respect to noise impacts and the area is sparsely
22 populated, cumulative noise effects during the construction or operation of solar facilities are
23 unlikely.
24
25

26 ***11.4.22.4.15 Paleontological Resources*** 27

28 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ has low potential for the occurrence of
29 significant fossil material in 91% of its area, mainly alluvial deposits, and unknown potential in
30 about 9% of its area, mainly playa deposits (Section 11.4.16.1). While impacts on significant
31 paleontological resources are unlikely to occur in the SEZ, the specific sites selected for future
32 projects would be investigated to determine whether a paleontological survey is needed. Any
33 paleontological resources encountered would be mitigated to the extent possible. No significant
34 cumulative impacts on paleontological resources are expected.
35
36

37 ***11.4.22.4.16 Cultural Resources*** 38

39 The proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is rich in cultural history, with
40 settlements dating as far back as 12,000 years. The area covered by the proposed Dry Lake
41 Valley North SEZ has the potential to contain significant cultural resources, especially in areas
42 around the dry lake and at the south end of the SEZ, as well as in alluvial fans, fan piedmonts,
43 ridge tops, passes, and stream terraces within and adjacent to the SEZ. It is possible that the
44 development of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ, when added to other potential
45 projects likely to occur in the area, could contribute cumulatively to cultural resource impacts
46 occurring in the region. However, the amount of potential and foreseeable development is low,

1 and includes one pending solar application, two authorized wind testing applications, a proposed
2 groundwater transfer pipeline, and several proposed transmission line projects within the 25-mi
3 (40-km) geographic extent of effects (Section 11.4.22.2). While any future solar projects would
4 disturb large areas, the specific sites selected for future projects would be surveyed; historic
5 properties encountered would be avoided or mitigated to the extent possible. Through ongoing
6 consultation with the Nevada SHPO and appropriate Native American governments, it is likely
7 that most adverse effects on significant resources in the region could be mitigated to some
8 degree. It is unlikely that any sites recorded in the SEZ would be of such individual significance
9 that, if properly mitigated, development would cumulatively cause an irretrievable loss of
10 information about a significant resource type, but this would depend on the results of the future
11 surveys and evaluations.

14 ***11.4.22.4.17 Native American Concerns***

16 Major Native American concerns in arid portions of the Great Basin include water,
17 culturally important plant and animal resources, and culturally important landscapes. The
18 development of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the SEZ, in combination with the
19 foreseeable development in the surrounding area, could cumulatively contribute to effects on
20 these resources. Development of the SEZ would result in the removal of plant species from the
21 footprint of the facility during construction. This would include some plants of cultural
22 importance. However, the primary species that would be affected are abundant in the region; thus
23 the cumulative effect would likely be small. Likewise, habitat for important species, such as the
24 black-tailed jackrabbit, would be reduced; however, extensive habitat is available in the area,
25 reducing the cumulative effect. The cultural importance of the mountains surrounding the SEZ is
26 as yet undetermined. If culturally important, the view from these features can be an important
27 part of their cultural integrity. The degree of impact on these resources of development at
28 specific locations must be determined in consultation with the Native American Tribes whose
29 traditional use area includes the proposed SEZ. In general, Tribes prefer that development occur
30 on previously disturbed land and this SEZ is largely undeveloped.

32 Government-to-government consultation is underway with federally recognized Native
33 American Tribes with possible traditional ties to the Dry Lake Valley North area. All federally
34 recognized Tribes with Southern Paiute or Western Shoshone roots have been contacted and
35 provided an opportunity to comment or consult regarding this PEIS. To date, no specific
36 concerns have been raised to the BLM regarding the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ.
37 However, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah has asked to be kept informed of PEIS developments,
38 while the Southern Paiute have previously expressed concern over adverse effects of energy
39 projects on a wide range of resources in the area (Section 11.4.18.2). Continued discussions with
40 the area Tribes through government-to-government consultation is necessary to determine the
41 extent to which cumulative effects of solar energy development in the proposed Dry Lake Valley
42 North SEZ can be addressed.

1 **11.4.22.4.18 Socioeconomics**
2

3 Solar energy development projects in the proposed Dry Lake Valley North SEZ could
4 cumulatively contribute to socioeconomic effects in the immediate vicinity of the SEZs and in
5 the surrounding multicounty ROI. The effects could be positive (e.g., creation of jobs and
6 generation of extra income, increased revenues to local governmental organizations through
7 additional taxes paid by the developers and workers) or negative (e.g., added strain on social
8 institutions such as schools, police protection, and health care facilities). Impacts from solar
9 development would be most intense during facility construction, but of greatest duration
10 during operations. Construction would temporarily increase the number of workers in the area
11 needing housing and services in combination with temporary workers involved in other new
12 developments in the area, including other renewable energy development. The number of
13 workers involved in the construction of solar projects in the peak construction year (including
14 the transmission lines) could range from about 200 to 2,700 people, depending on the technology
15 being employed, with solar PV facilities at the low end and solar trough facilities at the high end.
16 The total number of jobs created in the area could range from approximately 330 (solar PV) to as
17 high as 4,400 (solar trough). Cumulative socioeconomic effects in the ROI from construction of
18 solar facilities would occur to the extent that multiple construction projects of any type were
19 ongoing at the same time. It is a reasonable expectation that this condition would occur within a
20 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ occasionally over the 20-year or more solar development
21 period.
22

23 Annual impacts during the operation of solar facilities would be less, but of 20- to
24 30-year duration, and could combine with those from other new developments in the area,
25 including the proposed groundwater transfer pipeline and several proposed transmission line
26 projects. The number of workers needed at the solar facilities would be in the range of 130
27 to 2,700, with approximately 180 to 3,900 total jobs created in the region, assuming full build-
28 out of the SEZ (Section 11.4.19.2.2). Population increases would contribute to general upward
29 trends in population in the region in recent years. The socioeconomic impacts overall would be
30 positive, through the creation of additional jobs and income. The negative impacts, including
31 some short-term disruption of rural community quality of life, would not likely be considered
32 large enough to require specific mitigation measures.
33

34 **11.4.22.4.19 Environmental Justice**
35

36 No minority or low-income populations as defined by CEQ guidelines are currently
37 located within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the proposed SEZ (Section 11.4.20.1). If this condition
38 should change in the future, solar development of the proposed SEZ in combination with other
39 development in the area could potentially impact these groups. Such impacts could be both
40 positive, such as from increased economic activity, and negative, such as from visual impacts,
41 noise, and exposure to fugitive dust. Actual impacts would depend on where minority or low-
42 income populations were located relative to solar and other proposed facilities and on the
43 geographic range of effects. If needed, mitigation measures could be implemented to reduce the
44 impacts on these populations in the vicinity of the SEZ. Thus, it is not expected that the proposed
45

1 Dry Lake Valley North SEZ would contribute to cumulative impacts on minority and low-
2 income populations.

3
4
5 **11.4.22.4.20 Transportation**
6

7 State Route 318 extends north–south about 7 mi (11 km) west of the proposed Dry Lake
8 Valley North SEZ, and U.S. 93 is about 8 mi (13 km) from the eastern boundary. The closest
9 airport is Lincoln County Airport at Panaca, about 17 mi (27 km) east of the SEZ. The UP
10 Railroad serves the region.

11
12 During construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities, up to 1,000 workers could be
13 commuting to the construction site at the SEZ for a single project, which could increase the
14 AADT on these roads by 2,000 vehicle trips for each facility under construction. With as many
15 as three facilities assumed under construction at the same time, traffic on either State Route 318
16 or U.S. 93 could experience moderate slowdowns in the area of the SEZ (Section 11.4.21.2).
17 This increase in highway traffic from construction workers could likewise have moderate
18 cumulative impacts in combination with existing traffic levels and increases from additional
19 future developments in the area, including from construction in the proposed Delamar Valley
20 SEZ located 20 mi (32 km) south, should construction schedules overlap. Local road
21 improvements may be necessary on portions of State Route 318 and on U.S. 93 near the
22 proposed SEZ. Any impacts during construction activities would be temporary. The impacts
23 could also be mitigated to some degree by implementing staggered work schedules and ride-
24 sharing programs. Traffic increases during operation would be relatively small because of the
25 low number of workers needed to operate the solar facilities and would have little contribution to
26 cumulative impacts.
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1 **11.4.23 References**
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4 *Note to Reader:* This list of references identifies Web pages and associated URLs where
5 reference data were obtained for the analyses presented in this PEIS. It is likely that at the time
6 of publication of this PEIS, some of these Web pages may no longer be available or their URL
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34

1 **11.5 EAST MORMON MOUNTAIN**

2
3
4 **11.5.1 Background and Summary of Impacts**

5
6
7 **11.5.1.1 General Information**

8
9 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in Lincoln County in southern
10 Nevada (Figure 11.5.1.1-1). The SEZ has a total area of 8,968 acres (36 km²). In 2008, the
11 county population was 4,643, while adjacent Clark County to the south had a population of
12 1,879,093. The towns of Mesquite and Bunkerville are approximately 13 mi (21 km) southeast of
13 the SEZ; the larger, Mesquite, had a population of approximately 9,300 at the 2000 Census. The
14 Las Vegas metropolitan area is approximately 62 mi (100 km) to the southwest of the SEZ.

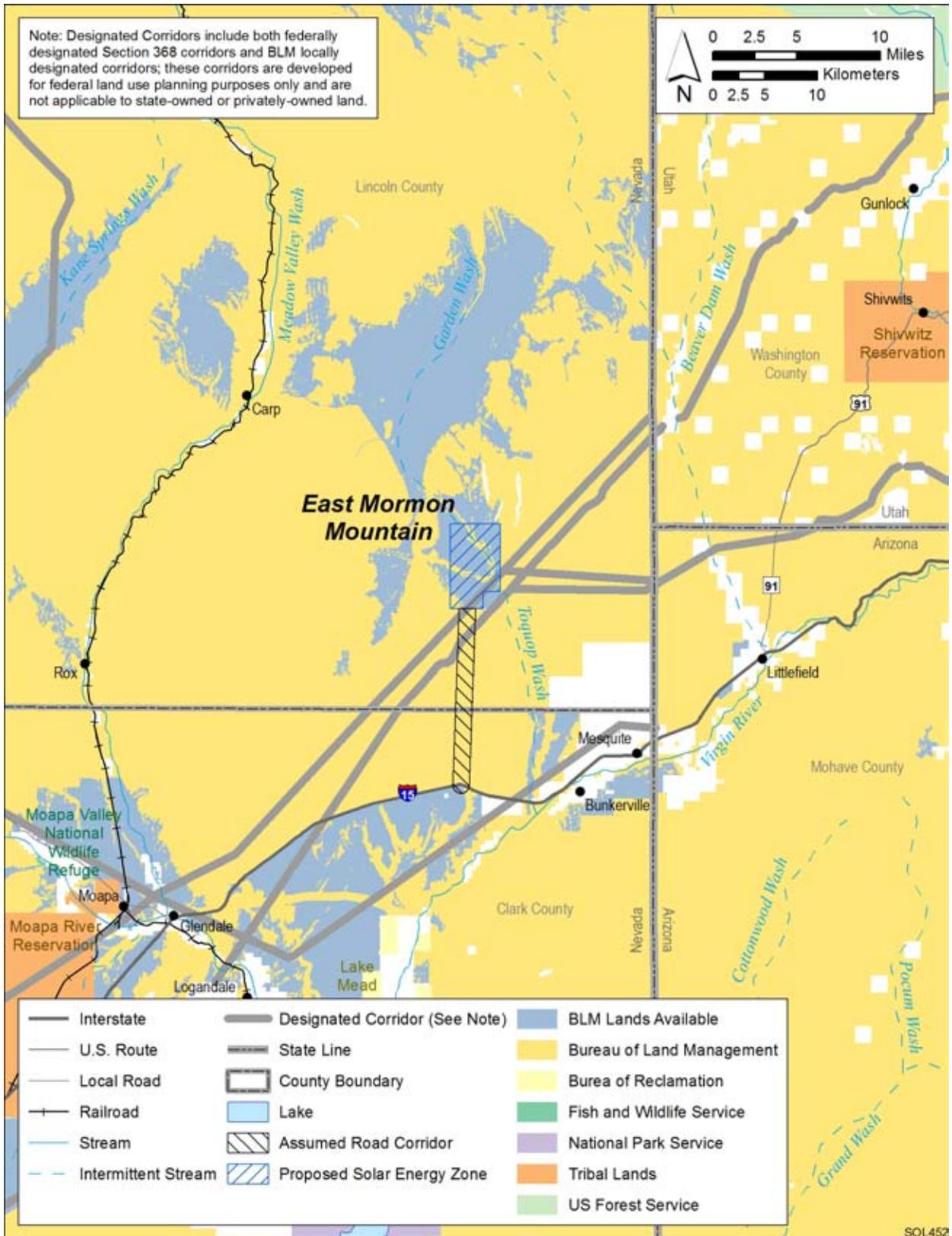
15
16 The nearest major road access to the proposed SEZ is I-15, which runs southwest–
17 northeast approximately 11 mi (18 km) to the southeast of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The
18 UP Railroad passes about 20 mi (32 km) west of the SEZ; the closest railroad stop is in Moapa,
19 approximately 25 mi (40 km) to the southwest. The nearest public airport is the Mesquite
20 Airport, a small airport in the vicinity of the SEZ near I-15. The nearest airport with scheduled
21 passenger service is the St. George Municipal Airport, 43 mi (69 km) to the northeast in
22 St. George, Utah.

23
24 A 500-kV transmission line is adjacent to the southeast corner of the SEZ; there are two
25 additional transmission lines within designated corridors adjacent to the site. It is assumed that
26 an existing transmission line could potentially provide access from the SEZ to the transmission
27 grid (see Section 11.5.1.2).

28
29 Applications for ROWs that have been submitted to the BLM include eight pending solar
30 projects, three pending authorizations for wind site testing, and two authorized projects for wind
31 site testing that would be located within 50 mi (80 km) of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ.
32 These applications are discussed in Section 11.5.22.2.1. There are currently no ROW
33 applications for solar projects within the SEZ.

34
35 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in the Lower Virgin River Valley.
36 The Mormon and East Mormon Mountains and Tule Spring Hills are located to the northwest of
37 the SEZ, and the Beaver Dam Mountains (in Utah and Arizona) are to the northeast. The Muddy
38 Mountains and Black Mountains are to the southwest; the Southern Virgin Mountains and Virgin
39 Mountains (Arizona) are to the southeast.

40
41 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ and other relevant information are shown in
42 Figure 11.5.1.1-1. The criteria used to identify the SEZ as an appropriate location for solar
43 energy development included proximity to existing transmission lines or designated corridors,
44 proximity to existing roads, a slope of generally less than 2%, and an area of more than
45 2,500 acres (10 km²). In addition, the area was identified as being relatively free of other types
46 of conflicts, such as USFWS-designated critical habitat for threatened and endangered species,
47 ACECs, SRMAs, and NLCS lands (see Section 2.2.2.2 for the complete list of exclusions).



1

2 **FIGURE 11.5.1.1-1 Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ**

1 Although these classes of restricted lands were excluded from the proposed East Mormon
 2 Mountain SEZ, other restrictions might be appropriate. The analyses in the following sections
 3 evaluate the affected environment and potential impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy
 4 development in the proposed SEZ for important environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic
 5 resources.
 6

7 As initially announced in the *Federal Register* on June 30, 2009, the proposed East
 8 Mormon Mountain SEZ encompassed 7,418 acres (30 km²). Subsequent to the study area
 9 scoping period, the boundaries of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ were altered
 10 somewhat to facilitate the BLM’s administration of the SEZ area. Some higher slope areas
 11 internal to and at the borders of the site were added to the SEZ; particularly significant was the
 12 addition of the Toquop Wash area to acreage. Although included in the SEZ, these higher slope
 13 areas would not likely be utilized for solar facilities. Additionally, borders with irregularly
 14 shaped boundaries were adjusted to match the section boundaries of the Public Lands Survey
 15 System (PLSS) (BLM and USFS 2010c). The revised SEZ is approximately 1,550 acres
 16 (6.3 km²) larger than the original SEZ area as published in June 2009.
 17
 18

19 **11.5.1.2 Development Assumptions for the Impact Analysis**
 20

21 Maximum solar development of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ is assumed to be 80%
 22 of the SEZ area over a period of 20 years, a maximum of 7,174 acres (29 km²). These values are
 23 shown in Table 11.5.1.2-1, along with other development assumptions. Full development of the
 24 East Mormon Mountain SEZ would allow development of facilities with an estimated total of
 25
 26

TABLE 11.5.1.2-1 Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ—Assumed Development Acreages, Solar MW Output, Access Roads, and Transmission Line ROWs

Total Acreage and Assumed Developed Acreage (80% of Total)	Assumed Maximum SEZ Output for Various Solar Technologies	Distance to Nearest State, U.S., or Interstate Highway	Distance and Capacity of Nearest Existing Transmission Line	Area of Assumed Transmission Line ROW and Road ROW	Distance to Nearest Designated Corridor ^d
8,968 acres and 7,174 acres ^a	797 MW ^b and 1,435 MW ^c	I-15 11 mi ^{d,e}	Adjacent, 500 kV	0 acres and 80 acres	0 mi

- a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.
- b Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies, assuming 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required.
- c Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using solar trough technologies, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.
- d BLM-designated corridors are developed for federal land use planning purposes only and are not applicable to state-owned or privately owned land.
- e To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

1 797 MW of electrical power capacity if power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies were used,
2 assuming 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required, and an estimated 1,435 MW of power if
3 solar trough technologies were used, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.
4

5 Availability of transmission from SEZs to load centers will be an important consideration
6 for future development in SEZs. The nearest existing transmission line is a 500-kV line that runs
7 adjacent to the SEZ. It is possible that this existing line could be used to provide access from the
8 SEZ to the transmission grid, but the 500-kV capacity of that line would likely be inadequate
9 for 797 to 1,435 MW of new capacity (a 500-kV line can accommodate approximately the load
10 of one 700-MW facility). At full build-out capacity, it is likely that new transmission and/or
11 upgrades of existing transmission lines would be required to bring electricity from the proposed
12 East Mormon Mountain SEZ to load centers; however, at this time the location and size of such
13 new transmission facilities are unknown. Generic impacts of transmission and associated
14 infrastructure construction and of line upgrades for various resources are discussed in Chapter 5.
15 Project-specific analyses would need to identify the specific impacts of new transmission
16 construction and line upgrades for any projects proposed within the SEZ.
17

18 For the purposes of analysis in the PEIS, it was assumed that the existing 500-kV
19 transmission line which runs adjacent to the proposed SEZ, could provide initial access to the
20 transmission grid, and thus no additional acreage for transmission line access was assessed.
21 Access to the existing transmission line was assumed, without additional information on whether
22 this line would be available for connection of future solar facilities. If a connecting transmission
23 line were constructed in the future to connect facilities within the SEZ to a different off-site grid
24 location from the one assumed here, site developers would need to determine the impacts from
25 construction and operation of that line. In addition, developers would need to determine the
26 impacts of line upgrades if they were needed.
27

28 I-15 lies 11 mi (18 km) to the south of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ.
29 Assuming construction of a new access road to reach I-15 would be needed to support
30 construction and operation of solar facilities, approximately 80 acres (0.3 km²) of land
31 disturbance would occur (a 60-ft [18.3-m] wide ROW was assumed).
32
33

34 **11.5.1.3 Summary of Major Impacts and SEZ-Specific Design Features**

35

36 In this section, the impacts and SEZ-specific design features assessed in Sections 11.5.2
37 through 11.5.21 for the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are summarized in tabular form.
38 Table 11.5.1.3-1 is a comprehensive list of impacts discussed in these sections; the reader may
39 reference the applicable sections for detailed support of the impact assessment. Section 11.5.22
40 discusses potential cumulative impacts from solar energy development in the proposed SEZ.
41

42 Only those design features specific to the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are
43 included in Sections 11.5.2 through 11.5.21 and in the summary table. The detailed
44 programmatic design features for each resource area to be required under BLM's Solar Energy
45 Program are presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would
46 also be required for development in this and other SEZs.

TABLE 11.5.1.3-1 Summary of Impacts of Solar Energy Development within the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ and SEZ-Specific Design Features^a

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Lands and Realty	<p>Full development of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ could disturb up to 7,174 acres (29 km²). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish a large, isolated industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity.</p> <p>Solar development could sever existing roads and trails (including dry washes) that access the SEZ, making it difficult to access undeveloped public lands within and to the west of the SEZ.</p>	<p>None.</p> <p>None.</p>
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	<p>Wilderness characteristics in about 3,143 acres (13 km²) or 2% of the Mormon Mountains WA within 5 mi (8 km) from the SEZ would be adversely affected and likely would not be completely mitigated. Depending on the visibility and elevation above the SEZ, wilderness characteristics could be adversely affected at distances up to 11 mi (18 km) in an additional 12,166 acres (49 km²) or 7.7% of the area.</p> <p>A new access road would pass through the Mormon Mesa ACEC and designated critical habitat for desert tortoise, causing fragmentation of the ACEC and creating additional hazards for desert tortoises. Road construction would disturb an additional 80 acres (0.3 km²) that would adversely affect tortoise habitat and would create a barrier to tortoise movement.</p>	<p>Design features for visual resources should be applied to minimize adverse visual impacts.</p> <p>The access road to the SEZ should be designed and built to minimize impacts on desert tortoise and tortoise habitat within the Mormon Mesa ACEC.</p>
Rangeland Resources: Livestock Grazing	<p>The Gourd Springs allotment has been previously reduced in size by about 40%, and would lose an additional 9.1% of the allotment. Because the SEZ would occupy the best remaining grazing land in the allotment, it is likely that the grazing operation would become economically infeasible and all 3,458 AUMs currently authorized would be lost.</p>	<p>None.</p>

TABLE 11.5.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Rangeland Resources: Wild Horses and Burros	None.	None.
Recreation	Recreational use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ that would be developed for solar energy production. There may be some loss of wilderness recreation opportunities in up to 9.7% of the Morman Mountains WA. Construction of solar energy facilities could sever access to undeveloped public lands in and around the SEZ.	Design features for visual resources should be applied to minimize adverse impacts on wilderness recreation use. None.
Military and Civilian Aviation	<i>Military:</i> The military has indicated that solar technologies with structures higher than 200 ft (61 m) above ground level would intrude into military airspace and would present safety concerns for military aircraft. <i>Civilian:</i> There would be no effect on civilian aviation.	None. None.
Geologic Setting and Soil Resources	Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase. Impacts would include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind, soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. These impacts may be impacting factors for other resources (e.g., air quality, water quality, and vegetation).	None.
Minerals (fluids, solids, and geothermal resources)	None.	None.

TABLE 11.5.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
<p>Water Resources</p>	<p>Ground-disturbance activities (affecting 33% of the total area in the peak construction year) could affect surface water quality due to surface runoff, sediment erosion, and contaminant spills.</p> <p>Construction activities may require up to 1,492 ac-ft (1.8 million m³) of water during the peak construction year.</p> <p>Construction activities would generate as high as 74 ac-ft (91,300 m³) of sanitary wastewater.</p> <p>Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would use the following amounts of water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For parabolic trough facilities (1,435-MW capacity), 1,025 to 2,172 ac-ft/yr (1.3 million to 2.7 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; 7,195 to 21,543 ac-ft/yr (8.9 million to 27 million m³/yr) for wet-cooled systems. • For power tower facilities (797-MW capacity), 567 to 1,205 ac-ft/yr (700,000 to 1.5 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; 3,995 to 11,966 ac-ft/yr (5 million to 14.8 million m³/yr) for wet-cooled systems. For dish engine facilities (797-MW capacity), 408 ac-ft/yr (503,500 m³/yr). • For PV facilities (797-MW capacity), 41 ac-ft/yr (50,600 m³/yr). • Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would generate up to 20 ac-ft/yr (24,700 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater and up to 408 ac-ft/yr (503,500 m³/yr) of blowdown water. 	<p>Water resources analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be feasible; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures.</p> <p>Land-disturbance activities should minimize impacts on the ephemeral stream channels found within the SEZ, including but not limited to Toquop Wash and South Fork Toquop Wash, as well as alluvial fan features throughout the SEZ.</p> <p>Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid any areas identified as within a 100-year floodplain or jurisdictional waters.</p> <p>Groundwater rights must be purchased and transferred through coordination with the NDWR and current water rights holders.</p> <p>Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.</p> <p>Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in accordance with state standards.</p> <p>Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water quality standards in accordance with the <i>Nevada Administrative Code</i>.</p>

TABLE 11.5.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation ^b	<p>Up to 80% (7,174 acres [29 km²]) of the SEZ would be cleared of vegetation; re-establishment of shrub communities in temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult because of the arid conditions and might require extended periods of time.</p> <p>Noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in widespread habitat degradation.</p> <p>The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition.</p> <p>Vegetation communities associated with playa habitats, riparian habitats, desert dry washes, or other intermittently flooded areas within or downgradient from solar projects could be affected by ground-disturbing activities.</p> <p>The use of groundwater within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ for technologies with high water requirements, such as wet-cooling systems, could disrupt the groundwater flow pattern and adversely affect wetland communities associated with springs in the vicinity of the SEZ.</p>	<p>An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan, addressing habitat restoration, should be approved and implemented to increase the potential for successful restoration of desert scrub and other affected habitats, and to minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species such as Mediterranean grass. Invasive species control should focus on biological and mechanical methods, where possible, to reduce the use of herbicides.</p> <p>All desert dry wash, playa, riparian, and Joshua tree communities within the SEZ and access road corridor should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated. Any Joshua trees, other yucca species, cacti, or succulent plant species in areas of direct impacts that cannot be avoided should be salvaged. A buffer area should be maintained around dry wash, playa, and riparian habitats to reduce the potential for impacts.</p> <p>Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on dry wash, playa, wetland, and riparian habitats, including downstream occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition to these habitats. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be determined through agency consultation.</p>

TABLE 11.5.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation ^b (Cont.)		Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect impacts on wetlands associated with springs, such as Tule Spring and Abe Spring. Potential impacts on springs should be determined through hydrological studies.
Wildlife: Amphibians and Reptiles ^b	Direct impacts from SEZ development would be small for all representative amphibian and reptile species (i.e., loss of ≤1% of potentially suitable habitats). With implementation of design features, indirect impacts are expected to be negligible.	Development in wash, playa and rock outcrop habitats should be avoided.
Wildlife: Birds ^b	<p>Direct impacts on all representative bird species would be small (i.e., loss of ≤1% of potentially suitable habitats).</p> <p>Other impacts on birds could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., buildings and fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment.</p>	<p>The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds will be followed.</p> <p>Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.</p> <p>Playa, wash, and rock outcrop habitats should be avoided.</p>
Wildlife: Mammals ^b	<p>Direct impacts on all representative mammal species would be small (i.e., loss of ≤1% of potentially suitable habitats).</p> <p>Other impacts on mammals could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment. These impacts are expected to be negligible with the implementation of design features.</p>	<p>The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free movement of mammals, particularly big game species.</p> <p>Playa, wash, and rock outcrop habitats should be avoided.</p>

TABLE 11.5.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Aquatic Biota ^b	<p>There are no perennial streams or lakes present within the East Mormon SEZ or the area of indirect effects. Intermittent and ephemeral washes are present, and these features may be directly affected by ground disturbance (SEZ only), contaminant inputs, and sedimentation from runoff and fugitive dust. However, the washes are typically dry, and impacts on aquatic habitat and communities are not likely to occur. Aquatic habitat and biota potentially found in springs present within the area of indirect effects could be affected by fugitive dust associated with solar energy development within the SEZ. However, more site specific data on these springs are needed. There is the potential for sediments and contaminants deposited in the washes to affect aquatic habitat and communities in the perennial Virgin River. However, the distance of the SEZ to the Virgin River (>12 mi [19 km]) and the infrequency of flooding reduces the chance for sediment to reach the aquatic habitat. Dry and wet cooling is not likely to be possible with local water resources, so water withdrawals and subsequent effects on aquatic habitat and biota would be minimal.</p>	<p>Ground disturbance and contaminant spills near Toquop Wash and the other unnamed washes within the SEZ should be minimized.</p> <p>Appropriate engineering controls should be implemented to minimize the amount of surface water runoff and fugitive dust reaching springs, Toquop Wash and unnamed washes in the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects.</p> <p>The impact of groundwater withdrawals on surface water features near the SEZ (such as Tule Spring, Abe Spring, Gourd Spring and Peach Spring) should be eliminated or minimized.</p>
Special Status Species ^b	<p>Potentially suitable habitat for 32 special status species occurs in the affected area of the East Mormon Mountains SEZ. For all special status species, less than 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region occurs in the area of direct effects.</p>	<p>Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the area of direct effects to determine the presence and abundance of special status species. Disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing impacts on occupied habitats is not possible for some species, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effect; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy for special status species that used one or more of these options to offset the impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the appropriate federal and state agencies.</p>

TABLE 11.5.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Special Status Species ^b (Cont.)		<p>Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash, playa, rocky cliffs, and outcrop habitats could reduce or eliminate impacts on 17 special status species.</p> <p>Consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW should be conducted to address the potential for impacts on the desert tortoise. Consultation would identify an appropriate survey protocol, avoidance and minimization measures, and, if appropriate, reasonable and prudent alternatives, reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions for incidental take statements.</p> <p>Coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW should be conducted for the Las Vegas buckwheat, a candidate species for listing under the ESA. Coordination would identify an appropriate survey protocol and mitigation requirements, which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or compensation.</p> <p>Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the affected area should be avoided or minimized. This can be accomplished by identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.</p>

TABLE 11.5.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Air Quality and Climate	<p><i>Construction:</i> Temporary exceedances of AAQS for 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ and 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentration levels would occur at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding areas during the construction of solar facilities. These concentrations would decrease quickly with distance. Modeling indicates that emissions from construction activities are not anticipated to exceed the Class I PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearby federal Class I area (Zion NP, Utah). In addition, construction emissions from the engine exhaust of heavy equipment and vehicles could affect AQRVs (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at nearby federal Class I areas.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> Positive impact due to avoided emissions of air pollutants from combustion-related power generation: 3.7 to 6.6% of total emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ from electric power systems in the state of Nevada avoided (up to 3,547 tons/yr SO₂, 3,042 tons/yr NO_x, 0.020 ton/yr Hg, and 1,952,000 tons/yr CO₂).</p>	None.
Visual Resources	<p>The SEZ is in an area of low scenic quality. Residents, workers, and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) as they travel area roads.</p> <p>Solar development could produce large visual impacts on the SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed due to major modification of the character of the existing landscape.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 2.4 mi (3.9 km) from Mormon Mountains WA. Because of the close proximity of the WA to the SEZ, and the elevated viewpoints in the WA, strong visual contrasts could be observed by WA visitors.</p>	The development of power tower facilities should be prohibited within the SEZ.

TABLE 11.5.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Acoustic Environment	<p><i>Construction:</i> For construction of a solar facility located near the southern SEZ boundary, estimated noise levels at the nearest residences located about 9 mi (14.5 km) from the SEZ boundary would be about 17 dBA, which is well below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. In addition, an estimated 40 dBA L_{dn} at these residences (i.e., no contribution from construction activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> For operation of a parabolic trough or power tower facility located near the southeastern SEZ boundary, the predicted noise level would be about 22 dBA at the nearest residences, which is well below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. If the operation were limited to daytime, 12 hours only, a noise level of about 40 dBA L_{dn} (i.e., no contribution from facility operation) would be estimated for the nearest residences, which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. However, in the case of 6-hour TES, the estimated noise level at the nearest residences would be 32 dBA, which is somewhat higher than the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. The day-night average noise level is estimated to be about 41 dBA L_{dn}, which is still well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p>If 80% of the SEZ were developed with dish engine facilities, the estimated noise level at the nearest residences would be about 33 dBA, which is lower than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. On the basis of 12-hour daytime operation, the estimated 40 dBA L_{dn} at these residences (i.e., no contributions from dish engines) would be well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p>	None.

TABLE 11.5.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Paleontological Resources	Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of the SEZ is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted.	The need for SEZ-specific design features would depend on the results of future paleontological investigations, especially along a potential new access road corridor; however, based on the current level of information, a need for mitigation of areas potentially classified as PFYC Class 2 or lower is not anticipated.
Cultural Resources	<p>Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ; however, further investigation is needed. Areas near Toquop Wash and South Fork have considerable potential for containing significant sites. Visual impacts on the Old Spanish National Historic Trail are possible, as well as visual and auditory effects on nearby rock art sites.</p> <p>A cultural resource survey of the entire area of potential effect, including consultation with affected Native American Tribes, would first need to be conducted to identify archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and traditional cultural properties, and an evaluation would need to follow to determine whether any are eligible for listing in the NRHP.</p>	<p>Avoidance of South Fork and Toquop Wash areas is recommended.</p> <p>Coordination with the Trail Administration for the Old Spanish Trail and Old Spanish Trail Association is recommended to identify potential mitigation strategies for avoiding or minimizing potential impacts, if impacts are identified in future studies, on the congressionally designated Old Spanish National Historic Trail.</p> <p>Other SEZ-specific design features would be determined through consultation with the Nevada SHPO and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations.</p>
Native American Concerns	While no comments specific to the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ have been received from Native American Tribes to date, the proposed SEZ does include plants and animals traditionally important to Native Americans. As consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it is possible that Native Americans will express concern over water resources and potential visual, acoustic, and other effects of solar energy development within the SEZ on specific resources, including culturally important landscapes.	The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features would be determined during government-to-government consultation with the affected Tribes.

TABLE 11.5.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Socioeconomics	<p><i>Construction:</i> A total of 444 to 4,438 jobs would be added; ROI income would increase by \$28.1 million to \$268.7 million.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> A total of 21 to 496 annual jobs would be added; ROI income would increase by \$0.7 million to \$18.9 million.</p> <p>Construction of new access road: 234 jobs; \$9.1 million income in ROI.</p>	None.
Environmental Justice	As defined in CEQ guidelines, no minority or low income populations occur within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ; thus, there would be no disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on low-income or minority populations.	None.
Transportation	The primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day, with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum). The volume of traffic on I-15 to the southeast of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ would represent an increase in traffic of about 12%.	None.

Abbreviations: AAQS = ambient air quality standards; ACEC = Area of Critical Environmental Concern; AQRV = air quality-related value; BLM = Bureau of Land Management; BMP = best management practice; CEQ = Council on Environmental Quality; CO₂ = carbon dioxide; dBA = A-weighted decibel; EPA = U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; ESA = Endangered Species Act; Hg = mercury; L_{dn} = day-night average sound level; MTR = military training route; NDOW = Nevada Department of Wildlife; NDWR = Nevada Division of Water Resources; NNHP = Nevada Natural Heritage Program; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; NP = National Park; NRHP = *National Register of Historic Places*; PEIS = programmatic environmental impact statement; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 μm or less; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 μm or less; PSD = prevention of significant deterioration; PV = photovoltaic; ROI = region of influence; ROW = right-of-way; SEZ = solar energy zone; SHPO = State Historic Preservation Office; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; SRMA = Special Recreation Management Area; TES = thermal energy storage; USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; WA = Wilderness Area.

^a The detailed programmatic design features for each resource area to be required under BLM's Solar Energy Program are presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would be required for development in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ.

^b The scientific names of all plants, wildlife, aquatic biota, and special status species are provided in Sections 11.5.10 through 11.5.12.

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1 **11.5.2 Lands and Realty**

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4 **11.5.2.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is a small but well-blocked area of BLM-
7 administered land that is very isolated and is accessible currently only by travel over 10 to 15 mi
8 (16 to 24 km) of dirt or gravel roads. The character of the land in the SEZ is undeveloped and
9 rural with only a few roads/trails (including dry washes) present within the area. There are
10 two designated 368b (of the Energy Policy Act of 2005) transmission corridors that pass
11 adjacent to the area that contain a total of three major transmission lines and one large natural
12 gas pipeline. There is also a locally designated corridor that heads southeast from the SEZ
13 toward Mesquite, Nevada.

14
15 Authorization is being sought for a new natural gas–fueled power generating station, the
16 Toquop Energy Project, located adjacent to the southeastern corner of the SEZ. Water for the
17 proposed energy project would be provided via a pipeline for which the BLM has issued a ROW.
18 The pipeline ROW is located within the proposed SEZ (Linnell 2010).

19
20 As of February 2010, there were no ROW applications for solar energy facilities within
21 the SEZ.

22
23
24 **11.5.2.2 Impacts**

25
26
27 ***11.5.2.2.1 Construction and Operations***

28
29 Full development of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ could disturb up to
30 7,174 acres (29 km²) (Table 11.5.1.2-1). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy
31 production would establish a large industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential
32 uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity. Since the SEZ is undeveloped and isolated, utility-scale
33 solar energy development would be a new and highly discordant land use to the area. If the
34 Toquop Energy Project (Section 11.5.22.2.2), were built, the area would have a much more
35 industrial nature.

36
37 The existing water pipeline ROW on the SEZ would not be affected by solar energy
38 development since it is a prior right. The area of the pipeline would not be available for
39 construction of solar energy facilities. Should the proposed area be identified as an SEZ
40 in the ROD for this PEIS, the BLM would still have discretion to authorize additional ROWs
41 in the area until solar energy development was authorized, and then future ROWs would be
42 subject to the rights issued for solar energy development. Because the area is adjacent to
43 three transmission corridors, it is not anticipated that approval of solar energy development in the
44 SEZ would have a significant impact on the availability of land for ROWs in the area.

1 Existing dirt roads and washes used for travel within the SEZ would be closed wherever
2 solar development facilities were constructed, and access to public lands not developed for solar
3 energy could be affected. This could adversely affect public land users wanting to access any
4 areas isolated by solar development unless provision of alternate access is retained or provided.
5
6

7 ***11.5.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***

8

9 An existing 500-kV transmission line runs adjacent to the SEZ; this line might be
10 available to transport the power produced in this SEZ. Establishing a connection to the existing
11 line would not involve the construction of a new transmission line outside of the SEZ. If a
12 connecting transmission line were constructed in a different location outside of the SEZ in the
13 future, site developers would need to determine the impacts from construction and operation of
14 that line. In addition, developers would need to determine the impacts of line upgrades if they
15 were needed.
16

17 To provide adequate road access to the SEZ, about 11 mi (18 km) of new or upgraded
18 road would be required to connect to I-15. This could create an additional 80 acres (0.3 km²) of
19 surface disturbance. See Section 11.5.1.2 regarding development assumptions for the SEZ.
20

21 Power lines and roads would be constructed within the SEZ as part of solar energy
22 development.
23
24

25 **11.5.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

26

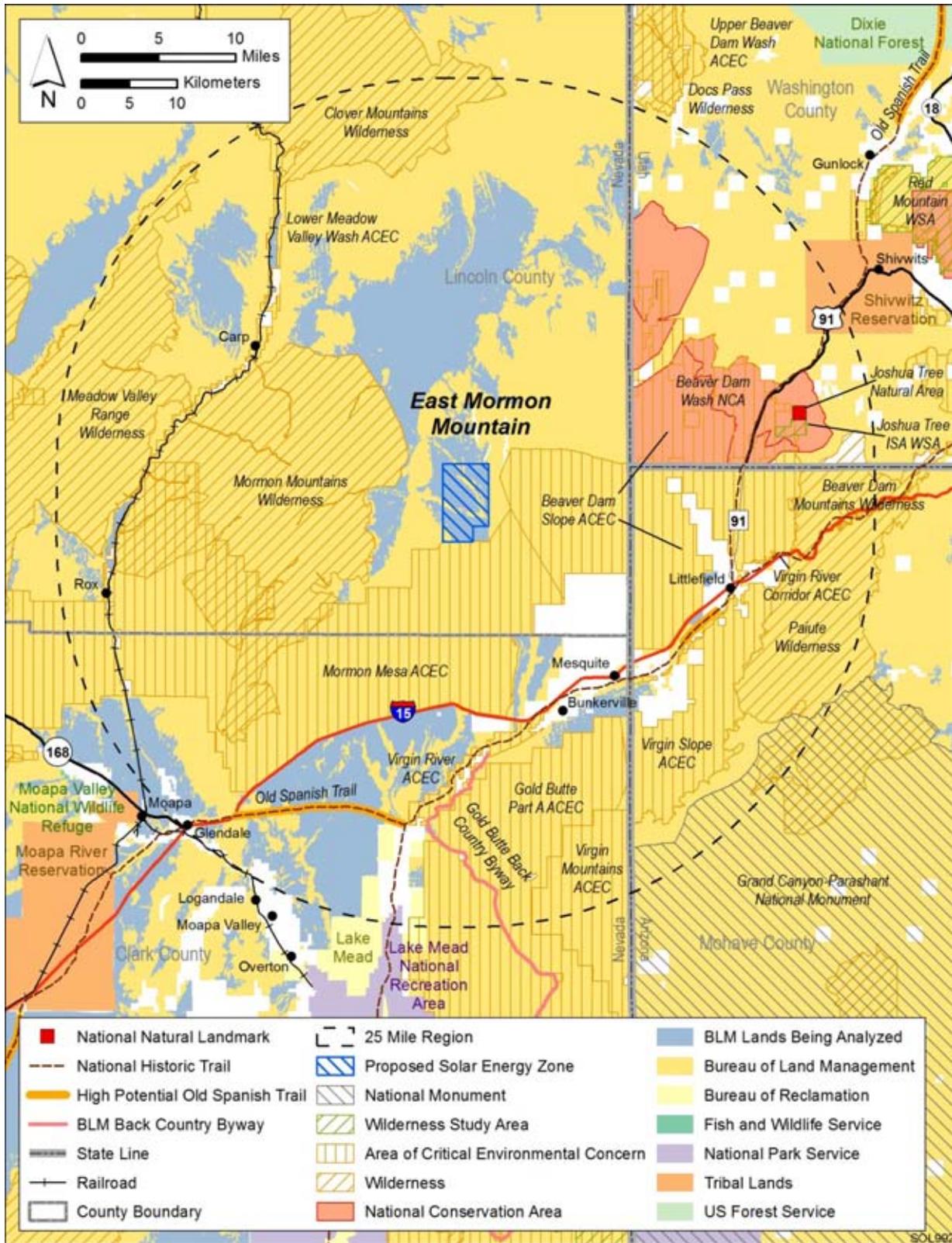
27 No SEZ-specific design features would be required. Implementing the programmatic
28 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
29 Program would provide adequate mitigation for some identified impacts. The exceptions may be
30 (1) development of the SEZ would establish a large industrial area that would exclude many
31 existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity, and (2) existing dirt roads and
32 washes within the SEZ would be closed wherever solar development facilities were constructed,
33 and access to public lands not developed for solar energy could be adversely affected.

11.5.3 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

11.5.3.1 Affected Environment

There are 20 specially designated areas within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ that potentially could be affected by solar energy development within the SEZ, principally from impacts on scenic, recreation, biological, and/or wilderness resources. The potential area of impact for the SEZ includes parts of Nevada, Utah, and Arizona; thus some of the listed areas are located in more than one BLM District. The state(s) in which the area is located is noted after the name of the area. The areas include (see Figure 11.5.3.1-1) the following:

- National Monument
 - Grand Canyon Parashant (Arizona)
- National Recreation Area
 - Lake Mead (Nevada)
- National Natural Landmark
 - Joshua Tree Natural Area (Utah)
- National Designated Historic Trail
 - Old Spanish Trail (Arizona, Nevada, and Utah)
- National Conservation Area
 - Beaver Dam Wash (Utah)
- Wilderness Areas
 - Mormon Mountains (Nevada)
 - Meadow Valley Range (Nevada)
 - Clover Mountains (Nevada)
 - Beaver Dam Mountains (Arizona and Utah)
 - Paiute (Arizona)
- Wilderness Study Area
 - Joshua Tree Instant Study Area (Utah)
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
 - Mormon Mesa, both Ely and Las Vegas Districts (Nevada)
 - Virgin River (Nevada)
 - Virgin Mountains (also known as Gold Butte Part A) (Nevada)
 - Beaver Dam Slope (Nevada, Utah, and Arizona)
 - Lower Meadow Valley Wash (Nevada)
 - Virgin River Corridor (Arizona)
 - Virgin Slope (Arizona)



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.5.3.1-1 Specially Designated Areas in the Vicinity of the Proposed East Mormon**
 3 **Mountain SEZ**

- 1 • Backcountry Byway
- 2 – Gold Butte

3
4 Both Lake Mead NRA and Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument are being
5 dropped from further consideration since both are 23 to 24 mi (37 to 39 km) from the SEZ and
6 less than 1% of their areas would have possible visibility of facilities within the SEZ. No impact
7 on these areas is anticipated.

8
9 Less than 5% of the area of the Clover Mountains and Meadow Mountain Range WAs
10 would have any visibility of solar development in the SEZ; the WAs are between 15 and 25 mi
11 (24 and 40 km) from the SEZ. Consequently, no impact on the wilderness characteristics of these
12 areas is anticipated; thus they are not considered further.

13
14 Of the listed ACECs, only the Virgin Mountains and the Virgin River Corridor have a
15 scenic component included as part of the rationale for the ACEC designation. Of the remaining
16 ACECs, only portions of the Mormon Mesa in the Ely District and Beaver Dam Slope in
17 Nevada, Utah, and Arizona, which abut the SEZ, may incur impacts from solar development of
18 the proposed SEZ. The remaining four ACECs are not anticipated to be adversely affected by
19 solar development in the SEZ and are not considered further.

20
21 There are no lands near the SEZ and outside of designated WAs or WSAs that have been
22 identified by the BLM to be managed to protect wilderness characteristics.

23 24 25 **11.5.3.2 Impacts**

26 27 28 ***11.5.3.2.1 Construction and Operations***

29
30 The primary potential impact on 10 of the 12 remaining specially designated areas near
31 the SEZ would be from visual impacts of solar energy development that could affect scenic,
32 recreational, or wilderness characteristics of the areas. The remaining 2 areas are ACECs
33 designated primarily to protect desert tortoise habitat. The primary potential impact on these
34 areas would come from increased human activity and vehicle traffic, which could increase
35 tortoise mortality.

36
37 The visual impact on specially designated areas is difficult to determine and would vary
38 by solar technology employed, the specific area being affected, and the perception of individuals
39 viewing the development. Development of the SEZ, especially full development, would be a
40 factor in the viewshed from portions of these specially designated areas, as summarized in
41 Table 11.5.3.2-1. The data provided in the table assume the use of 650-ft (198.1-m) power tower
42 solar energy technology, which because of the potential height of these facilities, could be visible
43 from the largest amount of land of the technologies being considered in the PEIS. Viewshed
44 analysis for this SEZ has shown that the visual impacts of shorter solar energy facilities would be
45 slightly less than for power tower technology that is used for the analysis (see Section 11.5.14 for
46 more detail on all viewshed analysis discussed in this section). Assessment of the visual impact

TABLE 11.5.3.2-1 Selected Potentially Affected Sensitive Visual Resources within a 25-mi Viewshed of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ^a

Feature Type	Feature Name (Total Acreage/Highway Length) ^b	Feature Area or Highway Length ^c		
		Visible within 5 mi	Visible between	
			5 mi and 15 mi	15 mi and 25 mi
WAs	Beaver Dam Mountains (18,635 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	2,748 acres (15%)
	Mormon Mountains (157,645 acres)	3,143 acres (2%)	15,309 acres (9.7%)	15,304 acres (9.7%)
	Paiute (87,908 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	15,359 acres (17.5%)
	Joshua Tree ISA (1,047 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	744 acres (71%)
ACECs	Virgin River Corridor (Arizona) (2,065 acres)	0 acres	Undetermined	Undetermined
	Virgin Mountains (Nevada) (35,826 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	6,257 acres (17.5%)
	Beaver Dam Slope (Nevada, Utah, Arizona) (137,029 acres)	13,046 acres (9.5%)	42,888 acres (31.3%)	73,249 acres (53.5%)
	Mormon Mesa – Ely (110,275 acres)	19,705 acres (17.9%)	25,118 acres (22.8%)	25,118 acres (22.8%)
National Conservation Area	Beaver Dam Wash (72,040 acres) ^d	0 acres	12,664 acres (17.5%)	33,860 acres (47%)
National Natural Landmark	Joshua Tree Natural Area (1,015 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	1,015 acres (100%)
National Trail	Old Spanish Trail	11 mi	0 mi	1 mi
Scenic Byway	Gold Butte (62 mi)	0 mi	0 mi	7 mi

^a Assuming power tower solar technology with a height of 650 ft (198.1 m).

^b To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047. To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

^c Percentage of total feature acreage or road length viewable.

^d This includes public, state, and private lands. Public lands total about 63,488 acres (257 km²).

1 of solar energy projects must be conducted on a site-specific and technology-specific basis to
2 accurately identify impacts.

3
4 In general, the closer a viewer is to solar development, the greater the impact on an
5 individual's perception. From a visual analysis perspective, the most sensitive viewing distances
6 generally are from 0 to 5 mi (0 to 8 km). The viewing height above a solar energy development
7 area, the size of the solar development area, and the purpose for which a person is visiting an
8 area are also important. Individuals seeking a wilderness or scenic experience within these areas
9 could be expected to be more adversely affected than those simply traveling along a highway
10 with another destination in mind. In the case of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ, the low-lying
11 location of the SEZ in relation to the East Mormon Mountains WA, would highlight the
12 industrial-like development in the SEZ.

13
14 The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could potentially cause large, but
15 temporary, increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities. The visual contrast levels
16 projected for sensitive visual resource areas that were used to assess potential impacts on
17 specially designated areas do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these
18 effects would be incorporated into a future site- and project-specific assessment that would be
19 conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects.

20 21 22 **Wilderness Areas**

23
24
25 **Beaver Dam Mountains.** This WA encompasses lands within both Utah and Arizona,
26 and its nearest boundary to the SEZ is about 19 mi (31 km) east of the SEZ. Almost all of the
27 2,748 acres (11 km²) with visibility of the SEZ are on the western slopes of the Beaver Dam
28 Mountains. Although there would be a long-distance view of facilities in the SEZ from the WA,
29 because the viewing angle would be very low, the portion of the horizontal field of view filled by
30 the SEZ would be small, and the distance so great, the contrast caused by solar facilities would
31 be very weak; it is anticipated that solar development would have no impact on wilderness
32 characteristics within the area.

33
34
35 **Mormon Mountains.** This WA is located about 2 mi (3 km) west of the SEZ at the
36 nearest point, and solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible from the summits and east-
37 facing slopes of some of the mountains in the eastern part of the WA, at distances from about
38 3 to 11 mi (5 to 18 km) west from the SEZ's western boundary. From many locations within the
39 WA, views of solar facilities within the SEZ would be largely screened by the intervening East
40 Mormon Mountains, or limited to views of taller solar facilities, or both, but there is a substantial
41 portion of the WA with open or nearly open views of the SEZ. These views are generally
42 through two gaps in the East Mormon Mountains, one directly west of the central portion of the
43 SEZ, and another northwest of the northwest corner of the SEZ. These views of the SEZ are the
44 most open, and from some viewpoints (generally closer to the SEZ) expected contrast levels
45 would be moderate to strong. At lower elevations, the East Mormon Mountains screen more of
46 the SEZ from view, and contrast levels are generally much lower. It is anticipated that the

1 wilderness characteristics in 3,143 acres (12.7 km²) of the WA with a view of the SEZ within
2 5 mi (8 km) from the SEZ would be adversely affected, and depending on the visibility and
3 height above the SEZ, wilderness characteristics could be adversely affected at somewhat longer
4 distances. Based on viewshed analysis, a total of 15,309 acres (62 km²), or 9.7%, of the WA
5 within about 11 mi (18 km) would have visibility of solar facilities in the SEZ.
6
7

8 ***Paiute.*** The Paiute WA is located in Arizona, with the nearest boundary of the SEZ about
9 19 mi (31 km) northwest of the area. Like the Beaver Dam Mountains WA, most of the area with
10 visibility of the SEZ is on the western slopes of the mountains. In this case, however, about
11 15,359 acres (62 km²), or about 17% of the WA, would have long-distance views of solar
12 development in the SEZ. Because the viewing angle of the SEZ would be very low, the portion
13 of the horizontal field of view filled by the SEZ would be small, and the distance so great, the
14 contrast caused by solar facilities would be very weak; it is anticipated that development within
15 the SEZ would have no impact on wilderness characteristics of the area.
16
17

18 ***Joshua Tree ISA and the Joshua Tree National Natural Landmark.*** The NNL is
19 included within the boundaries of the ISA (BLM 2010b), so the areas are discussed together.
20 Both are also included within the congressionally designated Beaver Dam Wash NCA. The
21 Joshua Tree ISA is a small area located about 19 mi (31 km) east of the SEZ, on the upper slopes
22 of the Beaver Dam Mountains. Much of the ISA and NNL would have open views of the distant
23 SEZ. Despite elevations more than 2,800 ft (853 m) higher than the SEZ in some locations,
24 because of the long distance to the SEZ the vertical angle of view is low, and the SEZ would
25 occupy a small portion of the horizontal field of view. Weak contrast levels would be expected
26 from solar facilities within the SEZ as viewed from the ISA and would not affect wilderness
27 characteristics in the area.
28
29

30 **Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

31
32

33 ***Virgin River Corridor.*** This ACEC is located in Arizona and follows the path of the
34 Virgin River. The ACEC at its nearest approach is about 13.5 mi (22 km) from the southeastern
35 border of the SEZ and actually extends to the northeast past the 25-mi (40-km) analysis area for
36 the SEZ. A review of the viewshed overlay for the area (not a viewshed analysis) indicates that
37 the river appears to be incised and largely topographically screened; thus it is likely solar
38 development would not be visible from within the ACEC. In some areas, dense vegetation would
39 also hinder views outside of the river corridor itself. If solar facilities were visible, the view
40 would only be of the top of sufficiently tall power towers. On the basis of this review, it is
41 anticipated that there would be no impact on the ACEC.
42
43

44 ***Virgin Mountains.*** This ACEC is located in Nevada about 19 mi (31 km) southeast of the
45 SEZ. The area was also known as Gold Butte ACEC Part 2 in the BLM's 1998 Las Vegas RMP
46 (BLM 1998b) and was established to protect wildlife, scenic, and botanical resources. About

1 6,257 acres (25 km²), or 17.5%, of the area would have potential visibility of solar facilities
2 within the SEZ. The area of potential visibility extends to about 24 mi (39 km) from the
3 boundary of the SEZ and primarily includes higher elevations on the northwest side of the
4 Virgin Mountains. Portions of the ACEC are about 2,500 ft (762 m) above the elevation of the
5 SEZ and would have views of development in the area. The views, however, would be from a
6 long distance, at a low vertical angle, and the SEZ would occupy only a small portion of the
7 horizontal field of view. Weak contrast levels would be expected from solar facilities within the
8 SEZ, as viewed from within the ACEC, and would not affect the values for which the ACEC was
9 established. It is also anticipated that there would be no impact on recreational use of the area.

10
11
12 ***Beaver Dam Slope and Mormon Mesa.*** These ACECs are very large and were
13 established for the protection of desert tortoise habitat. The ACECs are also designated as
14 critical habitat for desert tortoise by the USFWS. Relatively small portions of both of these
15 areas are adjacent to the SEZ. The major concern would be for any adverse effects associated
16 with human presence and traffic within these areas associated with development of the SEZ,
17 including increased possibilities for wildfire. Access to the SEZ would need to be dramatically
18 improved to support construction and operation of a solar facility, leading to higher speed
19 driving and much heavier volumes of traffic than at present. Whether mitigation measures would
20 be successful in preventing adverse impacts on tortoise populations and habitat is not known.
21 Section 11.5.12 provides additional information on potential sensitive species impacts.

22 23 24 **National Conservation Area**

25
26
27 ***Beaver Dam Wash.*** This NCA was created by an Act of Congress in 2009 “to conserve,
28 protect and enhance...the ecological, scenic, wildlife, recreational, cultural historical, natural,
29 educational, and scientific resources” (BLM 2010b) of about 63,488 acres (257 km²) of public
30 lands located in the southwestern corner of Utah. There are diverse recreational opportunities in
31 the area, including casual, dispersed camping; OHV riding; rock climbing; horseback trail riding;
32 and hunting for game birds, mule deer, and desert bighorn sheep. Annual visitation is estimated at
33 20,000 visitor use days in 2009 (BLM 2010b)

34
35 The western boundary of the NCA is about 9 mi (14 km) east of the nearest boundary of
36 the SEZ, and some areas within the NCA would have visibility of solar development out to about
37 22 mi (35 km). The nearest portions of the SEZ are slightly lower in elevation than the NCA,
38 but views of solar facilities would be at a very low angle, which would result in low contrast
39 between the facilities and the surrounding area. Higher elevations farther east would have long-
40 distance views of development in the SEZ, but the distance would also cause a lack of contrast
41 and detail. While facilities within the SEZ would be visible from about 33,860 acres (137 km²),
42 or 47%, of the NCA, it is anticipated that there would be no adverse impacts on scenic values of
43 the NCA or on recreational use of the area.

1 **National Trail**
2
3

4 **Old Spanish National Historic Trail.** Almost 18 mi (29 km) of the Old Spanish National
5 Historic Trail are within the SEZ viewshed to the south and to the east of the SEZ. The SEZ
6 would be visible from the trail in a number of places, but the largest segment with visibility is
7 a 12-mi (19-km) stretch closely paralleling U.S. 91 and oriented in a north–south direction
8 between 16 and 19 mi (26 and 31 km) east of the SEZ. Within the southernmost 7 mi (11 km)
9 of this trail segment, visibility would be limited to the upper portions of sufficiently tall power
10 towers within the SEZ, and expected visual contrast levels in this portion of the segment would
11 be minimal. The northern 5 mi (8 km) of the segment would have open views of the SEZ, but at
12 distances exceeding 16 mi (26 m), the SEZ would occupy a very small portion of the horizontal
13 field of view, and the vertical angle of view would be very low. Visual contrast levels would be
14 expected to be very weak. The SEZ would be visible from another 6 mi (10 km) of the Old
15 Spanish National Historic Trail, with four segments of the trail ranging in size from 0.3 mi to
16 2.8 mi (0.5 to 4.5 km) at a distance of about 18 mi (29 km) from the SEZ. For nearly all of
17 these segments, visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ would be limited to the upper
18 portions of tall power towers, and the expected visual contrast levels would be minimal.
19 Because of the expected low level of visual contrast, it is anticipated that there would be no
20 impact on future management of trail segments or on visitors attempting to re-trace travel on
21 the trail. Section 11.5.17 provides more information on the trail.
22

23
24 **Scenic Byway**
25
26

27 **Gold Butte Backcountry Byway.** The northern end of this 62-mi (100-km)
28 BLM-administered backcountry byway is located about 14 mi (22 km) south of the nearest
29 boundary of the SEZ. Viewshed analysis indicates that visitors on most of the byway would have
30 no views of solar development within the SEZ. There is, however, a 7-mi (11-km) portion of the
31 route where the trail runs in a northwest–southeast direction as it leaves the Virgin River and
32 crosses the Virgin Mountains where intermittent views of facilities in the SEZ from distances of
33 about 18 to 23 mi (29 to 37 km) might be possible. From these distances, contrast caused by
34 solar facilities would be weak and are expected to have no impact on visitor use of the trail.
35 About 7 mi (11 km) of the byway before it enters the Muddy Mountains is within the viewshed
36 of the SEZ. Views of solar development within the SEZ from the byway would be generally very
37 low angle. No impact on the use of the byway from the construction of solar facilities within the
38 SEZ is anticipated.
39

40
41 **11.5.3.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**
42

43 Because of the availability of a major transmission line in the SEZ, assuming that
44 additional project-specific analysis would be done for construction of such infrastructure, no
45 assessment of the impacts of such activities outside of the SEZ was conducted (see
46 Section 11.5.1.2).
47

1 To provide adequate road access to the SEZ, about 11 mi (18 km) of new or upgraded
2 road would be required to connect to I-15. The assumed road alignment would pass through the
3 Mormon Mesa ACEC and designated desert tortoise critical habitat, causing fragmentation of
4 the ACEC and creating additional hazards for desert tortoise. Road construction would disturb an
5 additional 80 acres (0.3 km²) that would adversely affect tortoise habitat and create a barrier to
6 tortoise movement. Section 11.5.1.2 provides development assumptions for the SEZ, and Section
7 11.5.12 gives detailed information on potential sensitive species impacts.
8
9

10 **11.5.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

11

12 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
13 as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program would provide some mitigation for identified
14 impacts. The exceptions may be (1) wilderness characteristics in about 3,143 acres (13 km²), or
15 2%, of the Mormon Mountains WA within 5 mi (8 km) from the SEZ would be adversely
16 affected and wilderness characteristics could be adversely affected at distances up to 11 mi
17 (18 km) in an additional 12,166 acres (49 km²), or 7.7%, of the area; and (2) road construction
18 would adversely affect desert tortoise habitat and create a barrier to tortoise movement.
19

20 Proposed design features specific to the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ include
21 the following:
22

- 23 • Design features for visual resources as described in Section 11.5.14 should be
24 applied to minimize adverse visual impacts.
25
- 26 • The access road to the SEZ should be designed and built to minimize impacts
27 on desert tortoise and tortoise habitat within the Mormon Mesa ACEC.
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1 **11.5.4 Rangeland Resources**
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3 Rangeland resources managed by the BLM on BLM-administered lands include livestock
4 grazing and habitat for wild horses and burros. These resources and possible impacts on them
5 from solar development within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are discussed in
6 Sections 11.5.4.1 and 11.5.4.2.
7

8
9 **11.5.4.1 Livestock and Grazing**
10

11
12 ***11.5.4.1.1 Affected Environment***
13

14 Portions of two grazing allotments—Gourd Springs and Summit Spring—overlap the
15 proposed SEZ. The Gourd Springs allotment contains 57,700 acres (234 km²) and has an
16 active authorization of 3,458 AUMs. A total of 8,773 acres (36 km²), or 9.1%, of the allotment
17 is located within the SEZ. This allotment was previously reduced in size by 38,262 acres
18 (155 km²), or 40%, in September 2000 by the Caliente Management Framework Plan
19 Amendment and Record of Decision for the Management of Desert Tortoise Habitat, which
20 created the Mormon Mesa ACEC. Further restrictions on the grazing season of use were placed
21 on the desert tortoise critical habitat portions of the Gourd Springs and Summit Spring allotments
22 in the Programmatic Biological Opinion for the BLM’s Ely District Resource Management Plan
23 in July 2008. Large portions of both allotments were burned by the Southern Nevada Complex
24 Fires in 2005. The location of the SEZ covers most of the Gourd Springs allotment’s prime
25 forage as well as some water sources. The primary water sources for this allotment are also
26 approximately 1 mi (1.6 km) west of the SEZ. Development of the SEZ would make these
27 waters unusable because it covers a majority of the land serviced by these waters.
28

29 The Summit Spring allotment contains 18,035 acres (73 km²) and has an active
30 authorization of 715 AUMs. A total of 195 acres (0.8 km²), or 1.1%, of the allotment is located
31 within the SEZ.
32

33
34 ***11.5.4.1.2 Impacts***
35

36
37 **Construction and Operations**
38

39 Should utility-scale solar development occur in the East Mormon Mountain SEZ, grazing
40 would be excluded from the areas developed, as provided for in the BLM grazing regulations
41 (43 CFR Part 4100). The regulations provide for reimbursement of permittees for their portion
42 of the value for any range improvements in the area removed from the grazing allotment. The
43 impact of this change in the grazing permits would depend on several factors, including (1) how
44 much of an allotment the permittee might lose to development, (2) how important the specific
45 land lost is to the permittee’s overall operation, and (3) the amount of actual forage production
46 that would be lost by the permittee.
47

1 Since only about 1% of the Summit Spring allotment overlaps the SEZ, the loss of this
2 small amount of area is anticipated to have no impact on this allotment, and any loss of use likely
3 could be absorbed elsewhere in the allotment.
4

5 Quantification of the impact on the Gourd Springs allotment would require, at a
6 minimum, consideration of the three factors identified above; however, the allotment has already
7 been reduced in size by about 40%, and the area that would be occupied by the SEZ includes
8 most of the rest of the best grazing land left in the allotment. It is likely that with the loss of the
9 land in SEZ, the allotment would cease to be a feasible economic operation and the total
10 authorized grazing use of 3,458 AUMs would be lost. This would be a large impact on the
11 grazing permittee.
12

13 On the basis of an assumed loss of a total of 3,458 AUMs, as described above, the impact
14 on livestock use within the Caliente Field Office from solar development of the SEZ would be
15 small. This conclusion is based on the comparison of the loss of the 3,458 AUMs with the total
16 BLM-authorized AUMs in the field office for grazing year 2009, which totaled 54,199 AUMs
17 (BLM 2009b). This loss is 6.4% of the total authorized use.
18
19

20 **Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**

21

22 Because of the availability of a major transmission line adjacent to the SEZ, and
23 assuming that additional project-specific analysis would be done for construction of such
24 infrastructure, no assessment of the impacts of electrical transmission facilities outside of the
25 SEZ was conducted (see Section 11.5.1.2).
26

27 Although a new road would be required to connect to I-15, the assumed road alignment
28 would pass through the portion of the Gourd Springs allotment that was removed from grazing in
29 2008. Thus there would be no additional impacts on livestock grazing from this construction.
30
31

32 ***11.5.4.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

33

34 No SEZ-specific design features are proposed to mitigate impacts on livestock grazing.
35 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as
36 required under BLM's Solar Energy Program would provide mitigation for some identified
37 impacts. The exception would be the potential adverse economic impacts on the Gourd Springs
38 permittee.
39
40

41 **11.5.4.2 Wild Horses and Burros**

42
43

44 ***11.5.4.2.1 Affected Environment***

45

46 Section 4.4.2 discusses wild horses (*Equus caballus*) and burros (*E. asinus*) that occur
47 within the six-state study area. Nearly 100 wild horse and burro herd management areas (HMAs)

1 occur within Nevada (BLM 2009c). Two of the Nevada HMAs and one Utah HMA are partially
2 located within the 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region for the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ
3 (Figure 11.5.4.2-1). None of the HMAs occur within the SEZ or indirect impact area of the SEZ.
4 The Gold Butte HMA is the closest HMA. It occurs about 32 mi (51.5 km) south of the SEZ
5 (Figure 11.5.4.2-1).

6
7 In addition to the HMAs managed by the BLM, the USFS has wild horse and burro
8 territories in Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah and is the lead management
9 agency that administers 37 of the territories (Giffen 2009; USFS 2007). All of the territories are
10 more than 50 mi (80 km) from the East Mormon Mountain SEZ.

11 12 13 ***11.5.4.2.2 Impacts***

14
15 Because the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is about 32 mi (51.5 km) or more
16 from any wild horse and burro HMA managed by the BLM and more than about 50 mi (80 km)
17 from any wild horse and burro territory administered by the USFS, solar energy development
18 within the SEZ would not directly or indirectly affect wild horses and burros that are managed by
19 these agencies.

20 21 22 ***11.5.4.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

23
24 No SEZ-specific design features for solar development within the proposed East Mormon
25 Mountain SEZ would be necessary to protect or minimize impacts on wild horses and burros.
26

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1 **11.5.5 Recreation**

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3
4 **11.5.5.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The site of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is accessible via a 10- to 15-mi
7 (16- to 24-km) drive on dirt and gravel roads, depending on the chosen access route. The SEZ is
8 generally flat, although it is dissected by several well-developed washes and has a small number
9 of roads and trails (including the dry wash bottoms) that provide access into the area. Although
10 there are no recreation data available, the area appears to offer limited opportunities for
11 recreation with backcountry driving, dispersed camping, and hunting being the most likely uses.
12 OHV use in the SEZ and surrounding area has been designated as “Limited to travel on
13 designated roads and trails” (BLM 2008a).

14
15
16 **11.5.5.2 Impacts**

17
18
19 ***11.5.5.2.1 Construction and Operations***

20
21 Recreational use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ developed for solar
22 energy production, and existing recreational users would be displaced. The area is not a major
23 recreation destination, and it is not anticipated that the loss of recreational opportunities would
24 be significant. The area contains a few dirt roads and dry washes that may be designated as open
25 to travel that access areas in and around the SEZ, and the potential exists for these roads to be
26 closed because of solar development. If open OHV routes within the SEZ were identified during
27 project-specific analyses, these routes would be re-designated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for
28 more details on how routes coinciding with proposed solar facilities would be treated). This
29 could adversely affect access to undeveloped areas within the SEZ and areas outside the SEZ.
30 Whether recreational visitors would continue to use any remaining undeveloped portions of the
31 SEZ, or how the use of areas surrounding the SEZ would change, is unknown.

32
33 The boundary of the Mormon Mountains WA is within 2 to 3.5 mi (3 to 6 km) of the
34 SEZ, and solar development within the SEZ would be very visible from about 15,309 acres
35 (62 km²), or 9.7%, of the WA. Whether the presence of solar development in the SEZ would
36 affect recreational use of these areas is unknown, but about 3,143 acres (12.7 km²), or about 2%,
37 of the area is located within 0 to 5 mi (0 to 8 km), the most sensitive visual zone surrounding the
38 proposed SEZ. It is anticipated that some wilderness visitors to this area of the WA may be
39 displaced and there is potential for wilderness recreation use to be reduced within the
40 15,309 acres (62 km²) with visibility of the SEZ.

41
42
43 ***11.5.5.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***

44
45 Because of the availability of an existing transmission line, no additional construction of
46 transmission facilities was assessed. Should additional transmission lines be required outside of

1 the SEZ, there may be additional recreation impacts. See Section 11.5.1.2 for the development
2 assumptions underlying this analysis.

3
4 The 11 mi (18 km) of new or upgraded road connecting the SEZ to I-15 would be visible
5 from portions of the Morman Mountains WA, but because of the small size of the road and the
6 distance from the SEZ, it is not anticipated that there would be any significant additional impact
7 on wilderness characteristics caused by road construction and use.
8

9 10 **11.5.5.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

11
12 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
13 as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program would provide some mitigation for some
14 identified impacts. The exceptions may be the loss of recreation use within developed portions of
15 the SEZ and in up to 15,309 acres (62 km²) of the Morman Mountains WA.
16

17 A proposed design feature specific to the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ includes
18 the following:

- 19
20 • Design features for visual resources as described in Section 11.5.14 should be
21 applied to minimize adverse impacts on wilderness recreation use.
22
23

1 **11.5.6 Military and Civilian Aviation**

2
3
4 **11.5.6.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located under two MTRs. One of these is a
7 visual flight route that can be used down to 200 ft (61 m) AGL, and the other is an instrument
8 route that can be used down to 400 ft (122 m) AGL. The area is located 5 mi (8 km) east of the
9 very large Military Operating Area that extends across southern Nevada just north of Las Vegas.
10 The SEZ is also located within a zone identified in BLM land records as a mandatory DoD
11 Consultation Area.

12
13 The nearest public airport is in Mesquite, Nevada, about 12 mi (19 km) southeast of the
14 SEZ, which does not have scheduled commercial passenger service.

15
16
17 **11.5.6.2 Impacts**

18
19 The military has indicated that solar technologies with structures higher than 200 ft
20 (61 m) AGL would intrude into military airspace and would present safety concerns for military
21 aircraft use of the airspace.

22
23 The Mesquite Airport is located far enough away from the proposed SEZ that there
24 would be no impact on airport operations.

25
26
27 **11.5.6.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

28
29 No SEZ specific design features are proposed. The programmatic design features
30 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, would require early coordination with the DoD
31 to identify and mitigate, if possible, potential impacts on the use of MTRs.
32

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1 **11.5.7 Geologic Setting and Soil Resources**

2
3
4 **11.5.7.1 Affected Environment**

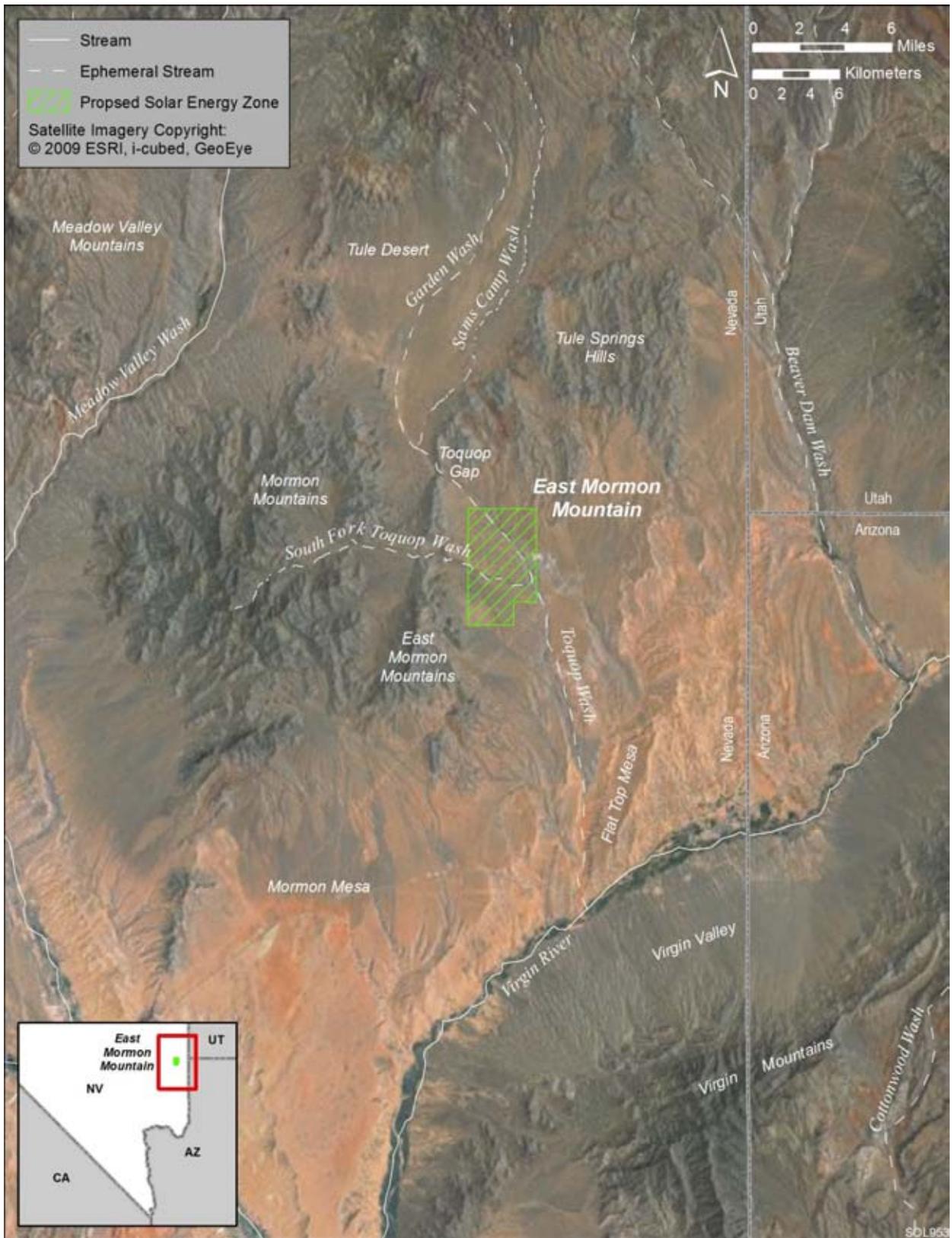
5
6
7 **11.5.7.1.1 Geologic Setting**

8
9
10 **Regional Setting**

11
12 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located along the northern edge of the
13 Virgin River depression, a large structural basin within the Basin and Range physiographic
14 province in southeastern Nevada. The depression is predominantly in Nevada but extends into
15 Utah and Arizona to the east. It is bounded on the northwest by the Mormon and East Mormon
16 Mountains and Tule Spring Hills and on the northeast by the Beaver Dam Mountains (in Utah
17 and Arizona). The Muddy Mountains and Black Mountains are to the southwest; the Southern
18 Virgin Mountains and Virgin Mountains (Arizona) are to the southeast. The basin is bisected by
19 the Virgin River, a tributary of the Colorado River, which flows to the southwest toward Lake
20 Mead (Figure 11.5.7.1-1). The Virgin River depression extends across Arizona, Nevada, and
21 Utah and is about 371,000 acres (1,500 km²) in area. It is divided by a north-northeast trending
22 buried ridge into two deep basins—the Mormon basin, to the east (below Mormon Mesa), and
23 the Mesquite basin, to the west (below the town of Mesquite). The East Mormon Mountain SEZ
24 sits above the northern edge of the Mesquite basin, an east-tilting half graben bounded by normal
25 faults to the east, southeast, and west. The basin contains as much as 3.7 mi (6 km) of
26 sedimentary (basin) fill above a sequence of Mesozoic and Paleozoic sedimentary rocks and
27 Precambrian basement rocks (Bohannon et al. 1993; Forrester 2009).

28
29 Basin fill consists of the Muddy Creek Formation, the Red Sandstone unit, and the Horse
30 Spring Formation (all Tertiary). The Muddy Creek Formation is the oldest and thickest unit that
31 crops out in the Mesquite basin; its composition is laterally variable, but typically comprises a
32 basal conglomerate unit overlain by a conglomerate bed of the Toquop Wash, siltstone and
33 claystone, and an upper conglomerate unit (as well as minor evaporites and basalt flows); it
34 constitutes an important producing aquifer in the region. Seismic studies indicate that the Muddy
35 Creek Formation is up to 0.6 to 1.2 mi (1 to 2 km) deep in the Mesquite basin. It unconformably
36 overlies the rocks of the Red Sandstone unit and the Lovell Wash Member of the Horse Spring
37 Formation (Bohannon et al. 1993; Langenheim et al. 2000; Dixon and Katzer 2002).

38
39 Exposed sediments near the proposed SEZ consist mainly of modern alluvial and
40 colluvium deposits (Qa) and tuffaceous sedimentary rocks of Tertiary age (Ts) (Muddy Creek
41 Formation [Crafford 2007]) (Figure 11.5.7.1-2). The surrounding mountains are composed
42 predominantly of Paleozoic carbonates (limestone and dolomite) and Mesozoic continental and
43 marine deposits of siltstone, sandstone, and limestone. The oldest rocks in the region are the
44 Precambrian metamorphic rocks (Xm) exposed in the East Mormon Mountains to the south of
45 the proposed SEZ.



1

2 **FIGURE 11.5.7.1-1 Physiographic Features of the East Mormon Mountain Region**

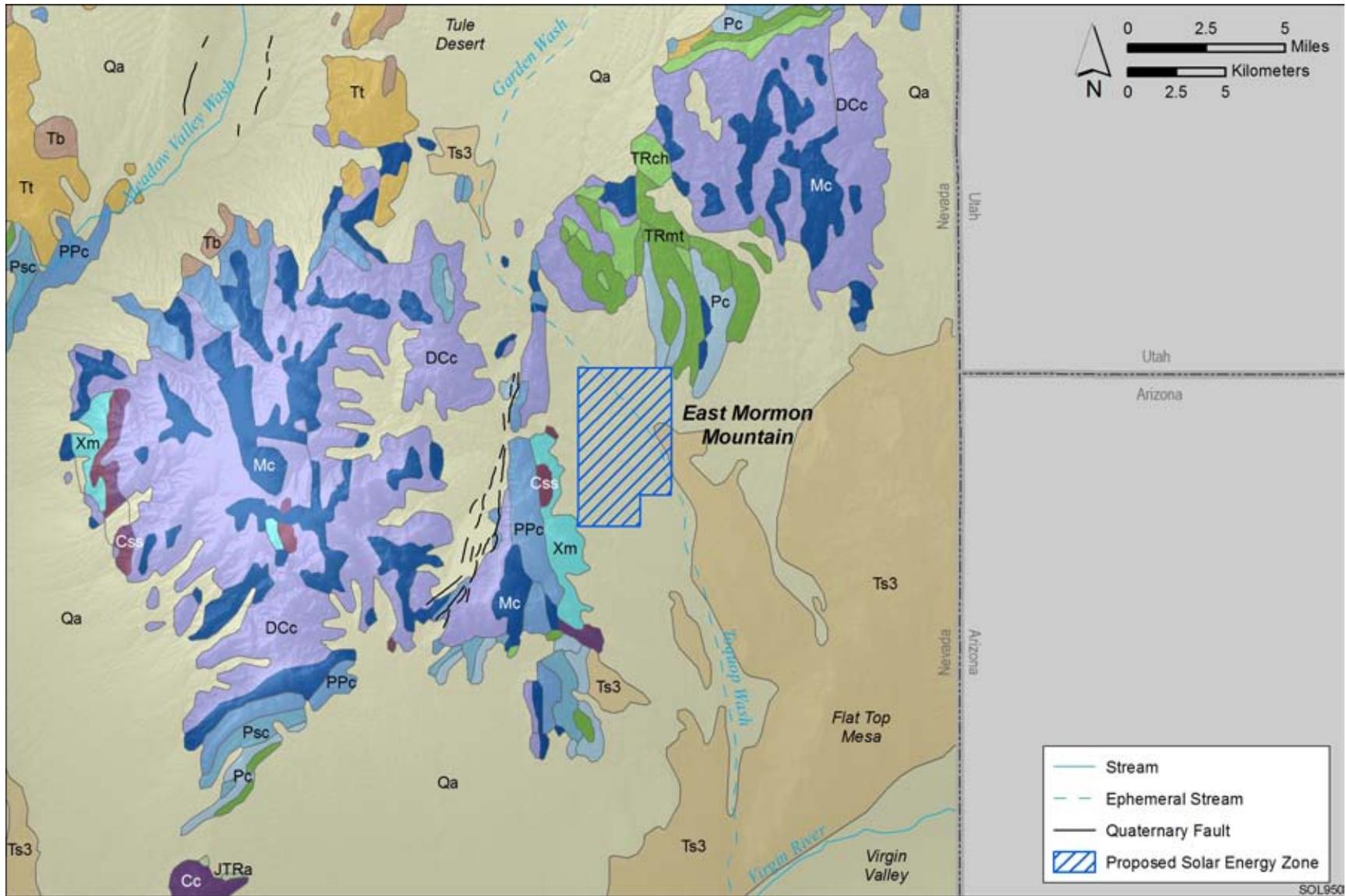


FIGURE 11.5.7.1-2 Geologic Map of the East Mormon Mountain Region (Ludington et al. 2007; Stewart and Carlson 1978)

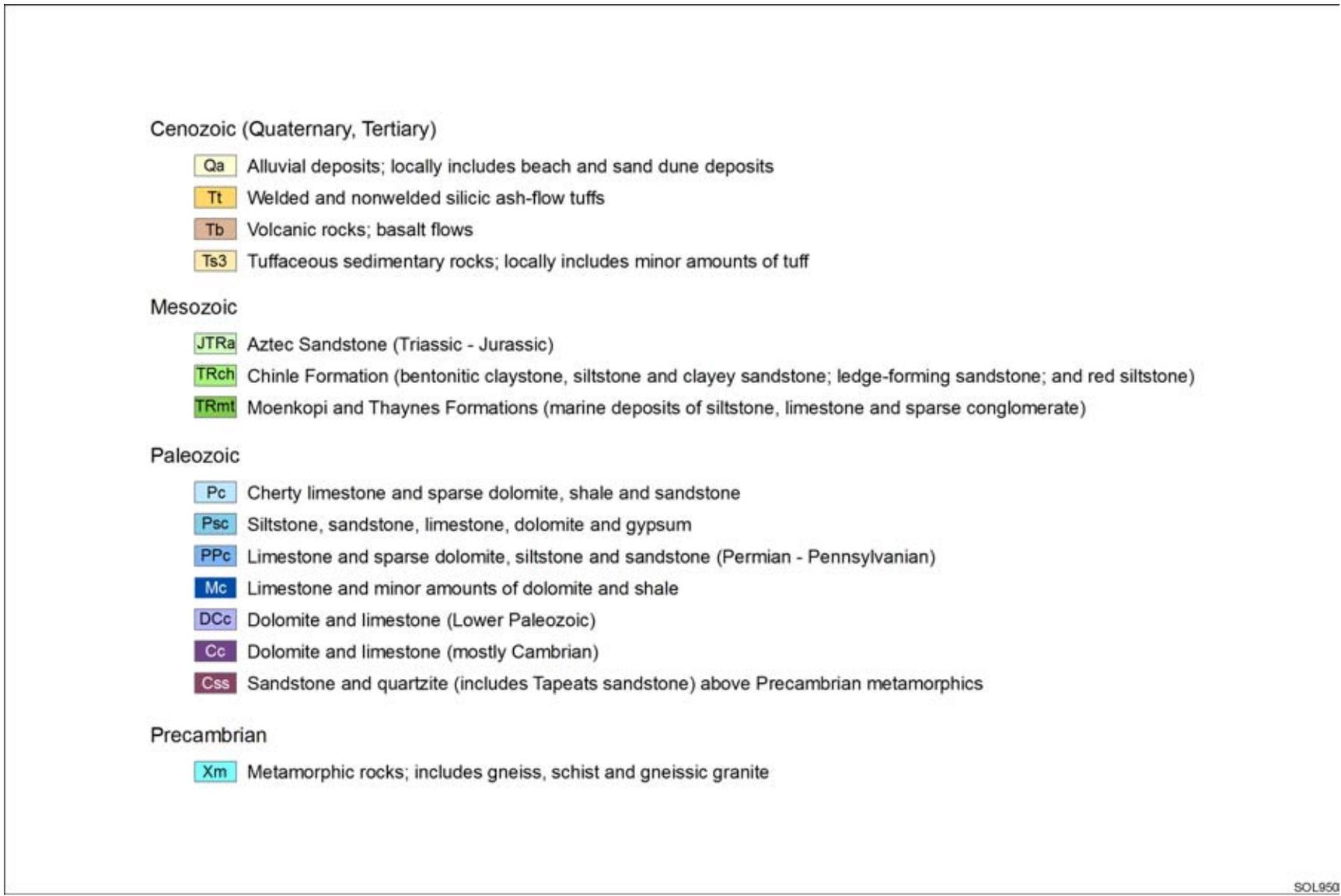


FIGURE 11.5.7.1-2 (Cont.)

1 **Topography**
2

3 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in the Mesquite basin (within the
4 northern part of the Virgin River depression), just east of the East Mormon Mountains and south
5 of Tule Springs Hills (Figure 11.5.7.1-3). Its terrain slopes gently to the southeast, generally
6 following the course of the Toquop Wash. Elevations range from greater than 2,800 ft (850 m)
7 along the western boundary (toward the base of the East Mormon Mountains) to about 2,405 ft
8 (730 m) at the southeastern end where the South Fork Toquop Wash and Toquop Wash merge
9 and exit the SEZ.
10

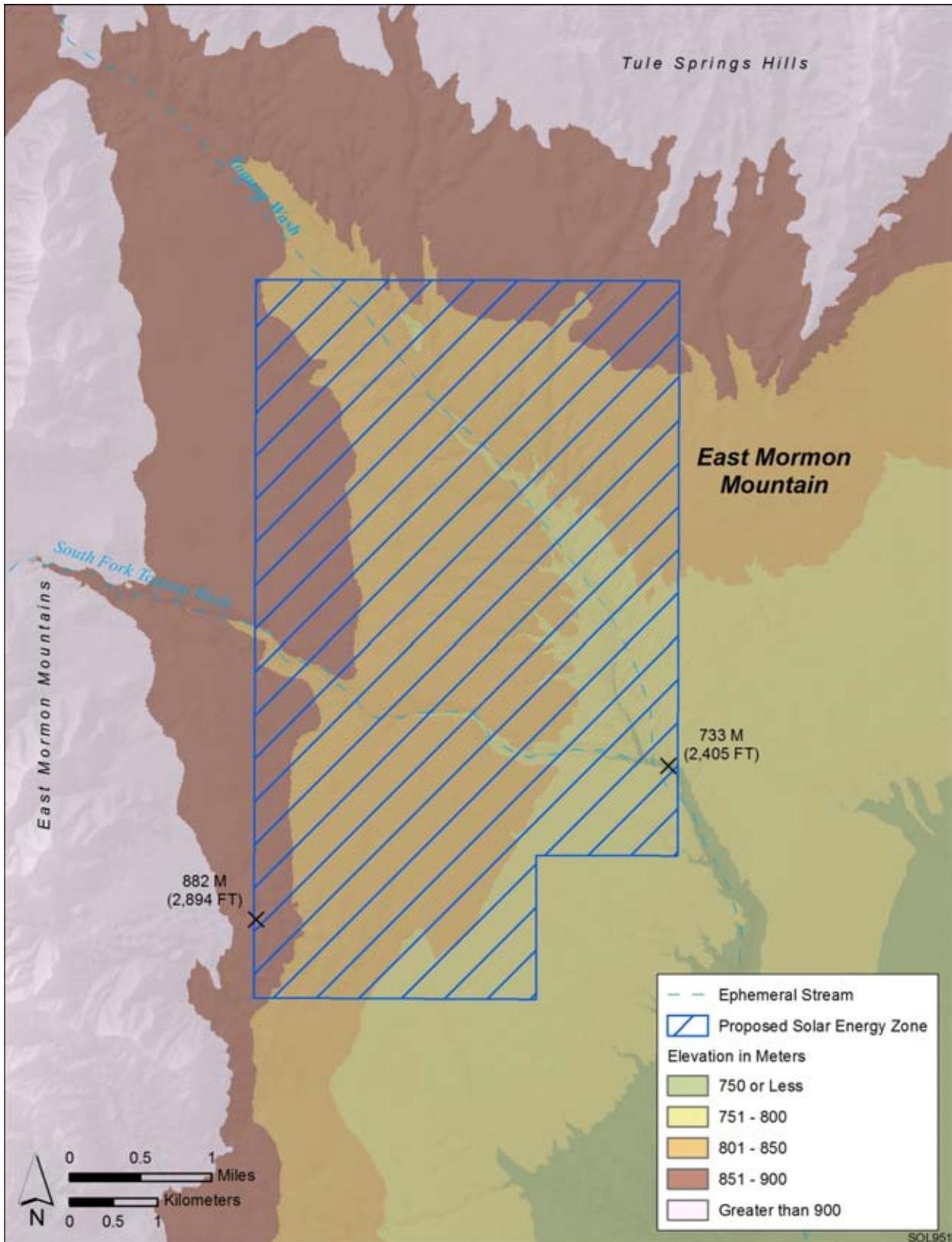
11 **Geologic Hazards**
12

13 The types of geologic hazards that could potentially affect solar project sites and
14 their mitigation are discussed in Section 5.7.3. The following sections provide a preliminary
15 assessment of these hazards at the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Solar project
16 developers may need to conduct a geotechnical investigation to identify and assess geologic
17 hazards locally to better identify facility design criteria and site-specific mitigation measures to
18 minimize their risk.
19

20
21 **Seismicity.** The southeastern corner of Lincoln County lies immediately south of the
22 Southern Nevada Seismic Belt (also called the Pahrnagat Shear Zone), a south-southwest-
23 trending zone of seismic activity characterized mainly by background earthquakes
24 (i.e., earthquakes not associated with surface expression) (dePolo and dePolo 1999). Although
25 the region is seismically active, there are no Quaternary faults within or immediately adjacent to
26 the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The nearest Quaternary fault is the Carp Road fault,
27 a north-striking fault that occurs along the western edge of the East Mormon Mountains a few
28 miles west of the SEZ. A series of discontinuous faults making up the Littlefield Mesa fault
29 system is located in Arizona about 15 mi (23 km) to the southeast (Figure 11.5.7.1-4).
30

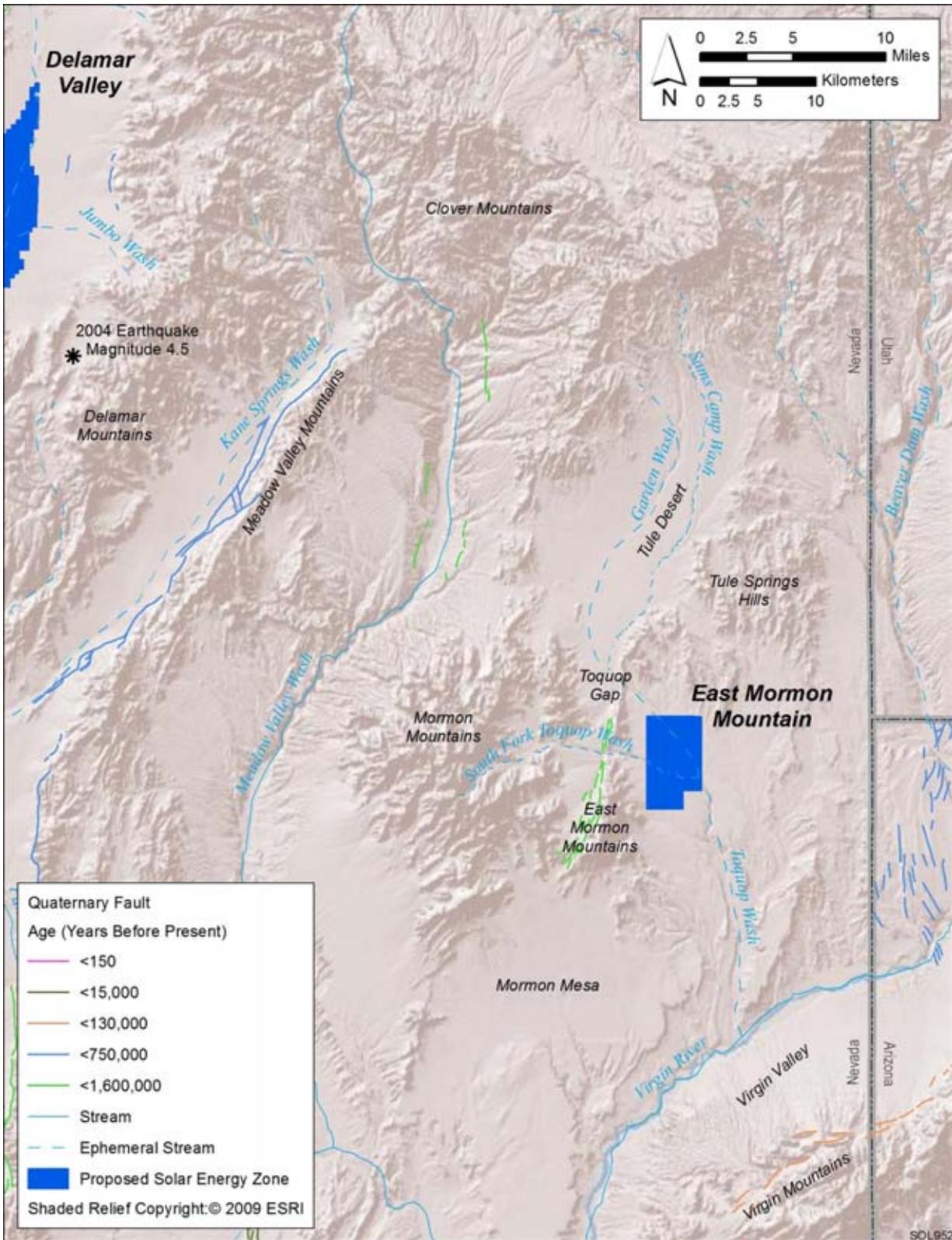
31
32 The Carp Road fault is a normal fault that forms an abrupt boundary between the down-
33 dropped block to the west and the east-tilting block of the East Mormon Mountains to the east.
34 No detailed field studies of the fault have been made, but maps based on aerial photos show
35 discontinuous fault traces expressed as scarps on surficial deposits and erosional surfaces of
36 Quaternary age along the mountain base. However, these studies do not provide sufficient
37 stratigraphic detail to constrain the date of the most recent movement along the fault more
38 precisely than within the past 1.6 million years. Slip rates along the fault are estimated to be less
39 than 0.2 mm/yr (Anderson 1998).
40

41 The Littlefield Mesa faults consist of a group of short, north-striking faults that transect
42 upper Pliocene to middle Pleistocene basin floor sediments and river gravels to the southeast of
43 the East Mormon Mountain SEZ, placing the most recent movement along the faults at less than
44 750,000 years ago. Scarps are readily seen in the field, showing vertical displacements that range
45 from 30 to 120 ft (10 to 36 m). Slip rates along the faults are estimated to be less than 0.2 mm/yr
46 (Pearthree 1997).



1

2 **FIGURE 11.5.7.1-3 General Terrain of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ**



1

2

3

4

FIGURE 11.5.7.1-4 Quaternary Faults in the East Mormon Mountain Region (USGS and NBMG 2010; USGS 2010a)

1 Several other inactive faults may occur near or within the proposed East Mormon
2 Mountain SEZ, including the Toquop Wash fault, which parallels the course of the Toquop Wash
3 near the site. This fault is not listed in the USGS Quaternary fault and fold database, but appears
4 as an inferred fault on the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology online Quaternary faults
5 interactive map (dePolo et al. 2009).
6

7 From June 1, 2000, to May 31, 2010, 64 earthquakes were recorded within a 61-mi
8 (100-km) radius of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (USGS 2010a). The largest
9 earthquake during that period occurred on May 16, 2004. It was located about 40 mi (60 km) to
10 the northwest of the SEZ in the Gregerson Basin (near the Delamar Mountains) and registered a
11 Richter scale magnitude¹ (ML) of 4.5 (Figure 11.5.7.1-4). During this period, 36 (56%) of the
12 recorded earthquakes within a 61-mi (100-km) radius of the SEZ had magnitudes greater than
13 3.0; none were greater than 4.5 (USGS 2010a). The most significant earthquake in the region
14 occurred on September 22, 1996, near Caliente, Nevada, about 45 mi (72 km) to the north-
15 northeast of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ; it registered a magnitude of 6.1 (von Seggern and
16 Brune 2000).
17
18

19 **Liquefaction.** The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ lies in an area where the peak
20 horizontal acceleration with a 10% probability of exceedance in 50 years is between 0.07 and
21 0.08 g. Shaking associated with this level of acceleration is generally perceived as moderate;
22 however, the potential damage to structures is light (USGS 2008). Given the low intensity of
23 ground shaking estimated for the area and the low incidence of historical seismicity in the region,
24 the potential for liquefaction in sediments within and around the SEZ is likely to be low.
25
26

27 **Volcanic Hazards.** Several calderas in southern Nevada are the sources of voluminous
28 and widespread Tertiary volcanic deposits throughout the region. These include the Indian Peak
29 caldera complex to the northeast of Delamar Valley, between the Highland Range and the
30 Nevada–Utah border; the Caliente caldera complex, to the north, in the northern Delamar and
31 Clover Mountains and extending into western Utah; the smaller Kane Springs Wash caldera in
32 the southern Delamar Mountains; and the Central Nevada caldera complex to the northwest of
33 Delamar Valley (Scott et al. 1992). Tertiary volcanism overlaps periods of extension in southern
34 Nevada and occurred as recently as 2.6 million years ago (late Pliocene) (Noble 1972); however,
35 there is no evidence of more recent volcanic activity associated with these complexes.
36

37 The East Mormon Mountain region is located about 80 mi (130 km) due east of the
38 southwestern Nevada volcanic field, which consists of volcanic rocks (tuffs and lavas) of the
39 Timber Mountain-Oasis Valley caldera complex and Silent Canyon and Black Mountain
40 calderas. The area has been studied extensively because of its proximity to the NTS and Yucca
41 Mountain repository. Two types of fields are present in the region: (1) large-volume, long-lived

¹ Richter scale magnitude (ML) was the original magnitude defined by Richter and Gutenberg for local earthquakes in 1935. It was based on the maximum amplitude recorded on a Wood-Anderson torsion seismograph but is currently calculated for earthquakes with magnitudes ranging from 2 to 6, using modern instruments with adjustments (USGS 2010b).

1 fields with a range of basalt types associated with more silicic volcanic rocks produced by
2 melting of the lower crust, and (2) small-volume fields formed by scattered basaltic scoria cones
3 during brief cycles of activity, called rift basalts because of their association with extensional
4 structural features. The basalts of the region typically belong to the second group; examples
5 include the basalts of Silent Canyon and Sleeping Butte (Byers et al. 1989; Crowe et al. 1983).
6

7 The oldest basalts in the region were erupted during the waning stages of silicic
8 volcanism in the southern Great Basin in the Late Miocene and are associated with silicic
9 volcanic centers like Dome Mountain (the first group). Rates of basaltic volcanic activity in
10 the region have been relatively constant but generally low. Basaltic eruptions occurred from
11 1.7 million to 700,000 years ago, creating the cinder cones within Crater Flat (Stuckless and
12 O’Leary 2007). The most recent episode of basaltic eruptions occurred at the Lathrop Wells
13 Cone complex about 80,000 years ago, a few miles east of the proposed Amargosa SEZ
14 (Stuckless and O’Leary 2007; see Section 11.1.7). There has been no silicic volcanism in the
15 region in the past 5 million years. Current silicic volcanic activity occurs entirely along the
16 margins of the Great Basin (Crowe et al. 1983).
17

18 Crowe et al. (1983) determined that the annual probability of a volcanic event for the
19 region is very low (3.3×10^{-10} to 4.7×10^{-8}), similar to the probability of 1.7×10^{-8} calculated
20 for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository (Cline et al. 2005). The volcanic risk in the region is
21 associated only with basaltic eruptions; the risk of more explosive silicic volcanism is negligible.
22 Perry (2002) cites new hypotheses and geologic data that point to a possible increase in the
23 recurrence rate (and thus the probability of disruption) of volcanism in the region. These include
24 hypotheses of anomalously high strain rate episodes in the region and the presence of a regional
25 mantle hot spot; and new aeromagnetic data that suggest as many as 12 previously unrecognized
26 volcanoes may be buried in the alluvial-filled basins in the region.
27
28

29 ***Slope Stability and Land Subsidence.*** The incidence of rock falls and slope failures can
30 be moderate to high along mountain fronts and can present a hazard to facilities on the relatively
31 flat terrain of valley floors such as the Virgin River Valley, if they are located at the base of steep
32 slopes. The risk of rock falls and slope failures decreases toward the flat valley center.
33

34 No land subsidence monitoring has taken place in the East Mormon Mountain region to
35 date; however, earth fissures have been documented in the Las Vegas Valley around Las Vegas,
36 about 70 mi (110 km) southwest of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The fissures are
37 likely the result of land subsidence caused by compaction of unconsolidated alluvial sediments
38 due to groundwater withdrawal. Spatial distribution of fissures in the valley suggests that fissures
39 are preferentially located near and along Quaternary faults, with 80% of fissures within 1,150 ft
40 (350 m) of a known fault. The maximum subsidence measured for the period between 1963 and
41 1987 was about 5 ft (1.5 m). Since then, subsidence rates have declined by as much as 50 to
42 80%. The reduction in subsidence rates has been attributed to the effects of the artificial recharge
43 program (using water from Lake Mead) started in the 1990s, which has generally increased water
44 levels in the region (Bell et al. 2002; Burbey 2002; Galloway et al. 1999).
45
46

1 **Other Hazards.** Other potential hazards at the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ
2 include those associated with soil compaction (restricted infiltration and increased runoff),
3 expanding clay soils (destabilization of structures), and hydro-compactable or collapsible soil
4 (settlement). Disturbance of soil crusts and desert pavement on soil surfaces may increase the
5 likelihood of soil erosion by wind.
6

7 Alluvial fan surfaces, such as those found in the valley surrounding the Toquop Wash,
8 can be the sites of damaging high-velocity flash floods and debris flows during periods of intense
9 and prolonged rainfall. The nature of the flooding and sedimentation processes (e.g., stream flow
10 versus debris flow) will depend on the specific morphology of the fan (National Research
11 Council 1996). Section 11.5.9.1.1 provides further discussion of flood risks within the East
12 Mormon Mountain SEZ.
13

14 **11.5.7.1.2 Soil Resources**

15
16 Soils within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are predominantly fine
17 sandy loams of the Mormon Mesa association, which covers about 84% of the site
18 (Figure 11.5.7.1-5). Soil map units within the SEZ are described in Table 11.5.7.1-1. These level
19 to gently sloping soils are derived from alluvium from sedimentary rocks (mainly carbonates).
20 They are predominantly shallow (above a hardpan layer) and well drained. Most of the soils on
21 the site have a high surface runoff potential and moderately rapid permeability. The natural soil
22 surface is suitable for roads, with a slight to moderate erosion hazard when used as roads or
23 trails. The water erosion potential is low for all soils at the site. The susceptibility to wind
24 erosion is moderate for most soils, with as much as 86 tons (78 metric tons) of soil eroded by
25 wind per acre (4,000 m²) each year (NRCS 2010). Biological soil crusts and desert pavement
26 have not been documented within the SEZ, but may be present.
27

28
29 None of the soils within the East Mormon Mountain SEZ are rated as hydric.² Flooding
30 is not likely for soils at the site (occurring less than once in 500 years). None of the soils are
31 classified as prime or unique farmland (NRCS 2010).
32

33 **11.5.7.2 Impacts**

34
35 Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities
36 (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase of a solar
37 project. These include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by
38 wind, soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. Such
39 impacts are common to all utility-scale solar energy developments in varying degrees and are
40 described in more detail for the four phases of development in Section 5.7 1.
41

42
43 Because impacts on soil resources result from ground-disturbing activities in the project
44 area, soil impacts would be roughly proportional to the size of a given solar facility, with larger

² A hydric soil is a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding (NRCS 2010).

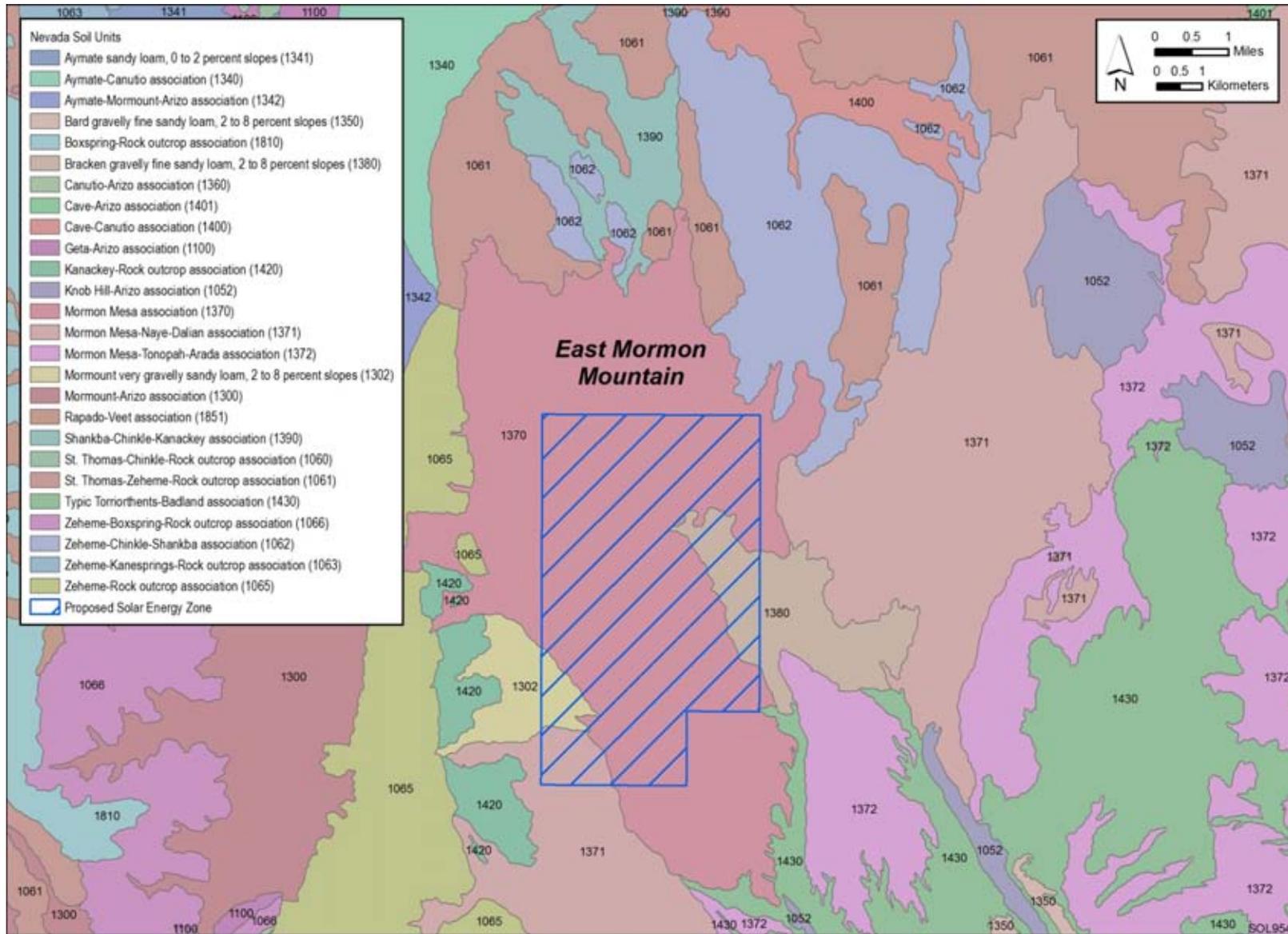


FIGURE 11.5.7.1-5 Soil Map for the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (NRCS 2008)

TABLE 11.5.7.1-1 Summary of Soil Map Units within the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area ^c (% of SEZ)
1370	Mormon Mesa association (0 to 2% slopes)	Low (0.28)	Moderate (WEG 3) ^d	Level to nearly level fine sandy loams on fan remnants and mesas. Parent material consists of alluvium derived from limestone and dolomite. Shallow (to a petrocalcic or hardpan horizon) and well drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	7,506 (84)
1380	Bracken gravelly fine sandy loam (2 to 8% slopes)	Low (0.20)	Moderate (WEG 4)	Gently sloping soils on hills and pediments. Parent material is residuum and colluvium (landslide debris) from gypsiferous sedimentary rocks. Deep and somewhat excessively drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	1,814 (8)
1371	Mormon Mesa-Nay-Dalian association (4 to 8% slopes)	Low (0.15)	Moderate (WEG 4)	Consists of about 45% Mormon Mesa gravelly fine sand, 25% Naye gravelly fine sandy loam, and 15% Dalian very gravelly fine sandy loam. Gently sloping soils on inset fans and fan remnants. Parent material is alluvium derived from limestone and dolomite. Moderately deep and well drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and moderate permeability. Available water capacity is low to very low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	412 (5)

TABLE 11.5.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area (% of SEZ)
1302	Mormount very gravelly sandy loam (2 to 8% slopes)	Low (0.17)	Moderate (WEG 5)	Gently sloping soils on fan piedmont remnants. Parent material consists of alluvium from limestone with minor amounts of volcanic tuffs. Shallow (to a petrocalcic or hardpan horizon) and well drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and moderate permeability. Available water capacity is very low. Slight rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	308 (4)

^a Water erosion potential rates based on soil erosion factor K (whole rock), which indicates the susceptibility of soil to sheet and rill erosion by water. Values range from 0.02 to 0.69 and are provided in parentheses under the general rating; a higher value indicates a higher susceptibility to erosion. Estimates based on the percentage of silt, sand, and organic matter and on soil structure and saturated hydraulic conductivity.

^b Wind erosion potential here is based on the wind erodibility group (WEG) designation: groups 1 and 2, high; groups 3 through 6, moderate; and groups 7 and 8 low (see footnote c for further explanation).

^c To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d WEG = wind erodibility group. WEGs are based on soil texture, content of organic matter, effervescence of carbonates, content of rock fragments, and mineralogy, and also take into account soil moisture, surface cover, soil surface roughness, wind velocity and direction, and the length of unsheltered distance (USDA 2004). Groups range in value from 1 (most susceptible to wind erosion) to 8 (least susceptible to wind erosion). The NRCS provides a wind erodibility index, expressed as an erosion rate in tons per acre per year, for each of the wind erodibility groups: WEGs 3 and 4, 86 tons (78 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year; and WEG 5, 56 tons (51 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year.

Source: NRCS (2010).

1 areas of disturbed soil having a greater potential for impacts than smaller areas (Section 5.7.2).
2 The magnitude of impacts would also depend on the types of components built for a given
3 facility, since some components would involve greater disturbance and would take place over a
4 longer timeframe.

7 **11.5.7.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

8
9 No SEZ-specific design features were identified for soil resources at the proposed East
10 Mormon Mountain SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features described under both
11 Soils and Air Quality in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
12 Program, would reduce the potential for soil impacts during all project phases.
13

1 **11.5.8 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)**

2
3
4 **11.5.8.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 As of September 20, 2010, there were no active mining claims located in the proposed
7 East Mormon Mountains SEZ, and there is no history of closed mining claims within the area
8 (BLM and USFS 2010a). The public land within the SEZ was closed to locatable mineral entry
9 in June 2009, pending the outcome of this PEIS. There are no active oil and gas leases within the
10 SEZ, but all of the area has been leased in the past (BLM and USFS 2010b). There are existing
11 non-producing leases adjacent to the eastern border of the SEZ. The area remains open for
12 discretionary mineral leasing for oil and gas and other leasable minerals and for disposal of
13 salable minerals. There is no active or historical geothermal leasing or development in or near
14 the SEZ (BLM and USFS 2010b).

15
16
17 **11.5.8.2 Impacts**

18
19 If the area were identified as a solar energy zone, it would continue to be closed to all
20 incompatible forms of mineral development. For the purpose of this analysis, it was assumed that
21 future development of oil and gas resources, should any be found, would still be possible, since
22 such development could occur with directional drilling from outside the SEZ.

23
24 Since the SEZ does not contain existing or closed mining claims, it was also assumed that
25 there would be no future loss of locatable mineral production.

26
27 The SEZ has had no history of development of geothermal resources. For that reason, it is
28 not anticipated that solar development would not adversely affect geothermal resources.

29
30 The production of common minerals, such as sand and gravel and mineral materials used
31 for road construction or other purposes, might take place in areas not directly developed for solar
32 energy production.

33
34
35 **11.5.8.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

36
37 No SEZ-specific design features are required to protect mineral resources. Implementing
38 the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under
39 BLM's Solar Energy Program would provide adequate mitigation for protection of mineral
40 resources.

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1 **11.5.9 Water Resources**

2
3
4 **11.5.9.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located within the Lower Colorado–Lake
7 Mead subbasin of the Lower Colorado hydrologic region (USGS 2010c) and the Basin and
8 Range physiographic province characterized by intermittent mountain ranges and desert valleys
9 (Planert and Williams 1995). The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located on top of an
10 alluvial fan at the base of the East Mormon Mountains and Tule Springs Mountains within the
11 Lower Virgin River Valley. There are significant surface drainage patterns throughout the
12 proposed SEZ, as evident from aerial photos and topographic maps. Surface elevations within
13 the proposed SEZ range from 2,410 to 2,890 ft (734 to 881 m) and surface elevations in the
14 surrounding East Mormon Mountains reach more than 4,700 ft (1,400 m) (Figure 11.5.9.1-1).
15 The average annual precipitation is approximately 6 in. (15 cm) in the valley (WRCC 2010a).
16 In the mountain regions, the average annual precipitation is higher, ranging up to 15 in. (38 cm)
17 at the highest elevations (Glancy and Van Denburgh 1969). Pan evaporation rates are estimated
18 to be 85 in./yr (216 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010b), and reference crop
19 evapotranspiration has been estimated at 61 in./yr (155 cm/yr) (Huntington and Allen 2010).
20
21

22 ***11.5.9.1.1 Surface Waters (Including Drainages, Floodplains, and Wetlands)***

23
24 There are no perennial surface water features in the proposed East Mormon Mountain
25 SEZ. The Toquop Wash and the South Fork Toquop Wash are significantly incised ephemeral
26 washes that flow through the proposed SEZ (Figure 11.5.9.1-1). The Toquop Wash is a
27 tributary to the Virgin River, approximately 12 mi (19 km) south of the SEZ. The Virgin River
28 is a tributary to the Colorado River and flows into Lake Mead approximately 24 mi (39 km)
29 downstream of the confluence of the river with Toquop Wash. Glancy and Van Denburgh (1969)
30 estimated that the Toquop Wash contributes approximately 3,000 ac-ft/yr (3.7 million m³/yr) to
31 the Virgin River. The Toquop Wash flows into the Virgin River Valley basin from the Tule
32 Basin, which is adjacent to and to the north of the basin. The Toquop Wash is referred to as the
33 Garden Wash in the Tule basin before it flows through the Toquop Gap and into the Virgin River
34 Valley basin, conveying approximately 1,000 ac-ft/yr (1.2 million m³/yr) of runoff (Figure
35 11.5.9.1-1). Total runoff in the Nevada portion of the Virgin River Valley basin is estimated to
36 be 6,300 ac-ft/yr (7.8 million m³/yr) (Glancy and Van Denburgh 1969). Average surface water
37 inflow in the Virgin River to the Nevada portion of the basin from Arizona is estimated to be
38 160,000 ac-ft/yr (197 million m³/yr) (NDWR 1971). Virgin River mean annual flow between
39 1930 and 2004 at the stream gauge in Littlefield, Arizona, just upstream from the border with
40 Nevada, is 173,000 ac-ft/yr (213 million m³/yr) (USGS 2010d; gauge 09415000). Outflow of
41 the Virgin River to Lake Mead has been estimated at between 80,000 and 140,000 ac-ft/yr
42 (99 million and 170 million m³/yr) (Glancy and Van Denburgh 1969; Virgin Valley Water
43 District 2002).
44

45 The entire area of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located on an alluvial fan
46 at the base of the East Mormon Mountains and Tule Springs Mountains. Several ephemeral

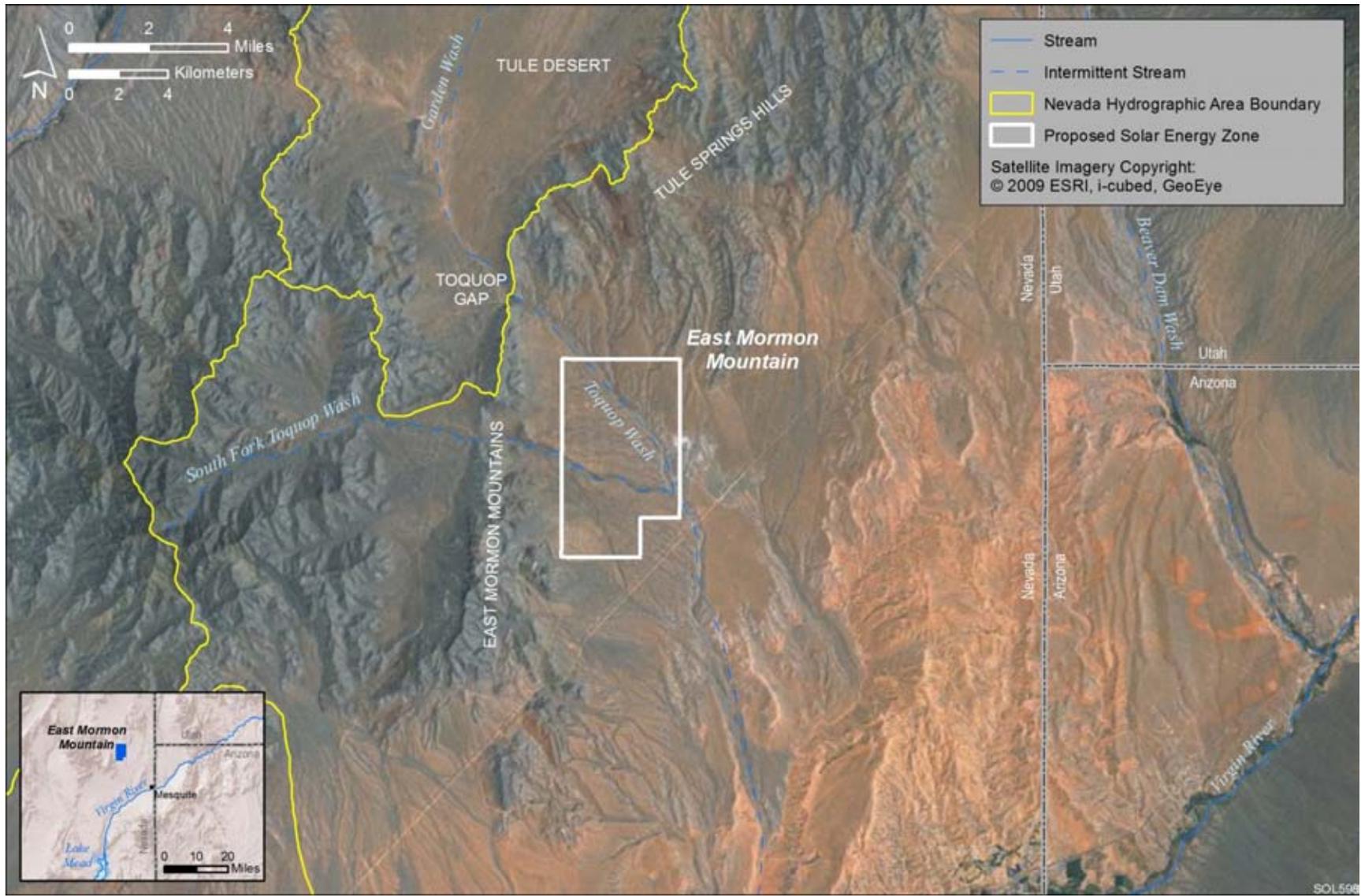


FIGURE 11.5.9.1-1 Surface Water Features near the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

1 drainages are present along the fan (Figure 11.5.9.1-1). Four springs are known to exist near
2 the proposed SEZ. Gourd Spring and Peach Spring originate in the East Mormon Mountains
3 approximately 1 mi (1.6 km) west of the SEZ, and Tule Spring and Abe Spring originate in the
4 Tule Springs Mountains about 2.3 mi (3.7 km) north of the SEZ.

5
6 The NWI has not identified any wetlands on or in the vicinity of the proposed East
7 Mormon Mountain SEZ (USFWS 2009).

8
9 Flood hazards have not been identified in Lincoln County, Nevada (FEMA 2009). During
10 large rainfall events, erosion and sedimentation may occur along Toquop Wash, South Fork
11 Toquop Wash, and the associated alluvial fan within the proposed SEZ. Flooding is very
12 common in all channels in the watershed during large storm events. Flooding was particularly
13 great in 2005 after widespread wildfires in the watershed in the years previous (USACE 2008).

14 15 16 **11.5.9.1.2 Groundwater**

17
18 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located within the Virgin River Valley
19 basin (NDWR 2010a). The Virgin River Valley basin, as defined in Nevada, is part of the Lower
20 Virgin River Valley groundwater basin, which covers an area of approximately 1.2 million acres
21 (4,800 km²) over three states (Arizona, Nevada, and Utah); 770,000 acres (3,100 km²) of the
22 basin are within Nevada (Glancy and Van Denburgh 1969). The mountain ranges surrounding
23 the SEZ are composed of both carbonate and non-carbonate consolidated rocks. Groundwater in
24 the Lower Virgin River Valley basin is primarily found in the basin-fill aquifer, which is
25 composed of unconsolidated gravel, sand, silt, and clay (Glancy and Van Denburgh 1969). The
26 basin-fill Muddy Creek Formation is the primary source of the potable groundwater supply in the
27 basin (Johnson et al. 2002).

28
29 The basin-fill aquifer is underlain by sequences of Paleozoic carbonate rocks (Harrill and
30 Prudic 1998). The basin-fill deposits and carbonate-rock sequences may extend as far as 5 mi
31 (8 km) below the surface near the center of the basin, making it one of the deepest known basins
32 in the region (Glancy and Van Denburgh 1969; Johnson et al. 2002; Virgin Valley Water
33 District, 2002). The Paleozoic carbonate rocks that underlie the basin-fill deposits are thought to
34 be a part of the Virgin River Subregion of the Colorado River Flow System, an interbasin
35 regional-scale carbonate-rock aquifer that flows generally toward the south and terminates at the
36 Virgin River and two regional springs, Rogers and Blue Point Springs, that are in the Lake Mead
37 watershed (Prudic et al. 1995). The Virgin River Subregion of the Colorado River Flow System
38 is a part of a large carbonate-rock province that occurs within approximately one-third of
39 Nevada, a large portion of Utah, and parts of Arizona and California (Harrill and Prudic 1998).
40 In addition, the carbonate-rock aquifer system is thought to be structurally complex in the Virgin
41 River Valley basin, and is discontinuous, highly faulted, and thinned in this area (Dettinger 1992;
42 Virgin Valley Water District 2002). In the vicinity of the SEZ, the thickness of the Paleozoic
43 carbonate-rock sequence is estimated to be approximately 4,000 ft (1,200 m). The Paleozoic
44 carbonate rocks are divided into two parts that are separated by a low-angle thrust fault and a
45 2,000-ft (610-m) layer of Mesozoic rock that contains sequences of less permeable siltstone and
46 shale (Virgin Valley Water District 2002).

1 Flow in the basin-fill aquifer is generally toward the Virgin River The basin-fill aquifer
2 Muddy Creek Formation typically has a low transmissivity of about 1,300 ft²/day (120 m²/day).
3 However, the aquifer is pumped mostly in zones that have been heavily faulted, which have
4 higher transmissivity values of around 20,000 ft²/day (1,800 m²/day) (Johnson et al. 2002).
5 Groundwater recharge from precipitation was estimated by Glancy and Van Denburgh (1969)
6 to be about 9,500 ac-ft/yr (11.7 million m³/yr) within the Lower Virgin River Valley, with
7 approximately 3,600 ac-ft/yr (4.4 million m³/yr) of recharge occurring within the Nevada portion
8 of the basin. Glancy and Van Denburgh (1969) estimated subsurface inflow from the Tule basin
9 to the north to be 2,100 ac-ft/yr (2.6 million m³/yr) and groundwater flow from Arizona to be at
10 least 1,000 ac-ft/yr (1.2 million m³/yr), for a total inflow estimate of 12,600 ac-ft/yr
11 (16 million m³/yr) to the groundwater basin. Using a recharge model specifically designed to
12 estimate recharge in the Great Basin Aquifer system, Flint and others (2004) estimated recharge
13 in the basin to be 32,400 ac-ft/yr (40 million m³/yr). The Virgin Valley Water District (2002)
14 estimated groundwater recharge in basin to be 55,000 ac-ft/yr (440 million m³/yr), using a
15 revised precipitation map along with a new relationship of groundwater recharge from
16 precipitation.

17
18 Evaporation from groundwater in the Nevada portion of basin was estimated by Glancy
19 and Van Denburgh (1969) to be 30,000 ac-ft/yr (37 million m³/yr) and groundwater outflow
20 from the basin into Lake Mead was estimated to be 40,000 ac-ft/yr (49 million m³/yr).
21 DeMeo and others (2008) estimated evapotranspiration in the basin to be 52,000 ac-ft/yr
22 (64 million m³/yr). The Virgin Valley Water District (2002) estimated evapotranspiration in the
23 basin to be 70,000 ac-ft/yr (86 million m³/yr) and groundwater outflow to Lake Mead to be
24 29,000 ac-ft/yr (36 million m³/yr), including 8,000 ac-ft/yr (9.9 million m³/yr) of estimated
25 discharge to Lake Mead from the regional carbonate aquifer system. Groundwater withdrawals
26 are estimated to be 12,000 ac-ft/yr (15 million m³/yr) within the basin (Virgin Valley Water
27 District 2002).

28
29 Some studies have attempted to determine the sustainable yield of the groundwater
30 basin in the Lower Virgin River Valley basin with estimates ranging between 12,600 and
31 40,000 ac-ft/yr (16 million and 49 million m³/yr) (Virgin Valley Water District 2002). However,
32 as discussed in Section 11.5.9.1.3, the NDWR has set the perennial yield at 3,600 ac-ft/yr
33 (4.4 million m³/yr) in the Nevada portion of the Virgin River basin according to the study by
34 Glancy and Van Denburgh (1969) (NDWR 2010a).

35
36 The chemical quality of the water in the Virgin River Valley basin is varied. In the
37 vicinity of the SEZ, the Virgin River Valley basin contains evaporite deposits that lead to poor-
38 quality groundwater in the area (Dettinger 1992; Virgin Valley Water District 2002). TDS
39 concentrations have been measured at between 240 and 10,800 mg/L in the groundwater samples
40 taken within the basin (Virgin Valley Water District 2002). Arsenic concentrations are also high
41 in groundwater, with concentrations ranging from 14 to 53 µg/L. Since the EPA lowered the
42 arsenic drinking water standard to 10 µg/L, the Virgin Valley Water District has constructed
43 five water treatment plants to lower arsenic concentrations to below the MCL (Virgin Valley
44 Water District 2010).

1 **11.5.9.1.3 Water Use and Water Rights Management**

2
3 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Lincoln County were
4 57,100 ac-ft/yr (70 million m³/yr), of which 11% came from surface waters and 89% came from
5 groundwater. The largest water use category was irrigation, at 55,100 ac-ft/yr (68 million m³/yr).
6 Public supply/domestic water uses accounted for 1,300 ac-ft/yr (1.6 million m³/yr), with
7 livestock and mining water uses on the order of 230 ac-ft/yr (280,000 m³/yr) and 450 ac-ft/yr
8 (560,000 m³/yr), respectively (Kenny et al. 2009).
9

10 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Clark County were
11 680,000 ac-ft/yr (839 million m³/yr), of which 83% came from surface waters and 17% came
12 from groundwater. The largest water use category was public supply, at 526,000 ac-ft/yr
13 (649 million m³/yr). Thermoelectric water use accounted for 28,000 ac-ft/yr (34 million m³/yr),
14 with irrigation water use on the order of 17,000 ac-ft/yr (21 million m³/yr) (Kenny et al. 2009).
15

16 The Virgin Valley Water District (2008) reports that groundwater withdrawals for
17 residential use were 2,730 ac-ft (3.4 million m³/yr) and a total groundwater pumpage of
18 7,460 ac-ft (9.2 million m³/yr) in 2007 within the basin. In the Arizona portion of the basin,
19 groundwater withdrawals were reportedly an average of 2,950 ac-ft/yr (3.6 million m³/yr)
20 between 2001 and 2005 (ADWR 2010). It is estimated that a total of 12,000 ac-ft/yr
21 (15 million m³/yr) are withdrawn from the basin as a whole (Virgin Valley Water District 2002).
22

23 All waters in Nevada are the property of the public in the State of Nevada and subject
24 to the laws described in Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapters 532 through 538 (available at
25 <http://leg.state.nv.us/nrs>). The NDWR, led by the State Engineer, is the agency responsible for
26 managing both surface water and groundwater resources, which includes overseeing water right
27 applications, appropriations, and interbasin transfers (NDWR 2010b). The two principle ideas
28 behind water rights in Nevada are the prior appropriations doctrine and the concept of beneficial
29 use. A water right establishes an appropriation amount and date such that more senior water
30 rights have priority over newer water rights. In addition, water rights are treated as both real and
31 personal property, such that water rights can be transferred without affecting the land ownership
32 (NDWR 2010b). Water rights applications (new or transfer of existing) are approved if the water
33 is available to be appropriated, if existing water rights will not be affected, and if the proposed
34 use is not deemed to be harmful to the public interest. If these conditions are satisfied according
35 to the State Engineer, proof of beneficial use of the approved water must be provided within a
36 certain time period, and following that a certificate of appropriation is issued (BLM 2001).
37

38 The NDWR has the authority to designate preferred uses of groundwater in a basin,
39 overriding the prior appropriation doctrine (BLM 2001). The NDWR generally does not grant
40 water rights in a basin that is over-appropriated. However, in basins that may have alternative
41 sources of water, groundwater rights can be temporarily granted in excess of the estimated
42 recharge of the basin. For example, basins that may have access to Colorado River water in the
43 future may be temporarily granted use of groundwater. Those permits may then be revoked at a
44 later date when water becomes available from the Colorado River (BLM 2001). Interbasin
45 transfers of water are possible within Nevada and are regulated by the NDWR (NDWR 2010b).
46

1 In 1980, Virgin River Valley was designated as a groundwater basin by the State
2 Engineer, and no preferred uses were specified (NDWR 1980). In 2007, the State Engineer
3 issued Order 1193 declaring the Virgin River closed to new appropriations of surface water
4 (NDWR 2007). Currently, there are a total of 12,348 ac-ft/yr (15 million m³/yr) of groundwater
5 rights granted by the NDWR within the Virgin River Valley Hydrographic Area, the vast
6 majority of which are for municipal use (NDWR 2010a). An additional 185,340 ac-ft/yr
7 (228 million m³/yr) of groundwater rights have been applied for within the basin and are under
8 consideration by the NDWR, most of which have been requested by the Virgin Valley Water
9 district (NDWR 2010c; Virgin Valley Water District 2010). The NDWR estimates the perennial
10 yield for each groundwater basin as the amount of water that can be economically withdrawn for
11 an indefinite period without depleting the source (NDWR 1999). The NDWR has set the
12 perennial yield of the basin at 3,600 ac-ft/yr (4.4 million m³/yr), based the estimated recharge in
13 the Nevada portion of the basin in the study done by Glancy and VanDenburgh (1969)
14 (NDWR 2010a).

15 16 17 **11.5.9.2 Impacts** 18

19 Potential impacts on water resources related to utility-scale solar energy development
20 include direct and indirect impacts on surface waters and groundwater. Direct impacts occur at
21 the place of origin and at the time of the proposed activity, while indirect impacts occur away
22 from the place of origin or later in time. Impacts on water resources considered in this analysis
23 are the result of land disturbance activities (construction, final developed site plan, and off-site
24 activities such as road and transmission line construction) and water use requirements for solar
25 energy technologies that take place during the four project phases: site characterization,
26 construction, operations, and decommissioning/reclamation. Both land disturbance and
27 consumptive water use activities can affect groundwater and surface water flows, cause
28 drawdown of groundwater surface elevations, modify natural drainage pathways, obstruct natural
29 recharge zones, and alter surface water–wetland–groundwater connectivity. Water quality can
30 also be degraded through the generation of wastewater, chemical spills, increased erosion and
31 sedimentation, and increased salinity (e.g., by the excessive withdrawal from aquifers).

32 33 34 **11.5.9.2.1 Land Disturbance Impacts on Water Resources** 35

36 Impacts related to land disturbance activities are common to all utility-scale solar energy
37 developments, which are described in more detail for the four phases of development in
38 Section 5.9.1; these impacts will be minimized through the implementation of programmatic
39 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Land disturbance activities should be
40 minimized in the vicinity of the incised ephemeral stream channels of the Toquop Wash, the
41 South Fork Toquop Wash, and the incised tributaries to these washes. During large storm events,
42 these channels have the potential to flood and cause sedimentation and erosion issues (note that
43 these streams are suspected to be within the 100-year floodplain, which will have to be
44 determined during the site characterization phase). The entire proposed SEZ is located on top of
45 an alluvial fan containing numerous ephemeral drainages. Disturbances to these ephemeral
46 drainages could cause erosion impacts and disrupt groundwater recharge. In addition, site design

1 and land disturbance activities could potentially alter surface water drainage and sedimentation
2 downstream of the proposed SEZ within the Toquop Wash, which is a tributary to the Virgin
3 River. As such, studies would need to be completed to determine the occurrence of jurisdictional
4 water bodies subject to Clean Water Act Section 404 permitting in areas of proposed
5 development.

8 ***11.5.9.2.2 Water Use Requirements for Solar Energy Technologies***

11 **Analysis Assumptions**

13 A detailed description of the water use assumptions for the four utility-scale solar
14 energy technologies (parabolic trough, power tower, dish engine, and PV systems) is presented
15 in Appendix M. Assumptions regarding water use calculations specific to the proposed East
16 Mormon Mountain SEZ include the following:

- 18 • On the basis of a total area of 8,968 acres (36.2 km²), it is assumed that
19 one solar project would be constructed during the peak construction year;
- 21 • Water needed for making concrete would come from an off-site source;
- 23 • The maximum land disturbance for an individual solar facility during the peak
24 construction year is 3,000 acres (12 km²);
- 26 • Assumptions on individual facility size and land requirements (Appendix M)
27 along with the assumed number of projects and maximum allowable land
28 disturbance, results in the potential to disturb up to 33% of the SEZ total area
29 during the peak construction year; and
- 31 • Water use requirements for hybrid cooling systems are assumed to be on the
32 same order of magnitude as those using dry cooling (see Section 5.9.2.1).

35 **Site Characterization**

37 During site characterization, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust
38 and the workforce potable water supply. Impacts on water resources during this phase of
39 development are expected to be negligible, since activities would be limited in area, extent,
40 and duration; water needs could be met by trucking water in from an off-site source.

43 **Construction**

45 During construction, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust and the
46 workforce potable water supply. Because there are no significant surface water bodies on the

1 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, the water requirements for construction activities are
 2 assumed to be met by either trucking water to the sites or by using on-site groundwater
 3 resources.

4
 5 Water requirements for dust suppression and potable water supply during construction
 6 are shown in Table 11.5.9.2-1 and could be as high as 1,492 ac-ft/yr (1.8 million m³/yr) in the
 7 peak construction year. The assumptions underlying these estimates for each solar energy
 8 technology are described in Appendix M. Groundwater wells would have to yield an estimated
 9 600 to 920 gpm (2,300 to 3,500 L/min) to meet the estimated construction water requirements.
 10 These yields are on the same order of magnitude as large municipal and agricultural production
 11 wells (Harter 2003), so multiple wells may be needed in order to obtain the water requirements.
 12 In addition, up to 74 ac-ft (91,000 m³) of sanitary wastewater generated on-site would need to
 13 be either treated on-site or sent to an off-site facility. The availability of groundwater and
 14 groundwater rights and the impacts of groundwater withdrawal would need to be assessed during
 15 the site characterization phase of a solar development project. Obtaining water from an offsite
 16 source could be necessary for solar development projects.

17
 18 Groundwater quality in the vicinity of the SEZ is known to have elevated concentrations
 19 of TDS and other constituents. If groundwater were to be used for potable supply during
 20 construction, it would need to be tested to verify the quality would comply with drinking water
 21 standards.

22
 23
 24 **Operations**

25
 26 During operations, water would be required for mirror/panel washing, the workforce
 27 potable water supply, and cooling (parabolic trough and power tower only) (Table 11.5.9.2-2).
 28
 29

TABLE 11.5.9.2-1 Estimated Water Requirements during the Peak Construction Year for the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Water use requirements ^a				
Fugitive dust control (ac-ft) ^{b,c}	965	1,447	1,447	1,447
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft)	74	45	19	9
Total water use requirements (ac-ft)	1,039	1,492	1,466	1,457
Wastewater generated				
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft)	74	45	19	9

^a Assumptions of water use for fugitive dust control, potable supply for workforce, and wastewater generation are presented in Table M.9-1 (Appendix M).

^b Fugitive dust control estimation assumes a local pan evaporation rate of 85 in./yr (216 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010b).

^c To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

1 Water needs for cooling are a function of the type of cooling used (dry, hybrid, wet). Further
2 refinements to water requirements for cooling would result from the percentage of time the
3 option was employed (30 to 60% range assumed) and the power of the system. The differences
4 between the water requirements reported in Table 11.5.9.2-2 for the parabolic trough and power
5 tower technologies are attributable to the assumptions of acreage per megawatt. As a result, the
6 water usage for the more energy-dense parabolic trough technology is estimated to be almost
7 twice as large as that for the power tower technology.
8

9 At full build-out capacity, water needs for mirror/panel washing are estimated to range
10 from 40 to 717 ac-ft/yr (49,000 to 880,000 m³/yr), and the workforce potable water supply is
11 estimated to range from 0.9 to 20 ac-ft/yr (1,100 to 25,000 m³/yr). The maximum total water
12 usage during normal operation at full build-out capacity would be greatest for those technologies
13 using the wet-cooling option and is estimated to be as high as 21,543 ac-ft/yr (26 million m³/yr).
14 Water usage for dry-cooling systems would be as high as 2,172 ac-ft/yr (2.7 million m³/yr),
15 approximately a factor of 10 times less than the wet-cooling option. Non-cooled technologies,
16 dish engine and PV systems, require substantially less water at full build-out capacity, at
17 408 ac-ft/yr (500,000 m³/yr) for dish engine and 41 ac-ft/yr (95,000 m³/yr) for PV
18 (Table 11.5.9.2-2). Operations would produce up to 20 ac-ft/yr (50,000 m³/yr) of sanitary
19 wastewater; in addition, for wet-cooled technologies, 226 to 408 ac-ft/yr (280,000 to
20 500,000 m³/yr) of cooling system blowdown water would need to be treated either on- or
21 off-site. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure that treatment ponds are
22 effectively lined in order to prevent any groundwater contamination.
23

24 Groundwater is the primary water resource available for solar energy development at the
25 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. However, obtaining water from an offsite source could
26 be necessary for solar development projects. At full build-out of the SEZ, parabolic trough
27 technologies that use wet cooling would use 2 to 6 times the amount of water of the perennial
28 yield set by the NDWR (2010a). In addition, there are over 185,000 ac-ft/yr (228 million m³/yr)
29 of water rights that have been applied for within the basin and would be considered by the
30 NDWR first before any applications for new water rights or transfer of existing water rights
31 would be considered. Based on the information presented here, wet cooling would not be feasible
32 for full build-out of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ. To the extent possible, facilities using dry
33 cooling should implement water conservation practices to limit water needs.
34
35

36 **Decommissioning/Reclamation**

37

38 During decommissioning/reclamation, all surface structures associated with the solar
39 project would be dismantled, and the site reclaimed to its pre-construction state. Activities and
40 water needs during this phase would be similar to those during the construction phase (dust
41 suppression and potable supply for workers) and may also include water to establish vegetation
42 in some areas. However, the total volume of water needed is expected to be less. Because
43 quantities of water needed during the decommissioning/reclamation phase would be less than
44 those for construction, impacts on surface and groundwater resources also would be less.
45

TABLE 11.5.9.2-2 Estimated Water Requirements during Operations at the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Full build-out capacity (MW) ^{a,b}	1,435	797	797	797
Water use requirements				
Mirror/panel washing (ac-ft/yr) ^{c,d}	717	399	399	40
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft/yr)	20	9	9	0.9
Dry cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	287–1,435	159–797	NA ^f	NA
Wet cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	6,457–20,806	3,587–11,559	NA	NA
Total water use requirements				
Non-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	NA	NA	408	41
Dry-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	1,025–2,172	567–1,205	NA	NA
Wet-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	7,195–21,543	3,995–11,966	NA	NA
Wastewater generated				
Blowdown (ac-ft/yr) ^g	408	226	NA	NA
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft/yr)	20	9	9	0.9

^a Land area for parabolic trough was estimated at 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW); land area for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies was estimated at 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW).

^b Water needs are linearly related to power. Water usage for any other size project can be estimated by using multipliers provided in Table M.9-2 (Appendix M).

^c Value assumes a usage rate of 0.5 ac-ft/yr/MW for mirror washing for parabolic trough, power tower, and dish engine technologies and a rate of 0.05 ac-ft/yr/MW for panel washing for PV systems.

^d To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

^e Dry-cooling value assumes 0.2 to 1.0 ac-ft/yr per MW and wet-cooling value assumes 4.5 to 14.5 ac-ft/yr per MW (range in these values represents 30 and 60% operating times) (DOE 2009).

^f NA = not applicable.

^g Value scaled from 250-MW Beacon Solar project with an annual discharge of 44 gpm (167 L/min) (AECOM 2009). Blowdown estimates are relevant to wet cooling only.

11.5.9.2.3 Off-Site Impacts: Roads and Transmission Lines

The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located approximately 11 mi (18 km) from I-15, and is adjacent to existing transmission lines as described in Section 11.5.1.2. Impacts associated with the construction of roads and transmission lines primarily deal with water use demands for construction, water quality concerns relating to potential chemical spills, and land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology. The extent of the impacts on water resources is proportional to the amount and location of land disturbance needed to connect the proposed SEZ to major roads and existing transmission lines. Water needed for road modification activities (e.g., for soil compaction, dust suppression, and potable supply for workers) could be trucked to

1 the construction area from an off-site source. As a result, water use impacts would be negligible.
2 Impacts on surface water and groundwater quality resulting from spills would be minimized by
3 implementing the mitigation measures described in Section 5.9.3 (e.g., cleaning up spills as soon
4 as they occur). Ground-disturbing activities that have the potential to increase sediment and
5 dissolved solid loads in downstream waters would be conducted following the mitigation
6 measures outlined in Section 5.9.3 to minimize impacts associated with alterations to natural
7 drainage pathways and hydrologic processes.
8
9

10 ***11.5.9.2.4 Summary of Impacts on Water Resources***

11

12 The impacts on water resources associated with developing solar energy at the proposed
13 East Mormon Mountain SEZ are related to land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology,
14 water quality concerns, and water use requirements for the various solar energy technologies.
15 Land disturbance activities can cause localized erosion and sedimentation issues, as well as
16 altering groundwater recharge and discharge processes. The ephemeral stream channels of
17 Toquop Wash, South Fork Toquop Wash, and other ephemeral washes found within the SEZ are
18 likely within the 100-year floodplain. Identifying the 100-year floodplain would be done during
19 the site characterization phase, and areas of the proposed SEZ within the 100-year floodplain
20 should be avoided during solar energy development. In addition, alteration of the surface water
21 drainage pattern off the proposed SEZ could impair the Toquop Wash downstream of the SEZ
22 through sedimentation and erosion, as well as changing the quality or quantity of inflows to the
23 Virgin River from Toquop Wash.
24

25 Impacts related to water use requirements vary depending on the type of solar technology
26 built and, for technologies using cooling systems, the type of cooling (wet, dry, or hybrid) used.
27 Groundwater is the primary water resource available to solar energy facilities in the proposed
28 East Mormon Mountain SEZ. However, obtaining water from an offsite source could be
29 necessary for solar development projects. The estimates of groundwater recharge, discharge, and
30 underflow from adjacent basins suggest that there may not be available groundwater available to
31 support water-intensive technologies, such as those using wet cooling. In addition, there are over
32 185,000 ac-ft/yr (228 million m³/yr) of water rights that have been applied for within the basin
33 and would be considered by the NDWR first before any applications for new water rights or
34 transfer of existing water rights would be considered. Obtaining new water rights or transfer of
35 existing water rights within the Virgin River Valley basin could present challenges for solar
36 development. Based on the information presented here, wet cooling would not be feasible for full
37 build-out of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ. To the extent possible, facilities using dry cooling
38 should implement water conservation practices to limit water needs.
39

40 Groundwater quality in the vicinity of the SEZ is known to have elevated concentrations
41 of TDS and other constituents. If groundwater were to be used for potable supply during
42 construction, it would need to be tested to verify that the quality would comply with drinking
43 water standards.
44
45
46

1 **11.5.9.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
4 as required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program, will mitigate some impacts on water resources.
5 Programmatic design features would focus on coordinating with federal, state, and local agencies
6 that regulate the use of water resources to meet the requirements of permits and approvals
7 needed to obtain water for development, and conducting hydrological studies to characterize the
8 aquifer from which groundwater would be obtained (including drawdown effects, if a new point
9 of diversion is created). The greatest consideration for mitigating water impacts would be in the
10 selection of solar technologies. The mitigation of impacts would be best achieved by selecting
11 technologies with low water demands.
12

13 Proposed design features specific to the East Mormon Mountain SEZ include the
14 following:

- 15 • Water resource analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be
16 feasible, and other technologies should incorporate water conservation
17 measures;
- 18 • Land-disturbance activities should minimize impacts on the ephemeral stream
19 channels found within the SEZ, including but not limited to Toquop Wash and
20 South Fork Toquop Wash, as well as alluvial fan features throughout the SEZ;
- 21 • Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid any areas
22 identified as within a 100-year floodplain or jurisdictional waters;
- 23 • Groundwater rights must be purchased and transferred through coordination
24 with the NDWR and current water rights holders;
- 25 • Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards
26 developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
27 (NDEP 2010);
- 28 • Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in
29 accordance with state standards (NDWR 2006); and
- 30 • Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water
31 quality standards in accordance with the *Nevada Administrative Code*
32 (445A.453-445A.455).
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40

1 **11.5.10 Vegetation**
2

3 This section addresses vegetation that could occur or is known to occur within *the*
4 *potentially affected area* of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The affected area
5 considered in this assessment includes the areas of direct and indirect effects. The area of direct
6 effects is defined as the area that would be physically modified during project development
7 (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur) and includes the SEZ and a 60-ft (18-m)
8 wide portion of an assumed access road corridor. The area of indirect effects was defined as the
9 area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide assumed access
10 road corridor, where ground-disturbing activities would not occur but that could be indirectly
11 affected by activities in the area of direct effects.
12

13 Indirect effects considered in the assessment include effects from surface runoff, dust,
14 and accidental spills from the SEZ, but did not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential
15 degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. This area of
16 indirect effects was identified on the basis of professional judgment and was considered
17 sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be subject to indirect effects. The
18 affected area is the area bounded by the areas of direct and indirect effects. These areas are
19 defined and the impact assessment approach is described in Appendix M.
20

21
22 **11.5.10.1 Affected Environment**
23

24 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located within the Creosotebush–
25 Dominated Basins Level IV ecoregion (EPA 2007), which includes stream terraces, floodplains,
26 alluvial fans, and eroded washes, as well as isolated hills, mesas, and buttes (Bryce et al. 2003).
27 Plant communities are characterized by sparse creosotebush (*Larrea tridentata*), white bursage
28 (*Ambrosia dumosa*), and big galleta grass (*Pleuraphis rigida*); cacti, yucca (*Yucca* sp.), ephedra
29 (*Ephedra* sp.), and Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) are also common, although
30 barren areas occur. Mesquite (*Prosopis* sp.) and acacia (*Acacia* sp.) are present, and blackbrush
31 (*Coleogyne ramosissima*) is common in areas near the Arid Footslopes ecoregion. Riparian
32 habitats include desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*), coyote willow (*Salix exigua*), and mesquite
33 (*Prosopis* sp.), with salt cedar (*Tamarix* sp.), a non-native shrub/tree invading riparian areas.
34

35 Areas surrounding the SEZ include the Creosotebush–Dominated Basins and Arid
36 Footslopes ecoregions. This Level IV ecoregion supports a diverse but sparse mixture of Mojave
37 desert forbs, succulents and shrubs, such as creosotebush, white bursage, *Yucca* species,
38 including Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), spiny menodora
39 (*Menodora spinescens*), Nevada ephedra (*Ephedra nevadensis*), big galleta, Indian ricegrass,
40 and annual fescue (*Vulpia myuros*) on alluvial fans, basalt flows, hills, and low mountains
41 (Bryce et al. 2003). Cacti, such as silver cholla (*Cylindropuntia echinocarpa*) and beavertail
42 (*Opuntia basilaris*), occur in rocky areas.
43

44 These ecoregions are located within the Mojave Basin and Range Level III ecoregion
45 (see Appendix I). This ecoregion is characterized by broad basins and scattered mountains.
46 Communities of sparse, scattered shrubs and grasses including creosotebush, white bursage, and

1 big galleta grass occur in basins; Joshua tree, other *Yucca* species, and cacti occur on arid
2 footslopes; and woodland and shrubland communities occur on mountain slopes, ridges, and hills
3 (Bryce et al. 2003). Creosotebush, all-scale (*Atriplex polycarpa*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*),
4 desert holly (*Atriplex hymenelytra*), white burrobrush (*Hymenoclea salsola*), shadscale (*Atriplex*
5 *confertifolia*), blackbrush, and Joshua tree are dominant species within the Mojave desertscrub
6 biome (Turner 1994). Precipitation in the Mojave Desert occurs primarily in winter. Many
7 ephemeral species (winter annuals) germinate in response to winter rains (Turner 1994). Annual
8 plants are abundant with sufficient winter precipitation. Annual precipitation in the vicinity of
9 the SEZ is low, averaging about 6.0 in. (16.3 cm) at Bunkerville, Nevada and 10.4 in. (26.4 cm)
10 at Lytle Ranch, Utah (see Section 11.5.13).

11
12 Land cover types described and mapped under the SWReGAP (USGS 2005a) were used
13 to evaluate plant communities in and near the SEZ. Each cover type encompasses a range of
14 similar plant communities. Land cover types occurring within the potentially affected area of the
15 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are shown in Figure 11.5.10.1-1. The surface area of each
16 cover type within the potentially affected area is listed in Table 11.5.10.1-1.

17
18 Sonora-Mojave Creosote-White Bursage Desert Scrub is the predominant cover type
19 within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Additional cover types within the SEZ are
20 given in Table 11.5.10.1-1. During an August 2009 visit to the site, creosotebush and white
21 bursage were the dominant species observed in the desert scrub communities present throughout
22 much of the SEZ, with scattered Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*). Cacti observed on the SEZ
23 included cholla (*Cylindropuntia* sp.). Sensitive habitats on the SEZ include desert dry wash and
24 playa habitats. The area has a history of livestock grazing, and the plant communities on the SEZ
25 have likely been affected by grazing. Much of the SEZ was burned by wildfire in 2005, with
26 very little subsequent shrub regeneration.

27
28 The area of indirect effects, including the area within 5 mi (8 km) around the SEZ,
29 includes 11 cover types, which are listed in Table 11.5.10.1-1. The predominant cover type
30 in the area of indirect effects is Sonora-Mojave Creosote-White Bursage Desert Scrub.

31
32 There are no wetlands mapped by the NWI within the SEZ or the area of indirect effects
33 (USFWS 2009). NWI maps are produced from high-altitude imagery and are subject to
34 uncertainties inherent in image interpretation (USFWS 2009). Small areas identified as North
35 American Warm Desert Playa occur in the eastern portion of the SEZ. Toquop Wash and a
36 tributary, South Fork Toquop Wash, are ephemeral streams and major drainages on the SEZ.
37 These drainages include small riparian areas of dense shrubs, primarily desert willow
38 (BLM 2009f). Numerous desert dry washes occur within the SEZ and are tributaries to Toquop
39 Wash and South Fork. The dry washes typically do not support wetland or riparian habitats, but
40 many support shrub communities. The dry washes and playa typically contain water for short
41 periods during or following precipitation events. Springs occur in the vicinity of the SEZ,
42 including Tule Spring and Abe Spring, about 2.3 mi (3.7 km) north of the SEZ, which support
43 wetland communities. Gourd Spring and Peach Spring are about 1 mi (1.6 km) west of the SEZ.
44 The Virgin River, approximately 12 mi (19 km) south of the SEZ, supports extensive wetland
45 and riparian communities.

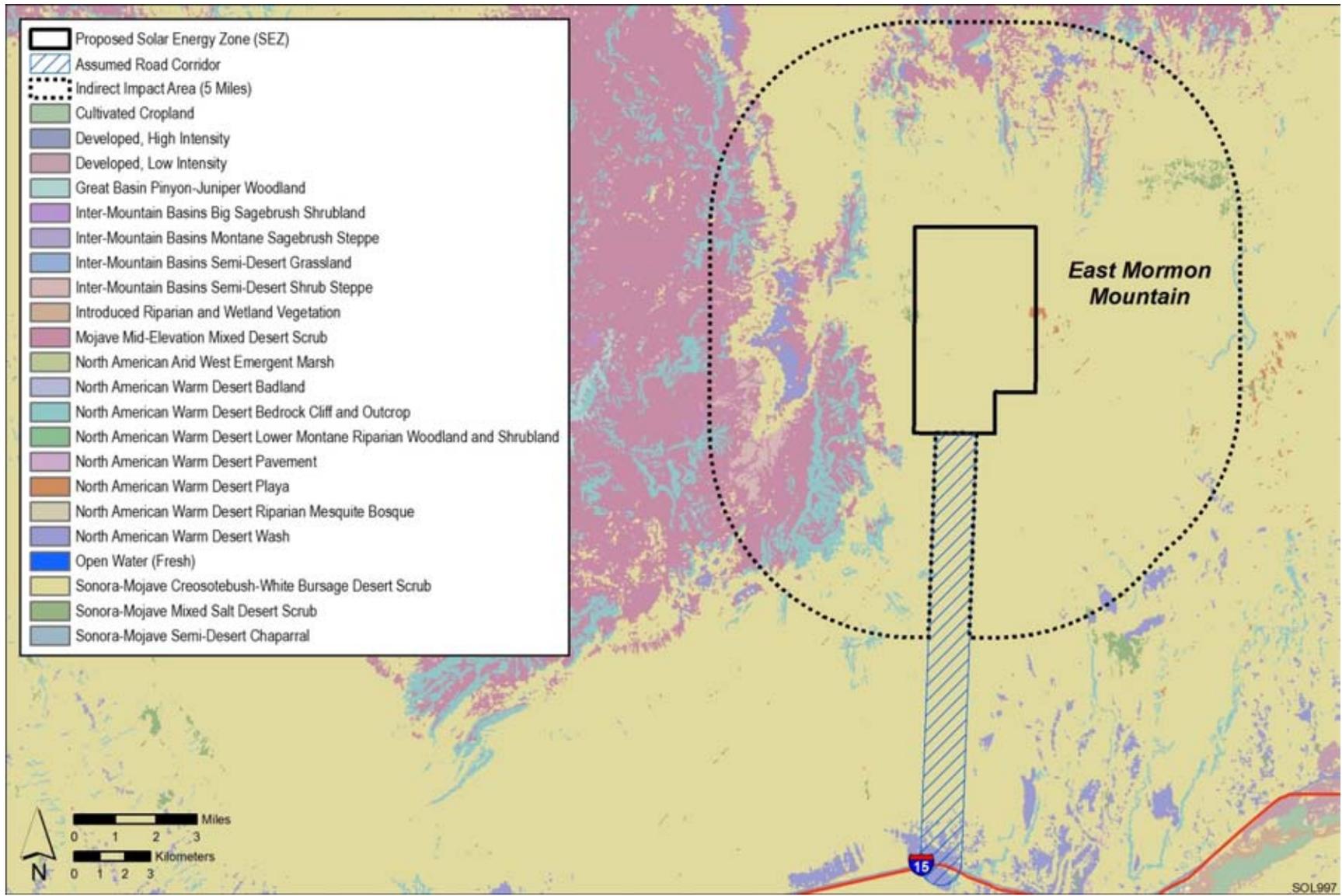


FIGURE 11.5.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (Source: USGS 2004)

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TABLE 11.5.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Potentially Affected Area of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ and Potential Impacts

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Sonora-Mojave Creosotebush-White Bursage Desert Scrub: Occurs in broad valleys, lower bajadas, plains, and low hills in the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts. Shrubs form a sparse to moderately dense cover (2 to 50%), although the ground surface may be mostly barren. The dominant species are typically creosotebush (<i>Larrea tridentata</i>) and white bursage (<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>). Other shrubs, dwarf-shrubs, and cacti may also be dominant or form sparse understories. Herbaceous species are typically sparse, but may be seasonally abundant.	8,913 acres ^g (0.5%, 0.6%)	71 acres (<0.1%)	80,168 acres (4.1%)	Small
North American Warm Desert Playa: Consists of barren and sparsely vegetated areas (generally <10% plant cover) that are intermittently flooded; salt crusts are common. Sparse shrubs occur around the margins, and patches of grass may form in depressions. In large playas, vegetation forms rings in response to salinity. Herbaceous species may be periodically abundant.	24 acres (0.6%, 1.1%)	0 acres	110 acres (2.7%)	Small
Sonora-Mojave Mixed Salt Desert Scrub: Extensive open-canopied shrublands in the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts, usually occurring around playas and in valley bottoms or basins with saline soils. Vegetation is typically composed of one or more <i>Atriplex</i> species; other salt-tolerant plants are often present or even co-dominant. Grasses occur at varying densities.	10 acres (0.1%, 0.1%)	0 acres	522 acres (2.7%)	Small
North American Warm Desert Bedrock Cliff and Outcrop: Occurs on subalpine to foothill steep cliff faces, narrow canyons, rock outcrops, and unstable scree and talus slopes. Consists of barren and sparsely vegetated areas (generally <10% plant cover) with desert species, especially succulents. Lichens are predominant in some areas.	4 acres (<0.1%, <0.1%)	<1 acre (<0.1%)	5,304 acres (2.5%)	Small

TABLE 11.5.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
North American Warm Desert Wash: Consists of intermittently flooded linear or braided strips within desert scrub or grassland landscapes on bajadas, mesas, plains, and basin floors. Although often dry, washes are associated with rapid sheet and gully flow. The vegetation varies from sparse and patchy to moderately dense and typically occurs along the banks, but may occur within the channel. Shrubs and small trees are typically intermittent to open. Common upland shrubs often occur along the edges.	0 acres	5 acres (<0.1%)	2,121 acres (3.1%)	Small
Developed, Medium-High Intensity: Includes housing and commercial/industrial development. Impervious surfaces compose 50 to 100% of the total land cover.	0 acres	1 acre (<0.1%)	75 acres (1.3%)	Small
Invasive Southwest Riparian Woodland and Shrubland: Dominated by non-native riparian woody plant species.	0 acres	<1 acre (<0.1%)	4 acres (<0.1%)	Small
Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub: The vegetation composition is quite variable. Dominant species include shrubs forbs and grasses and may include <i>Yucca</i> spp.	0 acres	0 acres	13,545 acres (1.4%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe: Generally consists of perennial grasses with an open shrub and dwarf shrub layer.	0 acres	0 acres	1,672 acres (1.5%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland: Dominated by basin big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata tridentata</i>), Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis</i>), or both. Other shrubs may be present. Perennial herbaceous plants are present but not abundant.	0 acres	0 acres	15 acres (<0.1%)	Small

TABLE 11.5.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
North American Warm Desert Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland: Occurs along perennial and seasonally intermittent streams in mountain canyons and valleys. Consists of a mix of woodlands and shrublands.	0 acres	0 acres	10 acres (0.2%)	Small

^a Land cover descriptions are from USGS (2005a). Full descriptions of land cover types, including plant species, can be found in Appendix I.

^b Area in acres, determined from USGS (2004).

^c Includes the area of the cover type within the SEZ, the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region (i.e., a 50-mi [80-km] radius from the center of the SEZ), and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type on BLM lands within the SEZ region.

^d For access road development, direct effects were estimated within an 11-mi (18-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest state highway. Direct impacts within this area were determined from the proportion of the cover type within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide road corridor. Impacts are for the area of the cover type within the assumed ROW, and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region.

^e Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide assumed access road corridor, where ground-disturbing activities would not occur but that could be indirectly affected by activities in the area of direct effects. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, and other factors from project developments. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. Includes the area of the cover type within the area of indirect effects and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region.

^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and include (1) *small*: a relatively small proportion ($\leq 1\%$) of the cover type within the SEZ region would be lost; (2) *moderate*: an intermediate proportion (> 1 but $\leq 10\%$) of a cover type would be lost; (3) *large*: $> 10\%$ of a cover type would be lost.

^g To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

1 The State of Nevada maintains an official list of weed species designated as noxious.
 2 Table 11.5.10.1-2 provides a summary of the noxious weed species regulated in Nevada known
 3 to occur in Lincoln County (USDA 2010; Creech et al. 2010) which includes the proposed East
 4 Mormon Mountain SEZ. Mediterranean grass (*Schismus barbatus*), an invasive species observed
 5 to occur within much of the SEZ in August 2009, is not included in this table. The BLM Ely
 6 District 2008 weed inventory documented Sahara mustard and salt cedar within the SEZ.

7
 8 The Nevada Department of Agriculture classifies noxious weeds into one of three
 9 categories (NDA 2005):

- 10 • “Category A: Weeds not found or limited in distribution throughout the state;
 11 actively excluded from the state and actively eradicated wherever found;
 12 actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; control required by the
 13 state in all infestations.”
- 14 • “Category B: Weeds established in scattered populations in some counties of
 15 the state; actively excluded where possible, actively eradicated from nursery
 16
 17
 18
 19

**TABLE 11.5.10.1-2 Designated Noxious Weeds of Nevada
 Occurring in Lincoln County**

Common Name	Scientific Name	Category
Black henbane ^a	<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i>	A
Canada thistle ^a	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	C
Dalmatian toadflax ^{a,b}	<i>Linaria dalmatica</i>	A
Diffuse knapweed ^a	<i>Centaurea diffusa</i>	B
Hoary cress ^b	<i>Cardaria draba</i>	C
Johnsongrass ^a	<i>Sorghum halepense</i>	C
Mayweed chamomile ^b	<i>Anthemis cotula</i>	A
Malta star thistle	<i>Centaurea melitensis</i>	A
Musk thistle ^a	<i>Carduus nutans</i>	B
Perennial pepperweed ^a	<i>Lepidium latifolium</i>	C
Perennial sowthistle ^a	<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>	A
Poison-hemlock ^a	<i>Conium maculatum</i>	C
Puncture vine ^b	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	C
Russian knapweed ^a	<i>Acroptilon repens</i>	B
Sahara/African mustard ^a	<i>Brassica tournefortii</i>	B
Saltcedar ^b	<i>Tamarix spp.</i>	C
Scotch thistle ^a	<i>Onopordium acanthium</i>	B
Spotted knapweed ^{a,b}	<i>Centaurea biebersteinii/maculosa</i>	A
Water hemlock ^a	<i>Cicuta maculata</i>	C

^a Creech et al. (2010).

^b USDA (2010).

Source: NDA (2005).

1 stock dealer premises; control required by the state in areas where populations
2 are not well established or previously unknown to occur.”

- 3
- 4 • “Category C: Weeds currently established and generally widespread in many
5 counties of the state; actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises;
6 abatement at the discretion of the state quarantine officer.”
- 7

8

9 **11.5.10.2 Impacts**

10

11 The construction of solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon Mountain
12 SEZ would result in direct impacts on plant communities due to the removal of vegetation within
13 the facility footprint during land-clearing and -grading operations. Approximately 80% of the
14 SEZ (7,174 acres [29 km²]) would be expected to be cleared with full development of the SEZ.
15 The plant communities affected would depend on facility locations and could include any of
16 the communities occurring on the SEZ. Therefore, for this analysis, all the area of each cover
17 type within the SEZ is considered to be directly affected by removal with full development of
18 the SEZ.

19

20 Indirect effects (e.g., caused by surface runoff or dust from the SEZ) have the potential
21 to degrade affected plant communities and may reduce biodiversity by promoting the decline
22 or elimination of species sensitive to disturbance. Indirect effects can also cause an increase
23 in disturbance-tolerant species or invasive species. High impact levels could result in the
24 elimination of a community or the replacement of one community type by another. The proper
25 implementation of programmatic design features, however, would reduce indirect effects to a
26 minor or small level of impact.

27

28 Possible impacts from solar energy facilities on vegetation within the SEZ are described
29 in more detail in Section 5.10.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the
30 implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
31 Section A.2.2, and from any additional mitigation applied. Section 11.5.10.2.3, below, identifies
32 design features of particular relevance to the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ.

33

34

35 **11.5.10.2.1 Impacts on Native Species**

36

37 The impacts of construction, operation, and decommissioning were considered small
38 if the impact affected a relatively small proportion ($\leq 1\%$) of the cover type in the SEZ region
39 (within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ), moderate (>1 but $\leq 10\%$) if it could affect an
40 intermediate proportion of a cover type, and large if it could affect greater than 10% of a
41 cover type.

42

43 Solar facility construction and operation in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ
44 would primarily affect communities of the Sonora-Mojave Creosote-White Bursage Desert
45 Scrub cover type. Additional cover types that would be affected within the SEZ include North
46 American Warm Desert Playa, Sonora-Mojave Mixed Salt Desert Scrub, and North American

1 Warm Desert Bedrock Cliff and Outcrop. Additional cover types that would be affected only by
2 the assumed access road include North American Warm Desert Wash, Developed, Medium-High
3 Intensity, and Invasive Southwest Riparian Woodland and Shrubland. The Developed, Medium-
4 High Intensity, and Invasive Southwest Riparian Woodland and Shrubland cover types would
5 likely have relatively minor populations of native species. Table 11.5.10.1-1 summarizes the
6 potential impacts on land cover types resulting from solar energy facilities in the proposed East
7 Mormon Mountain SEZ. While the Sonora-Mojave Creosote-White Bursage Desert Scrub and
8 North American Warm Desert Bedrock Cliff and Outcrop cover types are relatively common in
9 the SEZ region, Sonora-Mojave Mixed Salt Desert Scrub and North American Warm Desert
10 Playa are relatively uncommon, representing 0.4% and 0.08% of the land area within the SEZ
11 region, respectively. Desert dry washes, playas, and riparian habitats are important sensitive
12 habitats. The construction, operation, and decommissioning of solar projects within the proposed
13 East Mormon Mountain SEZ would result in small impacts on all cover types in the affected
14 area. Because much of the SEZ and areas within the SEZ region have been impacted by wildfire,
15 proportional impacts on some cover types may differ somewhat from that shown in
16 Table 11.5.10.1-1, and in some cases may be greater.

17
18 Because of the arid conditions, re-establishment of desert scrub communities in
19 temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult and might require extended periods
20 of time. In addition, noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize
21 adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in
22 widespread habitat degradation. Cryptogamic soil crusts occur in many of the shrubland
23 communities in the vicinity, and likely occur on the SEZ. Damage to these crusts, by the
24 operation of heavy equipment or other vehicles, can alter important soil characteristics, such
25 as nutrient cycling and availability, and affect plant community characteristics (Lovich and
26 Bainbridge 1999).

27
28 The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside
29 a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community
30 composition. Fugitive dust deposition could affect plant communities of each of the cover
31 types occurring within the indirect impact area identified in Table 11.5.10.1-1.

32
33 Communities associated with playa habitats, riparian habitats, or other intermittently
34 flooded areas within or downgradient from solar projects or access roads could be affected by
35 ground-disturbing activities. Surface drainage throughout the SEZ is directed toward Toquop
36 Wash. Site-clearing and -grading could disrupt surface water flow patterns, resulting in changes
37 in the frequency, duration, depth, or extent of inundation or soil saturation, and could potentially
38 alter riparian shrub communities along Toquop Wash, including occurrences outside of the SEZ,
39 and affect community function. Playa habitats in the eastern portion of the SEZ could also be
40 affected by ground disturbance. Small areas of riparian habitat occur within the access road
41 corridor. Increases in surface runoff from a solar energy project site or access road could also
42 affect hydrologic characteristics of these communities. The introduction of contaminants into
43 these habitats could result from spills of fuels or other materials used on a project site. Soil
44 disturbance could result in sedimentation in these areas, which could degrade or eliminate
45 sensitive plant communities. Grading could also affect desert dry wash habitats within the SEZ
46 or access road area of direct effects. Alteration of surface drainage patterns or hydrology could

1 adversely affect downstream dry wash communities. Vegetation within these communities could
2 be lost by erosion or desiccation. Wetland and riparian communities along the Virgin River,
3 located downgradient of the SEZ, could be affected by sediment deposition or altered hydrology.
4

5 Although the use of groundwater within the East Mormon Mountain SEZ for
6 technologies with high water requirements, such as wet-cooling systems, may be unlikely,
7 groundwater withdrawals for such systems could reduce groundwater elevations. Communities
8 that depend on accessible groundwater, such as wetland communities associated with springs,
9 could become degraded or lost as a result of lowered groundwater levels. The potential for
10 impacts on springs in the vicinity of the SEZ, such as Tule Spring, Abe Spring, Gourd Spring, or
11 Peach Spring, would need to be evaluated by project-specific hydrological studies. Lowered
12 groundwater levels in the basin could potentially affect wetland and riparian communities along
13 the Virgin River.
14
15

16 ***11.5.10.2.2 Impacts from Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plant Species*** 17

18 On February 8, 1999, the President signed E.O. 13112, “Invasive Species,” which directs
19 federal agencies to prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and
20 to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts of invasive species (*Federal*
21 *Register*, Volume 64, page 61836, Feb. 8, 1999). Potential impacts of noxious weeds and
22 invasive plant species resulting from solar energy facilities are described in Section 5.10.1.
23 Despite required design features to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, project disturbance
24 could potentially increase the prevalence of noxious weeds and invasive species in the affected
25 area of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, such that weeds could be transported into
26 areas that were previously relatively weed-free, which could result in reduced restoration success
27 and possible widespread habitat degradation. Invasive species, including Mediterranean grass,
28 occur within the SEZ. Additional species designated as noxious weeds in Nevada and known
29 to occur in Lincoln County are given in Table 11.5.10.1-2. Less than 1 acre (<0.004 km²) of
30 Invasive Southwest Riparian Woodland and Shrubland occurs within the area of direct effects
31 of the assumed access road and approximately 4 acres (0.02 km²) occurs in the area of indirect
32 effects of the SEZ.
33

34 Past or present land uses may affect the susceptibility of plant communities to the
35 establishment of noxious weeds and invasive species. Existing roads, transmission lines, and
36 recreational OHV use within the SEZ area of potential impact would also likely contribute to the
37 susceptibility of plant communities to the establishment and spread of noxious weeds and
38 invasive species. Disturbed areas may contribute to the establishment of noxious weeds and
39 invasive species. Approximately 1 acre (0.004 km²) of Developed, Medium-High Intensity
40 occurs within the area of direct effects of the assumed access road and 75 acres (0.3 km²) occurs
41 in the area of indirect effects.
42
43

44 **11.5.10.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness** 45

46 In addition to programmatic design features, SEZ-specific design features would reduce
47 the potential for impacts on plant communities. While the specific practices are best established

1 when project details are considered, some SEZ-specific design features can be identified at this
2 time, as follows.

- 3
4 • An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species
5 control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan,
6 addressing habitat restoration, should be approved and implemented to
7 increase the potential for successful restoration of desert scrub and other
8 affected habitats, and minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species
9 such as Mediterranean grass. Invasive species control should focus on
10 biological and mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use of
11 herbicides.
- 12
13 • All desert dry wash, playa, riparian, and Joshua tree communities within the
14 SEZ and access road corridor should be avoided to the extent practicable, and
15 any impacts minimized and mitigated. Any Joshua trees, other yucca species,
16 cacti, or succulent plant species in areas of direct impacts that cannot be
17 avoided should be salvaged. A buffer area should be maintained around dry
18 wash, playa, and riparian habitats to reduce the potential for impacts.
- 19
20 • Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on dry
21 wash, playa, wetland, and riparian habitats, including downstream
22 occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation,
23 altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition to these
24 habitats. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be determined
25 through agency consultation.
- 26
27 • Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect
28 impacts on wetlands associated with springs, such as Tule Spring and Abe
29 Spring. Potential impacts on springs should be determined through
30 hydrological studies.

31
32 If these mitigations measures are implemented in addition to other programmatic design
33 features, it is anticipated that a high potential for impacts from invasive species and potential
34 impacts on Joshua tree communities, dry washes, playas, riparian habitats, wetlands, and springs
35 would be reduced to a minimal potential for impact.

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11.5.11 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota

This section addresses wildlife (amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals) and aquatic biota that could occur within the potentially affected area of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Wildlife species known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2007) and the Nevada Natural Heritage Program (NDCNR 2002). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). The amount of aquatic habitat within the SEZ region was determined by estimating the length of linear perennial stream features and the area of standing water body features (i.e., ponds, lakes, and reservoirs) within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ using available GIS surface water datasets.

The affected area considered in this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur) and included the SEZ and a 60-ft (18-m) wide portion of an assumed 11-mi (18-km) long access road corridor. The maximum developed area within the SEZ would be 7,174 acres (29 km²).

The area of indirect effects was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within a 1.0-mi (1.6-km) access road corridor where ground-disturbing activities would not occur but that could be indirectly affected by activities in the area of direct effects (e.g., surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and accidental spills in the SEZ or road construction area). Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 7,174 acres (29.0 km²) of direct effect was also included as part of the area of indirect effects. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ. The area of indirect effects was identified on the basis of professional judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be subject to indirect effects. The areas of direct and indirect effects are more thoroughly defined and the impact assessment approach is described in Appendix M.

The primary habitat type within the affected area is desert scrub, particularly Sonora-Mojave Creosotebush-White Bursage Desert Scrub (over 99.5% of the SEZ) (see Section 11.5.10). Potentially unique habitats in the affected area include cliff and rock outcrop, playa, wash, and riparian woodland and shrubland habitats. Toquop Wash and the South Fork Toquop Wash, temporary aquatic habitats, occur in the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects (see Figure 11.5.9.1-1).

11.5.11.1 Amphibians and Reptiles

11.5.11.1.1 Affected Environment

This section addresses amphibian and reptile species that are known to occur, or for which potentially suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The list of amphibian and reptile species potentially

1 present in the SEZ area was determined from species lists available from the Nevada Natural
2 Heritage Program (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available from the
3 California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CDFG 2008), SWReGAP (USGS 2007),
4 and NatureServe (2010). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from
5 SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). Appendix M provides additional information on the
6 approach used.

7
8 Based on the distribution and habitat preferences of the amphibian species, the Great
9 Plains toad (*Bufo cognatus*) and red-spotted toad (*Bufo punctatus*) would be expected to occur
10 within the SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). Both toad species would most likely occur in or
11 near the wash habitats within the SEZ.

12
13 More than 25 reptile species occur within the area that encompasses the proposed East
14 Mormon Mountain SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*)
15 is a federal- and state-listed threatened species. This species is discussed in Section 11.5.12.
16 Lizard species expected to occur within the SEZ include the desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma*
17 *platyrhinos*), Great Basin collared lizard (*Crotaphytus bicinctores*), long-nosed leopard lizard
18 (*Gambelia wislizenii*), side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus*
19 *occidentalis*), western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris*), and zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus*
20 *draconoides*). Snake species expected to occur within the proposed SEZ are the coachwhip
21 (*Masticophis flagellum*), common kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula*), glossy snake (*Arizona*
22 *elegans*), gophersnake (*Pituophis catenifer*), groundsnake (*Sonora semiannulata*), and
23 nightsnake (*Hypsiglena torquata*). The Mojave rattlesnake (*Crotalus scutulatus*) and sidewinder
24 (*Crotalus cerastes*) would be the most common poisonous snake species expected to occur on
25 the SEZ.

26
27 Table 11.5.11.1-1 provides habitat information for representative amphibian and reptile
28 species that could occur within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Special status
29 amphibian and reptile species are addressed in Section 11.5.12.

30 31 32 **11.5.11.1.2 Impacts**

33
34 The types of impacts that amphibians and reptiles could incur from construction,
35 operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in
36 Section 5.10.2.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of
37 required programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through
38 any additional mitigation applied. Section 11.5.11.1.3, below, identifies SEZ-specific design
39 features of particular relevance to the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ.

40
41 The assessment of impacts on amphibian and reptile species is based on available
42 information on the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.5.11.1.1
43 and following the analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments
44 and coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific

TABLE 11.5.11.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Amphibian and Reptile Species That Could Occur in the Affected Area of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Amphibians					
Great Plains toad (<i>Bufo cognatus</i>)	Prairies and deserts. Often breeds in shallow temporary pools or quiet waters of streams, marshes, irrigation ditches, and flooded fields. About 3,064,000 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,656 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of playa and wash habitats, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Red-spotted toad (<i>Bufo punctatus</i>)	Dry, rocky areas at lower elevations near desert springs and persistent pools along rocky arroyos, desert streams and oases, open grassland, scrubland oaks, and dry woodlands. About 3,968,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,666 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of playa and wash habitats, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Lizards					
Desert horned lizard (<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>)	Deserts dominated by sagebrush, creosotebush, greasewood, or cactus. Occurs on sandy flats, alluvial fans, washes, and edge of dunes. Burrows in soil during periods of inactivity. About 3,713,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	105,243 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Great Basin collared lizard (<i>Crotaphytus bicinctores</i>)	Usually inhabits alluvia, lava flows, mountain slopes, canyons, buttes, rock outcrops, washes, and rocky plains. Limiting factors are the presence of large boulders and open/sparse vegetation. About 3,490,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	105,084 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rocky outcrop and wash habitats, no species- specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Lizards (Cont.)					
Long-nosed leopard lizard (<i>Gambelia wislizenii</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas with scattered shrubs. Prefers sandy or gravelly flats and plains. Also prefers areas with abundant rodent burrows that they occupy when inactive. About 3,256,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	95,999 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Side-blotched lizard (<i>Uta stansburiana</i>)	Low to moderate elevations in washes, arroyos, boulder-strewn ravines, rocky cliff bases, and flat shrubby areas in canyon bottoms. Often along sandy washes. Usually in areas with a lot of bare ground. About 4,067,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	102,880 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	45 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of cliff and rock outcrop and wash habitats, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Lizards (Cont.)					
Western fence lizard (<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>)	Disturbed areas, roadsides, gravel beds, rock quarries, lava flows, outcrops, talus slopes, shrublands, riparian areas, and coniferous woodlands. About 3,835,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	89,448 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rock outcrop habitats, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western whiptail (<i>Cnemidophorus tigris</i>)	Arid and semiarid habitats with sparse plant cover. About 4,271,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,255 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6.612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Lizards (Cont.)					
Zebra-tailed lizard (<i>Callisaurus draconoides</i>)	Open, warm-desert habitats, especially dry washes and canyons with fine gravel and sand. About 3,181,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,239 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Snakes					
Coachwhip (<i>Masticophis flagellum</i>)	Creosotebush desert, shortgrass prairie, shrub-covered flats and hills. Sandy to rocky substrates. Avoids dense vegetation. About 3,521,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	88,902 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Snakes (Cont.)					
Common kingsnake (<i>Lampropeltis getula</i>)	Coniferous forests, woodlands, swampland, coastal marshes, river bottoms, farmlands, prairies, chaparral, and deserts. Uses rock outcrops and rodent burrows for cover. About 4,623,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	105,228 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rock outcrops, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Glossy snake (<i>Arizona elegans</i>)	Light shrubby to barren deserts, sagebrush flats, grasslands, and chaparral-covered slopes and woodlands. Prefers sandy grasslands, shrublands and woodlands. About 2,475,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	85,715 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Snakes (Cont.)					
Gophersnake (<i>Pituophis catenifer</i>)	Plains grasslands, sandhills, riparian areas, marshes, edges of ponds and lakes, rocky canyons, semidesert and mountain shrublands, montane woodlands, rural and suburban areas, and agricultural areas. Likely inhabits pocket gopher burrows in winter. About 4,446,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,339 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	77 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,699 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Groundsnake (<i>Sonora semiannulata</i>)	River bottoms, desert flats, sand hummocks, rocky hillsides with pockets of loose soil; from prairie and desert lowlands to pinyon-juniper and oak-pine zone; soil may be rocky to sandy, vegetation dense to sparse. About 4,162,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,149 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Snakes (Cont.)					
Mojave rattlesnake (<i>Crotalus scutulatus</i>)	Mostly upland desert and lower mountain slopes. Barren desert, grassland, open juniper woodland, and scrubland; especially common in areas of scattered scrubby growth such as creosote and mesquite. About 5,017,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	105,323 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	77 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,699 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Nightsnake (<i>Hypsiglena torquata</i>)	Arid and semiarid desert flats, plains, and woodlands; areas with rocky and sandy soils are preferred. During cold periods of the year, it seeks refuge underground, in crevices, or under rocks. About 3,390,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	88,887 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rock outcrops, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Snakes (Cont.)					
Sidewinder (<i>Crotalus cerastes</i>)	Windblown sand habitats near rodent burrows. Most common in areas of sand hummocks topped with creosote, mesquite, or other desert plants. About 2,884.400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	95,462 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

- ^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 7,174 acres (29 km²) of direct effect within the SEZ was assumed.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 7,174 acres (29 km²) of direct effect was also added to the area of indirect effect. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- ^e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within a 11-mi (18-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide access road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest existing highway. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide access road corridor to the existing highway, less the assumed area of direct effects.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.5.11.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigation measures are suggested here, but final mitigation measures should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in
2 additional required actions to avoid or mitigate impacts on amphibians and reptiles
3 (see Section 11.5.11.1.3).
4

5 In general, impacts on amphibians and reptiles would result from habitat disturbance
6 (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration) and from disturbance, injury, or mortality
7 to individual amphibians and reptiles. On the basis of the magnitude of impacts on amphibians
8 and reptiles summarized in Table 11.5.11.1-1, direct impacts on representative amphibian and
9 reptile species would be expected to be small, ranging from 0.1 to 0.3%. For all amphibian and
10 reptile species, up to 7,174 acres (29.0 km²) of potentially suitable habitat would be lost within
11 the SEZ; while, depending on the species, an additional 45 to 77 acres (0.2 to 0.3 km²) of
12 potentially suitable habitat could be lost by access road construction. Larger areas of potentially
13 suitable habitats for the amphibian and reptile species occur within the area of potential indirect
14 effects (e.g., up to 3.5% of available habitat for the glossy snake) (Table 11.5.11.1-1). Indirect
15 impacts on amphibians and reptiles could result from surface water and sediment runoff from
16 disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental spills, collection, and
17 harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with implementation of
18 programmatic design features.
19

20 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
21 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
22 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
23 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
24 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
25 particular importance for amphibian and reptile species would be the restoration of original
26 ground surface contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with desert scrub, playa,
27 and wash habitats.
28
29

30 ***11.5.11.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

31
32 The successful implementation of programmatic design features presented in
33 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on amphibians and reptiles,
34 especially for those species that utilize habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., washes and
35 playas). Indirect impacts could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic
36 design features, especially those engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation,
37 spills, and fugitive dust. While SEZ-specific design features are best established when
38 considering specific project details, one design feature can be identified at this time:
39

- 40 • Development in wash, playa, and rock outcrop habitats should be avoided.
41

42 If this SEZ-specific design feature is implemented in addition to the programmatic design
43 features, impacts on amphibian and reptile species could be reduced. However, as potentially
44 suitable habitats for all of the amphibian and reptile species occur throughout much of the SEZ,
45 additional species-specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or
46 infeasible.
47
48

1 **11.5.11.2 Birds**

2
3
4 **11.5.11.2.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section addresses bird species that are known to occur, or for which potentially
7 suitable habitat occurs, on the potentially affected area of the proposed East Mormon Mountain
8 SEZ. The list of bird species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined from the
9 Nevada Natural Heritage Program (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information
10 available from the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CDFG 2008), SWReGAP
11 (USGS 2007), and NatureServe (2010). Land cover types suitable for each species were
12 determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). Appendix M provides additional
13 information on the approach used.

14
15 Fourteen bird species that could occur in the affected area of the SEZ are considered
16 focal species in the *Desert Bird Conservation Plan* (CalPIF 2009): ash-throated flycatcher
17 (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), black-tailed
18 gnatcatcher (*Polioptila melanura*), black-
19 throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*),
20 burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), common
21 raven (*Corvus corax*), Costa’s hummingbird
22 (*Calypte costae*), crissal thrasher (*Toxostoma*
23 *crissale*), Gila woodpecker (*Melanerpes*
24 *uropygialis*), ladder-backed woodpecker
25 (*Picoides scalaris*), Le Conte’s thrasher
26 (*Toxostoma lecontei*), Lucy’s warbler (*Vermivora luciae*), phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*),
27 Scott’s oriole (*Icterus parisorum*), and verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*). Because of their special
28 species status, the burrowing owl and phainopepla are discussed in Section 11.5.12.

Desert Focal Bird Species

Bird species whose requirements define spatial attributes, habitat characteristics, and management regimes representative of a healthy desert system (Chase and Geupel 2005).

29
30
31 **Waterfowl, Wading Birds, and Shorebirds**

32
33 As discussed in Section 4.10.2.2.2, waterfowl (ducks, geese, and swans), wading birds
34 (herons and cranes), and shorebirds (avocets, gulls, plovers, rails, sandpipers, stilts, and terns)
35 are among the most abundant groups of birds in the six-state solar study area. However, within
36 the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebird species
37 would be mostly absent to uncommon. Playa and wash habitats within the SEZ may attract
38 shorebird species, but Lake Mead, Muddy River, Virgin River, and larger named washes within
39 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ would provide more viable habitat for this group of birds. The killdeer
40 (*Charadrius vociferus*) is the shorebird species most likely to occur within the SEZ.

41
42
43 **Neotropical Migrants**

44
45 As discussed in Section 4.10.2.2.3, neotropical migrants represent the most diverse
46 category of birds within the six-state solar energy study area. Species expected to occur within

1 the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ include the ash-throated flycatcher, Bewick’s wren
2 (*Thryomanes bewickii*), black-tailed gnatcatcher, black-throated sparrow, Brewer’s sparrow
3 (*Spizella breweri*), common poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), common raven, Costa’s
4 hummingbird, greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*),
5 ladder-backed woodpecker, Le Conte’s thrasher, lesser nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*),
6 loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), rock wren
7 (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), Say’s phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), verdin, and western kingbird (*Tyrannus*
8 *verticalis*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007). Potentially suitable habitat for several of
9 the desert focal bird species (crissal thrasher, Gila woodpecker, Lucy’s warbler, phainopepla, and
10 Scott’s oriole) do not occur in the SEZ; but potentially suitable habitat for all of these species,
11 except Scott’s oriole, occurs within the assumed access road corridor.

12 13 14 **Birds of Prey**

15
16 Section 4.10.2.2.4 provided an overview of the birds of prey (raptors, owls, and vultures)
17 within the six-state solar study area. Species that could occur within the proposed East Mormon
18 Mountain SEZ include the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), golden eagle (*Aquila*
19 *chrysaetos*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), and turkey vulture
20 (*Cathartes aura*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007). Several special status birds of prey
21 species are discussed in Section 11.5.12.

22 23 24 **Upland Game Birds**

25
26 Section 4.10.2.2.5 provided an overview of the upland game birds (primarily pheasants,
27 grouse, quail, and doves) that occur within the six-state solar study area. Upland game species
28 that could occur within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ include the chukar (*Alectoris*
29 *chukar*), Gambel’s quail (*Callipepla gambelii*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), and white-
30 winged dove (*Zenaida asiatica*). Potentially suitable habitat for the wild turkey (*Meleagris*
31 *gallopavo*) occurs within the assumed access road corridor (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002;
32 USGS 2007).

33
34 Table 11.5.11.2-1 provides habitat information for representative bird species that could
35 occur within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Special status bird species are discussed
36 in Section 11.5.12.

37 38 39 **11.5.11.2.2 Impacts**

40
41 The types of impacts that birds could incur from construction, operation, and
42 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
43 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
44 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any additional mitigation applied.
45 Section 11.5.11.2.3, below, identifies design features of particular relevance to the proposed East
46 Mormon Mountain SEZ.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Bird Species That Could Occur in the Affected Area of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Shorebirds					
Killdeer (<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>)	Open areas such as fields, meadows, lawns, mudflats, and shores. Nests on ground in open dry or gravelly locations. About 73,000 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	24 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.03% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	105 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	1 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 87 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Avoid playa and wash habitats. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Neotropical Migrants					
Ash-throated flycatcher (<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>)	Common in scrub and woodland habitats, including desert riparian and desert washes. Requires hole/cavity for nesting. Uses shrubs or small trees for foraging perches. About 4,437,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,130 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Bewick's wren (<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>)	Generally associated with dense, brushy habitats. It is a permanent resident of lowland deserts and pinyon-juniper forests. Breeding occurs in brushy areas of open woodlands and other open habitats. It is a cavity nester with nests constructed in small enclosed areas such as tree cavities, nesting boxes, rock crevices, or the center of a brush pile. About 3,856,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	91,036 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Black-tailed gnatcatcher (<i>Poliophtila melanura</i>)	Nests in bushes mainly in wooded desert washes with dense mesquite, palo verde, ironwood, and acacia. Also occurs in desert scrub habitat. About 2,029,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	84,032 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.004% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>					
Black-throated sparrow (<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>)	Chaparral and desertscrub habitats with sparse to open stands of shrubs. Often in areas with scattered Joshua trees. Nests in thorny shrubs or cactus. About 3,936,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	95,452 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Brewer's sparrow (<i>Spizella breweri</i>)	Prefers to nest in sagebrush, but also nests in other shrubs and cactus. During migration and winter, it occurs in low, arid vegetation, desert scrub, sagebrush, and creosotebush. About 3,390,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	95,467 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Common poorwill (<i>Phalaenoptilus nuttallii</i>)	Scrubby and brushy areas, prairie, desert, rocky canyons, open woodlands, and broken forests. Mostly in arid and semiarid habitats. Nests in open areas on a bare site. About 3,741,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	89,882 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>					
Common raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	Occurs in most habitats. Trees and cliffs provide cover. Roosts primarily in trees. Nests on cliffs, bluffs, tall trees, or man-made structures. Forages in sparse, open terrain. About 4,615,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,756 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Costa's hummingbird (<i>Calypte costae</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas, arid brushy foothills, and chaparral. Main habitats are desert washes, edges of desert riparian and valley foothill riparian areas, coastal shrub, desert scrub, desert succulent shrub, lower-elevation chaparral, and palm oasis. Also in mountains, meadows, and gardens during migration and winter. Most common in canyons and washes when nesting. Nests are located in trees, shrubs, vines, or cacti. About 2,982,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,115 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Greater roadrunner (<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>)	Desert scrub, chaparral, edges of cultivated lands, and arid open areas with scattered brush. Requires thickets, large bushes, or small trees for shade, refuge, and roosting. Usually nests low in trees, shrubs, or clumps of cactus. Rarely nests on ground. About 4,661,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	103,561 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Horned lark (<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>)	Common to abundant resident in a variety of open habitats. Breeds in grasslands, sagebrush, semidesert shrublands, and alpine tundra. During migration and winter, inhabits the same habitats other than tundra, and occurs in agricultural areas. Usually occurs where plant density is low and there are exposed soils. About 3,442,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,671 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Ladder-backed woodpecker (<i>Picooides scalaris</i>)	Variety of habitats, including deserts, arid scrub, riparian woodlands, mesquite, scrub oak, pinyon-juniper woodlands. Digs nest hole in rotted stub or dead or dying branches of various trees. Also nests in saguaro, agave, yucca, fence posts, and utility poles. Nests on ledges; branches of trees, shrubs, and cactus; and holes in trees or walls. About 4,148,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,115 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of riparian habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Le Conte's thrasher (<i>Toxostoma lecontei</i>)	Open desert wash, alkali desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats. Prefers to nest and forage in arroyos and washes lined with dense stands of creosotebush and salt bush. About 3,003,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,573 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Lesser nighthawk (<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>)	Open country, desert regions, scrub, savanna, and cultivated areas. Usually near water, including open marshes, salt ponds, large rivers, rice paddies, and beaches. Roosts on low perches or the ground. Nests in the open on bare sites. About 3,749,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	103,427 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Loggerhead shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	Open country with scattered trees and shrubs, savanna, desert scrub, desert riparian, Joshua tree, and occasionally open woodland habitats. Perches on poles, wires, or fence posts (suitable hunting perches are important aspect of habitat). Nests in shrubs and small trees. About 4,679,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,806 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>					
Northern mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	Parkland, cultivated lands, second-growth habitats, desert scrub, and riparian areas at low elevations. Forages on ground in short, grassy to nearly barren substrates. About 4,887,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	105,185 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	77 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,699 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Rock wren (<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>)	Arid and semiarid habitats. Breeds in areas with talus slopes, scrublands, or dry washes. Nests, constructed of plant materials, are located in rock crevices, and the nest entrance is paved with small rocks and stones. About 4,903,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	104,577 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Say's phoebe (<i>Sayornis saya</i>)	Arid open country, deserts, sagebrush plains, dry barren foothills, canyons, cliffs, ranches, and rural homes. Nests in cliff crevices, holes in banks, sheltered ledges, tree cavities, under bridges and roofs, and in mines. About 3,489,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	101,307 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Verdin (<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>)	Desert riparian, desert wash, desert scrub, and alkali desert scrub areas with large shrubs and small trees. Nests in shrubs, small trees, or cactus. About 2,965,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,583 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Western kingbird (<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>)	Occurs in a variety of habitats, including riparian forests and woodlands, savannahs, shrublands, agricultural lands, deserts, and urban areas. Nesting occurs in trees, bushes, and other raised areas, such as buildings. It migrates to Central America or the southeastern United States for the winter. About 3,700,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,224 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Birds of Prey					
American kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius</i>)	Occurs in most open habitats, in various shrub and early successional forest habitats, forest openings, and various ecotones. Perches on trees, snags, rocks, utility poles and wires, and fence posts. Uses cavities in trees, snags, rock areas, banks, and buildings for nesting and cover. About 2,729,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	14 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	21,143 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	1 acre of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.0001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 87 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Avoid bedrock cliff and outcrop habitat.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)					
Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)	Grasslands, shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine forests. Occasionally in most other habitats, especially during migration and winter. Nests on cliffs and sometimes trees in rugged areas, with breeding birds ranging widely over surrounding areas. About 2,783,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	38 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	23,298 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	6 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.0002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 522 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
Great horned owl (<i>Bubo virginianus</i>)	Needs large abandoned bird nest or large cavity for nesting. Usually lives on forest edges and hunts in open areas. In desert areas, requires wooded cliff areas for nesting. About 4,808,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	100,015 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	77 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,699 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Long-eared owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)	Nests and roosts in dense vegetation and hunts in open areas (e.g., creosotebush-bursage flats, desert scrub, grasslands, and agricultural fields). About 4,478,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,153 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)					
Turkey vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>)	Occurs in open stages of most habitats that provide adequate cliffs or large trees for nesting, roosting, and resting. Migrates and forages over most open habitats. Will roost communally in trees, exposed boulders, and occasionally transmission line support towers. About 4,105,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	101,306 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Upland Game Birds					
Chukar (<i>Alectoris chukar</i>)	Steep, semiarid slopes with rocky outcrops and shrubs with a grass and forb understory. Sources of water are required during hot, dry periods, with most birds found within 0.25 mi (0.4 km) of water during the brooding period. About 4,549,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,681 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Gambel's quail (<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>)	Deserts, especially in areas with brushy or thorny growth, and adjacent cultivated areas. Usually occurs near water. Nests on the ground under cover of small trees, shrubs, and grass tufts. About 3,895,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	105,113 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Upland Game Birds (Cont.)					
Mourning dove (<i>Zenaida macroura</i>)	Habitat generalist, occurring in grasslands, shrublands, croplands, lowland and foothill riparian forests, ponderosa pine forests, deserts, and urban and suburban areas. Rarely in aspen and other forests, coniferous woodlands, and alpine tundra. Nests on ground or in trees. Winters mostly in lowland riparian forests adjacent to cropland. About 4,603,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	100,015 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	77 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,699 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
White-winged dove (<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>)	Nests in low to medium height trees with dense foliage and fairly open ground cover. Feeds on wild seeds, grains, and fruit. About 2,985,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,109 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 7,174 acres of direct effect within the SEZ was assumed.

^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.

Footnotes on next page.

TABLE 11.5.11.2-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 7,174 acres (29 km²) of direct effect was also added to the area of indirect effect. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ.
- ^e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within a 11-mi (18-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide access road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest existing highway. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide access road corridor to the existing highway, less the assumed area of direct effects.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigation measures are suggested here, but final mitigation measures should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 The assessment of impacts on bird species is based on available information on the
2 presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.5.11.2.1 and following the
3 analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination
4 with federal or state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts
5 more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions
6 to avoid or mitigate impacts on birds (see Section 11.5.11.2.3).

7
8 In general, impacts on birds would result from habitat disturbance (i.e., habitat
9 reduction, fragmentation, and alteration), and from disturbance, injury, or mortality to
10 individual birds. Table 11.5.11.2-1 summarizes the magnitude of potential impacts on
11 representative bird species resulting from solar energy development in the proposed East
12 Mormon Mountain SEZ. Direct impacts on representative bird species would be small, ranging
13 from <0.001 to 0.4%. For most of the representative bird species, up to 7,174 acres (29.0 km²)
14 of potentially suitable habitat would be lost within the SEZ, while, depending on the species, an
15 additional 0.0 to 77 acres (0.0 to 0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat could be lost by access
16 road construction (Table 11.5.11.2-1). No direct impacts would occur to the crissal thrasher,
17 Gila woodpecker, Lucy's warbler, or wild turkey from solar energy development in the SEZ.
18 However, access road construction could result in the loss of up to 1 acre (0.004 km²) of
19 potential habitat for the Gila woodpecker and up to 5 acres (0.02 km²) of potential habitat for
20 the other three species.

21
22 Larger areas of potentially suitable habitats for the bird species occur within the area of
23 potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 4.1% of available habitat for the black-tailed gnatcatcher)
24 (Table 11.5.11.2-1). Indirect impacts on birds could result from surface water and sediment
25 runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental spills,
26 collection, and harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with
27 implementation of programmatic design features.

28
29 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
30 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
31 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
32 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
33 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
34 particular importance for bird species would be the restoration of original ground surface
35 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with desert scrub, playa, and wash
36 habitats.

37 38 39 ***11.5.11.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

40
41 The successful implementation of programmatic design features presented in
42 Appendix A, Section A.2.2 would reduce the potential for effects on birds, especially for those
43 species that depend on habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., wash and playa habitats). Indirect
44 impacts could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic design features,
45 especially those engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive
46 dust. While SEZ-specific design features important in reducing impacts on birds are best

1 established when project details are considered, some design features can be identified at this
2 time:

- 3
- 4 • The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding
5 between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds
6 will be followed.
- 7
- 8 • Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation
9 regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the
10 USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and
11 Golden Eagle Protection Act.
- 12
- 13 • Playa, wash, and rock outcrop habitats should be avoided.
- 14

15 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to the programmatic
16 design features, impacts on bird species could be reduced. However, as potentially suitable
17 habitats for a number of the bird species occur throughout much of the SEZ, additional species-
18 specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.

21 **11.5.11.3 Mammals**

24 ***11.5.11.3.1 Affected Environment***

25
26 This section addresses representative mammal species that are known to occur, or for
27 which potentially suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the
28 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The list of mammal species potentially present in the
29 SEZ area was determined from the Nevada Natural Heritage Program (NDCNR 2002) and range
30 maps and habitat information available from the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships
31 System (CDFG 2008), SWReGAP (USGS 2007), and NatureServe (2010). Land cover types
32 suitable for each species were determined from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007).
33 Appendix M provides additional information on the approach used.

34
35 Over 55 species of mammals have ranges that encompass the area of the proposed SEZ
36 (NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007); however, suitable habitats for a number of these species are
37 limited or nonexistent within the SEZ (USGS 2007). Similar to the overview of mammals
38 provided for the six-state solar energy study area (Section 4.10.2.3), the following discussion for
39 the SEZ emphasizes big game and other mammal species that (1) have key habitats within or
40 near the SEZ, (2) are important to humans (e.g., big game, small game, and furbearer species),
41 and/or (3) are representative of other species that share similar habitats.

44 **Big Game**

45
46 The big game species that occur within Lincoln County include cougar (*Puma concolor*),
47 elk (*Cervis canadensis*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), Nelson's bighorn sheep (*Ovis*

1 *canadensis nelsoni*), and pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002;
2 USGS 2007). Because of its special species status, the Nelson's bighorn sheep is addressed in
3 Section 11.5.12. Based on land cover, potentially suitable habitat for the cougar and mule deer
4 occurs within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, whereas no potentially suitable habitat
5 for elk or pronghorn occurs within the SEZ. Only 15 acres (0.6 km²) of potentially suitable
6 habitat for elk and 1,687 acres (6.8 km²) of potentially suitable habitat for pronghorn occurs
7 within the area of indirect effect. Figure 11.5.11.3-1 shows the location of the SEZ relative to the
8 mapped range of mule deer habitat.

11 Other Mammals

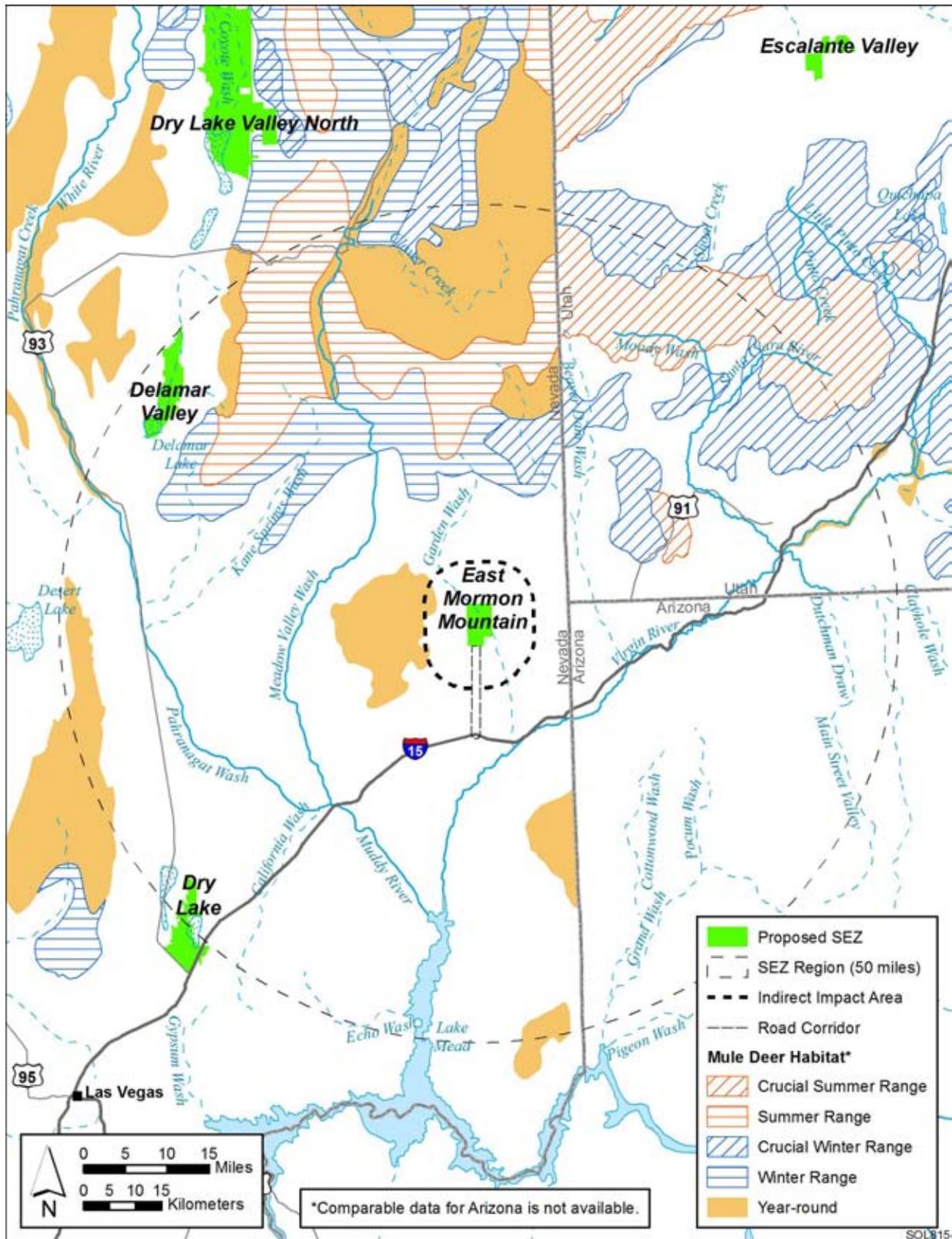
13 A number of furbearers and small game mammal species occur within the area of the
14 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Species that could occur within the area of the SEZ
15 include the American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*),
16 bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), gray fox
17 (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*), and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)
18 (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007).

20 The nongame (small) mammals include bats, rodents, and shrews. Representative species
21 for which potentially suitable habitat occurs within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ
22 include Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), cactus mouse (*Peromyscus eremicus*), canyon
23 mouse (*P. crinitis*), deer mouse (*P. maniculatus*), desert shrew (*Notiosorex crawfordi*), desert
24 woodrat (*Neotoma lepida*), little pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris*), Merriam's pocket
25 mouse (*Dipodomys merriami*), northern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys leucogaster*), southern
26 grasshopper mouse (*O. torridus*), western harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*), and
27 white-tailed antelope squirrel (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002;
28 USGS 2007). Bat species that may occur within the area of the SEZ include the big brown bat
29 (*Eptesicus fuscus*), Brazilian free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*), California myotis (*Myotis*
30 *californicus*), hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), long-legged myotis (*M. volans*), silver-haired bat
31 (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), and western pipistrelle (*Parastrellus hesperus*) (CDFG 2008;
32 NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007). However, roost sites for the bat species (e.g., caves, hollow trees,
33 rock crevices, or buildings) would be limited to absent within the SEZ. Several other special
34 status bat species that could occur within the SEZ area are addressed in Section 11.5.12.

36 Table 11.5.11.3-1 provides habitat information for representative mammal species
37 that could occur within the proposed SEZ. Special status mammal species are discussed in
38 Section 11.5.12.

11.5.11.3.2 Impacts

43 The types of impacts that mammals could incur from construction, operation, and
44 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
45 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
46 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any additional mitigation applied.



1

2 **FIGURE 11.5.11.3-1 Location of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ Relative to the**
 3 **Mapped Range of Mule Deer (Source: NDOW 2010)**

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Mammal Species That Could Occur in the Affected Area of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Big Game Cougar (<i>Puma concolor</i>)	Most common in rough, broken foothills and canyon country, often in association with montane forests, shrublands, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. About 4,801,300 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	102,989 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Mule deer (<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>)	Most habitats, including coniferous forests, desert shrub, chaparral, and grasslands with shrubs. Greatest densities in shrublands on rough, broken terrain that provides abundant browse and cover. About 3,823,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,408 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers</i>					
American badger (<i>Taxidea taxus</i>)	Open grasslands and deserts, meadows in subalpine and montane forests, alpine tundra. Digs burrows in friable soils. Most common in areas with abundant populations of ground squirrels, prairie dogs, and pocket gophers. About 4,394,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,149 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Black-tailed jackrabbit (<i>Lepus californicus</i>)	Open plains, fields, and deserts with scattered thickets or patches of shrubs. Also open, early stages of forests and chaparral habitats. Rests during the day in shallow depressions, and uses shrubs for cover. About 4,861,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	104,567 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)					
Bobcat (<i>Lynx rufus</i>)	Most habitats except subalpine coniferous forest and montane meadow grasslands. Most common in rocky country from deserts through ponderosa forests. About 4,563,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,270 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Coyote (<i>Canis latrans</i>)	All habitats at all elevations. Least common in dense coniferous forest. Where human control efforts occur, they are restricted to broken, rough country with abundant shrub cover and a good supply of rabbits or rodents. About 4,985,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	105,323 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	77 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,699 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)					
Desert cottontail (<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>)	Abundant to common in grasslands, open forests, and desert shrub habitats. Can occur in areas with minimal vegetation as long as adequate cover (e.g., rock piles, fallen logs, fence rows) is present. Thickets and patches of shrubs, vines, and brush also used as cover. About 3,687,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	85,715 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Gray fox (<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>)	Deserts, open forests, and brush. Prefers wooded areas, broken country, brushlands, and rocky areas. Tolerant of low levels of residential development. About 3,547,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	91,141 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)					
Kit fox (<i>Vulpes macrotis</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas with relatively open vegetative cover and soft soils. Seeks shelter in underground burrows. About 3,701,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,926 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Red fox (<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>)	Most common in open woodlands, pasturelands, riparian areas, and agricultural lands. About 3,414,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	83,604 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals</i>					
Big brown bat (<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>)	Most habitats from lowland deserts to timberline meadows. Roosts in hollow trees, rock crevices, mines, tunnels, and buildings. About 3,523,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	88,962 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	72 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,264 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rock outcrops, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Botta's pocket gopher (<i>Thomomys bottae</i>)	Variety of habitats, including shortgrass plains, oak savanna, agricultural lands, and deserts. Burrows are more common in disturbed areas such as roadways and stream floodplains. About 2,628,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	85,715 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6.612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Brazilian free-tailed bat (<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>)	Cliffs, deserts, grasslands, old fields, savannas, shrublands, woodlands, and suburban/urban areas. Roosts in buildings, caves, and hollow trees. May roost in rock crevices, bridges, signs, or cliff swallow nests during migration. Large maternity colonies inhabit caves, buildings, culverts, and bridges. About 3,787,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	91,108 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	77 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,699 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rock outcrops, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Cactus mouse (<i>Peromyscus eremicus</i>)	Variety of areas, including desert scrub, semidesert chaparral, desert wash, semidesert grassland, and cliff and canyon habitats. About 4,001,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,791 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash and rock outcrop habitats, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
California myotis (<i>Myotis californicus</i>)	Desertscrub, semidesert shrublands, lowland riparian, swamps, riparian suburban areas, plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, woodlands, and forests. Roosts in caves, mine tunnels, hollow trees, and loose rocks. About 2,934,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	91,032 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rock outcrop habitats, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Canyon mouse (<i>Peromyscus crinitus</i>)	Associated with rocky substrates in a variety of habitats, including desert scrub, sagebrush shrublands, woodlands, cliffs and canyons, and volcanic rock and cinder lands. Source of free water not required. About 3,417,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	977 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	96,009 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Avoid rock outcrop habitat.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Deer mouse (<i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i>)	Tundra; alpine and subalpine grasslands; plains grasslands; open, sparsely vegetated deserts; warm temperate swamps and riparian forests; and Sonoran desert scrub habitats. About 4,713,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	102,457 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Desert shrew (<i>Notiosorex crawfordi</i>)	Usually in arid areas with adequate cover such as semiarid grasslands, shortgrass plains, desert scrub, chaparral slopes, shortgrass plains, oak savannas and woodlands, and alluvial fans. About 3,527,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	105,098 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Desert woodrat (<i>Neotoma lepida</i>)	Sagebrush scrub; chaparral; deserts and rocky slopes with scattered cactus, yucca, pine-juniper, or other low vegetation; creosotebush desert; Joshua tree woodlands; scrub oak woodlands, pinyon-juniper woodlands; and riparian zones. Most abundant in rocky areas with Joshua trees. Dens built of debris on ground, among cacti or yucca, along cliffs, among rocks, or occasionally in trees. About 4,851,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	105,109 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rock outcrop habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Hoary bat (<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>)	Chaparral, shortgrass plains, scrub-grassland, desertscrub, forests and woodlands. Usually roosts in trees, also in caves, rock crevices, and houses. About 3,401,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	88,976 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	72 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,264 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rock outcrop habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Little pocket mouse (<i>Perognathus longimembris</i>)	Mostly sandy and gravelly soils, but also stony soils and rarely rocky sites. About 3,376,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,792 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Long-legged myotis (<i>Myotis volans</i>)	Prefers pine forest, desert, and riparian habitats. Old buildings, rock crevices, and hollow trees are used for daytime roosting and winter hibernation. It forages in open areas, such as forest clearings. About 3,564,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	88,897 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rock outcrop habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Merriam's kangaroo rat (<i>Dipodomys merriami</i>)	Plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, desertscrub, shortgrass plains, oak and juniper savannahs, mesquite dunes, and creosote flats. About 3,637,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,792 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Northern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys leucogaster</i>)	Grasslands, sagebrush deserts, overgrazed pastures, weedy roadside ditches, sand dunes, and other habitats with sandy soil and sparse vegetation. About 4,472,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,149 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Silver-haired bat (<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>)	Urban areas, chaparral, alpine and subalpine grasslands, forests, scrub-grassland, oak savannah, and desertscrub habitats. Roosts under bark, and in hollow trees, caves and mines. Forages over clearings and open water. About 3,756,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	88,987 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	72 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,264 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Southern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys torridus</i>)	Low, arid, shrub and semiscrub vegetation of deserts. About 3,170,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,791 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Western harvest mouse (<i>Reithrodontomys megalotis</i>)	Various habitats, including scrub-grasslands, temperate swamps and riparian forests, salt marshes, shortgrass plains, oak savannah, dry fields, agricultural areas, deserts, and desertscrub. Grasses are the preferred cover. About 2,525,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	76,480 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	27 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 2,364 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western pipistrelle (<i>Parastrellus hesperus</i>)	Deserts and lowlands, desert mountain ranges, desert scrub flats, and rocky canyons. Roosts mostly in rock crevices, sometimes in mines and caves, and rarely in buildings. Suitable roosts occur in rocky canyons and cliffs. Most abundant bat in desert regions. About 2,789,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	88,977 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	72 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,264 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rock outcrop habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Road Corridor (Direct and Indirect Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
White-tailed antelope squirrel (<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>)	Low deserts, semidesert and montane shrublands, plateaus, and foothills in areas with sparse vegetation and hard gravelly surfaces. Spends its nights and other periods of inactivity in underground burrows. About 3,618,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	104,552 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,612 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Yuma myotis (<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>)	Riparian areas, grasslands, semidesert shrubland, mountain brush, woodlands, and deserts. It occurs where there is open water, regardless of the habitat. Roosts in caves, mines, cliffs, crevices, buildings, and swallow nests. About 2,772,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	89,050 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	71 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 6,177 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of rock outcrop habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 7,174 acres (29 km²) of direct effect within the SEZ was assumed.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.5.11.3-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 7,174 acres (29 km²) of direct effect was also added to the area of indirect effect. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- ^e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within a 11-mi (18-km) long, 60-ft (18-m) wide access road ROW from the SEZ to the nearest existing highway. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide access road corridor to the existing highway, less the assumed area of direct effects.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: ≤1% of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but ≤10% of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: >10% of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigation measures are suggested here, but final mitigation measures should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 Section 11.5.11.3.3, below, identifies design features of particular relevance to mammals for the
2 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ.
3

4 The assessment of impacts on mammal species is based on available information on the
5 presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.5.11.3.1 and following the
6 analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination
7 with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts more
8 thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions to
9 avoid or mitigate impacts on mammals (see Section 11.5.11.3.3). Table 11.5.11.3-1 summarizes
10 the magnitude of potential impacts on representative mammal species resulting from solar energy
11 development (with the inclusion of programmatic design features) in the proposed East Mormon
12 Mountain SEZ.
13
14

15 **Cougar**

16
17 Up to 7,245 acres (29.3 km²) of potentially suitable cougar habitat could be lost through
18 solar energy and access road development at the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. This
19 represents about 0.1% of potentially suitable cougar habitat within the SEZ region. Nearly
20 103,000 acres (417 km²) of potentially suitable cougar habitat occurs within the area of indirect
21 effect for the SEZ and access road. This is about 2.1% of potentially suitable cougar habitat
22 within the SEZ region. Overall, impacts on cougar from solar energy development in the SEZ
23 would be small.
24
25

26 **Mule Deer**

27
28 Based on land cover analyses, up to 7,250 acres (29.3 km²) of potentially suitable mule
29 deer habitat could be lost through solar energy and access road development at the proposed East
30 Mormon Mountain SEZ. This acreage represents about 0.2% of potentially suitable mule deer
31 habitat within the SEZ region. About 99,400 acres (402 km²) of potentially suitable mule deer
32 habitat occurs within the area of indirect effect for the SEZ and access road. This acreage is
33 about 2.6% of potentially suitable mule deer habitat within the SEZ region. Based on mapped
34 range, the closest year-round mule deer habitat is about 3.5 mi (5.6 km) from the SEZ
35 (Figure 11.5.11.3-1). About 3,170 acres (12.8 km²) of year-round mule deer habitat occurs
36 within the area of indirect effect. This is about 0.6% of the year-round mule deer habitat within
37 the SEZ region. The closest summer range, winter range, and crucial winter range are about
38 17 mi (27 km), 13 mi (21 km), and 15 mi (24 km), respectively from the SEZ
39 (Figure 11.5.11.3-1). Thus, no direct or indirect effect to these mule deer ranges would be
40 expected. Overall, impacts on mule deer from solar energy development in the SEZ would be
41 small.
42
43

44 **Other Mammals**

45
46 Direct impacts on other representative mammal species would be small, ranging from
47 0.1 to 0.3%. For most of the species, up to 7,174 acres (29 km²) of potentially suitable habitat

1 would be lost within the SEZ; while, depending on the species, an additional 27 to 77 acres
2 (0.1 to 0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat could be lost by access road construction
3 (Table 11.5.11.3-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitats for the furbearers, small game,
4 and nongame mammal species occur within the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 3.2%
5 of available habitat for the western pipistrelle and Yuma myotis) (Table 11.5.11.3-1). Indirect
6 impacts on mammals could result from surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas,
7 fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental spills, collection, and harassment. These
8 indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with implementation of programmatic design
9 features.

12 **Summary**

14 Overall, impacts on mammal species would be small (Table 11.5.11.3-1). In addition
15 to habitat loss, other direct impacts on mammals could result from collision with vehicles and
16 infrastructure (e.g., fences). Indirect impacts on mammals could result from surface water and
17 sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental
18 spills, collection, and harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with
19 implementation of programmatic design features.

21 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
22 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
23 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
24 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
25 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
26 particular importance for mammal species would be the restoration of original ground surface
27 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with desert scrub, playa, and wash
28 habitats.

31 ***11.5.11.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

33 The implementation of required programmatic design features presented in Appendix A,
34 Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on mammals. Indirect impacts could be
35 reduced to negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those engineering
36 controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While SEZ-specific
37 design features important for reducing impacts on mammals are best established when
38 considering specific project details, design features that can be identified at this time include the
39 following:

- 41 • The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free
42 movement of mammals, particularly big game species.
- 44 • Playa, wash, and rock outcrop habitats should be avoided.

1 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to the programmatic
2 design features, impacts on mammals could be reduced. However, potentially suitable habitats
3 for most of the representative mammal species occur throughout most of the SEZ; therefore,
4 species-specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.
5

6 7 **11.5.11.4 Aquatic Biota**

8 9 10 ***11.5.11.4.1 Affected Environment***

11
12 This section addresses aquatic habitats and biota on the proposed East Mormon Mountain
13 SEZ itself or within an area that could be affected, either directly or indirectly, by activities
14 associated with solar energy development within the SEZ and the presumed new access road.
15 There are no permanent streams or water bodies within the proposed East Mormon Mountain
16 SEZ. About 5 mi (8 km) of Toquop Wash, an intermittent stream, is located within the SEZ.
17 Several large, unnamed ephemeral washes also are present in the SEZ. Streams and washes in
18 the SEZ typically contain water only after substantial rainfall, at which time they carry water
19 across the SEZ to the southeast and eventually drain into the Virgin River (Beck and
20 Wilson 2006). Although intermittent or ephemeral, channel incision indicates that the washes
21 within the SEZ can carry substantial flow during large runoff events. Ephemeral or intermittent
22 streams may contain a diverse seasonal community of invertebrates that are potentially present
23 in a dormant state, even in dry periods (Levick et al. 2008). However, more site-specific data are
24 needed to fully evaluate aquatic biota present in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ.
25 NWI mapping (USFWS 2009) does not indicate any wetlands are present within the SEZ. The
26 assumed access road corridor does not intersect any intermittent or permanent surface water
27 features within the SEZ.
28

29 Ten miles (16 km) of intermittent washes are located within the area of indirect effects.
30 Several unnamed ephemeral washes are present as well. The washes are typically dry and are not
31 expected to contain permanent aquatic habitat or communities. The assumed access road corridor
32 intersects ephemeral, but not permanent, surface water features within the area of indirect effects.
33 NWI mapping (USFWS 2009) does not indicate any wetlands are present within the area of
34 indirect effects. However, springs occur in the vicinity of the SEZ, including Tule Spring and
35 Abe Spring, about 2.3 mi (3.7 km) north of the SEZ, and Gourd Spring and Peach Spring, which
36 are about 1 mi (1.6 km) west of the SEZ. These springs may support aquatic habitat and
37 communities, but site specific survey data is needed to characterize the extent to which aquatic
38 habitat and biota are present.
39

40 Outside of the area of indirect effects, but within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed East
41 Mormon Mountain SEZ, are 7,372 acres (30 km²) of dry lakes and 19,963 acres (81 km²) of
42 perennial lakes. In addition, there are 319 mi (513 km) of perennial streams and 402 mi (647 km)
43 of intermittent streams. The nearest perennial surface water feature is the Virgin River, about
44 10 mi (16 km) from the southern border of the SEZ. Intermittent streams are the primary surface
45 water feature present in the area of direct and indirect effects and account for about 4% of the
46 total amount of intermittent stream present in the SEZ region.
47

1 **11.5.11.4.2 Impacts**
2

3 Because surface water habitats are a unique feature in the arid landscape in the vicinity
4 of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, the maintenance and protection of such habitats is
5 important to the survival of aquatic and terrestrial organisms. The types of impacts that aquatic
6 habitats and biota could incur from the development of utility-scale solar energy facilities are
7 described in detail in Section 5.10.3. Aquatic habitats present on or near the locations selected
8 for construction of solar energy facilities could be affected in a number of ways, including
9 (1) direct disturbance, (2) deposition of sediments, (3) changes in water quantity, and
10 (4) degradation of water quality.
11

12 The intermittent Toquop Wash and several unnamed ephemeral washes are present in
13 the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ and the area of indirect effects, and these features
14 may be directly affected by ground disturbance (SEZ only) and sedimentation from runoff and
15 fugitive dust. However, washes in the SEZ are typically dry, and impacts on aquatic habitat and
16 communities are not likely to occur. The streams present in the SEZ and area of indirect effects
17 flow into the Virgin River. Therefore, the potential exists for sediments deposited in the washes
18 to affect aquatic habitat and communities downstream. However, the distance from the SEZ to
19 the Virgin River (more than 12 mi [19 km]) reduces the chance for sediment to reach the aquatic
20 habitat. Aquatic habitat and biota potentially found in springs present within the area of indirect
21 effects could be affected by fugitive dust associated with solar energy development within the
22 SEZ. However, more site-specific data on these springs is needed to assess the potential for
23 impacts. The implementation of commonly used engineering practices to control the entry of
24 soils and fugitive dust into surface waters such as site watering, building settling basins and silt
25 fences, or directing water draining from the developed areas away from streams, would help
26 minimize the potential for impacts on aquatic organisms.
27

28 In arid environments, reductions in the quantity of water in aquatic habitats are of
29 particular concern. Water quantity in aquatic habitats could also be affected if significant
30 amounts of surface water or groundwater were utilized for power plant cooling water, for
31 washing mirrors, or for other needs. The greatest need for water would occur if technologies
32 employing wet cooling, such as parabolic trough or power tower facilities, were developed at
33 the site. The associated impacts would ultimately depend on the water source used (including
34 groundwater from aquifers at various depths). No permanent surface waters occur in the
35 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. However, springs are present in the area of indirect
36 effects. Obtaining cooling water from perennial surface water features or from groundwater
37 could potentially reduce habitat size and create more adverse environmental conditions for
38 aquatic organisms in the springs located in the area of indirect effects as well as surface water
39 outside of the area of indirect effects. Additional details regarding the volume of water required
40 and the types of organisms present in potentially affected water bodies would be required in
41 order to further evaluate the potential for impacts from water withdrawals.
42

43 As identified in Section 5.9, water quality in aquatic habitats could be affected by the
44 introduction of contaminants such as fuels, lubricants, or pesticides/herbicides during site
45 characterization, construction, operation, or decommissioning of a solar energy facility. The
46 potential exists for contaminants to enter intermittent washes within the SEZ, especially if heavy

1 machinery is used in or near these surface water features. The intermittent streams within the
2 SEZ region are typically dry, and are not likely to support aquatic habitat or communities.
3 However, they do drain into the perennial Virgin River; therefore, there is the potential for
4 contaminants entering washes within the SEZ to impact aquatic habitat and biota in the river.
5 However, the distance from the SEZ to the Virgin River (more than 12 mi [19 km]) and the
6 infrequency of flooding reduces the chance for contaminants to reach the aquatic habitat. The
7 introduction of contaminants can be minimized by avoiding construction near washes within the
8 SEZ.

11.5.11.4.3 *SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness*

10
11
12
13 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
14 Section A.2.2, could greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects on aquatic biota and
15 aquatic habitats from development and operation of solar energy facilities. While some SEZ-
16 specific design features are best established when specific project details are being considered,
17 design features that can be identified at this time include the following:

- 18
19 • Ground disturbance and contaminant spills near Toquop Wash and the other
20 unnamed washes within the SEZ should be minimized;
- 21
22 • Appropriate engineering controls should be implemented to minimize the
23 amount of surface water runoff and fugitive dust reaching springs, Toquop
24 Wash and unnamed washes in the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects; and
- 25
26 • The impact of groundwater withdrawals on surface water features near the
27 SEZ (such as Tule Spring, Abe Spring, Gourd Spring and Peach Spring)
28 should be eliminated or minimized.

29
30 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to programmatic design
31 features and if the utilization of water from groundwater or surface water sources is adequately
32 controlled to maintain sufficient water levels in aquatic habitats, the potential impacts on aquatic
33 biota and habitats from solar energy development at the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ
34 would be negligible.
35

1 **11.5.12 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Rare Species)**
2

3 This section addresses special status species that are known to occur, or for which
4 suitable habitat occurs, within the potentially affected area of the proposed East Mormon
5 Mountain SEZ. Special status species include the following types of species³:
6

- 7 • Species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA;
- 8
- 9 • Species that are proposed for listing, under review, or are candidates for
10 listing under the ESA;
- 11
- 12 • Species that are listed by the BLM as sensitive;
- 13
- 14 • Species that are listed by the State of Nevada⁴; and
- 15
- 16 • Species that have been ranked by the State of Nevada as S1 or S2, or species
17 of concern by the State of Nevada or the USFWS; hereafter referred to as
18 “rare” species.
- 19

20 Special status species known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the center of the proposed
21 East Mormon Mountain SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined from natural heritage
22 records available through NatureServe Explorer (NatureServe 2010), information provided by
23 the NDOW NNHP (Miskow 2009; NDCNR 2004, 2009a,b, 2010), SWReGAP (USGS 2004,
24 2005a, 2007), and the USFWS ECOS (USFWS 2010a). Information reviewed consisted of
25 county-level occurrences as determined from Nature Serve, element occurrences provided by the
26 NNHP, as well as modeled land cover types and predicted suitable habitats for the species within
27 the 50-mi (80-km) region as determined from SWReGAP. The 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region
28 intersects Clark and Lincoln Counties, Nevada; Mohave County, Arizona; and Iron and
29 Washington Counties, Utah. However, the entire SEZ is located in Lincoln County, Nevada.
30 Appendix M contains additional information on the approach used to identify species that could
31 be affected by development within the SEZ.
32

33
34 **11.5.12.1 Affected Environment**
35

36 The affected area considered in the assessment included the areas of direct and indirect
37 effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified
38 during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur). For the
39 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, the area of direct effect included the SEZ and the portion
40 of the road corridor where ground-disturbing activities are assumed to occur. Due to the

³ See Section 4.6.4 for definitions of these species categories. Note that some of the categories of species included here do not fit BLM’s definition of special status species as defined in BLM Manual 6840 (BLM 2008e). These species are included here to ensure broad consideration of species that may be most vulnerable to impacts.

⁴ State-listed species for the state of Nevada are those protected under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants).

1 proximity of existing infrastructure, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission
2 lines outside of the SEZ are not assessed, assuming that the existing transmission infrastructure
3 might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-
4 specific analysis would be conducted for new transmission construction or line upgrades (see
5 Section 11.5.1.2 for development assumptions for this SEZ). The area of indirect effects was
6 defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and the portion of the access road
7 corridor where ground-disturbing activities would not occur but that could be indirectly affected
8 by activities in the area of direct effects. Indirect effects considered in the assessment included
9 effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and accidental spills from the SEZ and road
10 construction area, but did not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential magnitude of
11 indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. This area of indirect
12 effects was identified on the basis of professional judgment and was considered sufficiently large
13 to bound the area that would potentially be subject to indirect effects. The affected area includes
14 both the direct and indirect effects areas.

15
16 The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is Sonora-Mojave creosote
17 desert scrub (see Section 11.5.10). Potentially unique habitats in the affected area in which
18 special status species may reside include rocky cliffs and outcrops, desert washes, playas, and
19 riparian habitats. No permanent or perennial surface water features occur on the SEZ or within
20 the area of indirect effects. However, various intermittent streams (washes) and playas are
21 present on the SEZ and throughout the area of indirect effects. In particular, Toquop Wash flows
22 northwest to southeast across the SEZ. Unnamed tributary washes to the Toquop Wash also
23 occur on the SEZ. The nearest permanent or perennial surface water feature is the Virgin River,
24 about 12 mi (19 km) south of the SEZ (Figure 11.5.12.1-1).

25
26 All special status species that are known to occur within the proposed East Mormon
27 Mountain SEZ region (i.e., within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ) are listed (along
28 with their status, nearest recorded occurrence, and habitats) in Appendix J. Thirty-two of these
29 species could be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ on the basis of recorded
30 occurrences or the presence of potentially suitable habitat in the area. These species, their status,
31 and their habitats are presented in Table 11.5.12.1-1. The predicted potential occurrence of many
32 of these species in the affected area is based only on a general correspondence between mapped
33 SWReGAP land cover types and descriptions of species habitat preferences. This overall
34 approach to identifying species in the affected area probably overestimates the number of special
35 status species that actually occur in the affected area. For many of the species identified as
36 having potentially suitable habitat in the affected area, the nearest known occurrence is more
37 than 20 mi (32 km) from the SEZ.

38
39 NNHP records indicate that three special status species known to occur within the
40 affected area of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ: Las Vegas buckwheat, desert
41 tortoise, and Nelson's bighorn sheep (Table 11.5.12.1-1). There are no groundwater-dependent
42 species in the vicinity of the SEZ based upon NNHP records, comments provided by the USFWS
43 (Stout 2009), and the evaluation of groundwater resources in the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
44 region (Section 11.5.9).

1 ***11.5.12.1.1 Species Listed under the Endangered Species Act That Could Occur in the***
2 ***Affected Area***
3

4 In scoping comments on the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, the USFWS
5 expressed concern for impacts of project development within the SEZ on the Mojave population
6 of the desert tortoise—a species listed as threatened under the ESA in the SEZ region
7 (Stout 2009). This species is likely to occur in the affected area of the proposed East Mormon
8 Mountain SEZ. Based upon information from the NNHP and the availability of potentially
9 suitable habitat, no other species listed under the ESA are expected to occur in the affected area
10 of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Information on habitats for the desert tortoise and
11 occurrences in relation to the SEZ is presented in Table 11.5.12.1-1; additional basic information
12 on life history, habitat needs, and threats to populations of this species is provided in Appendix J.
13

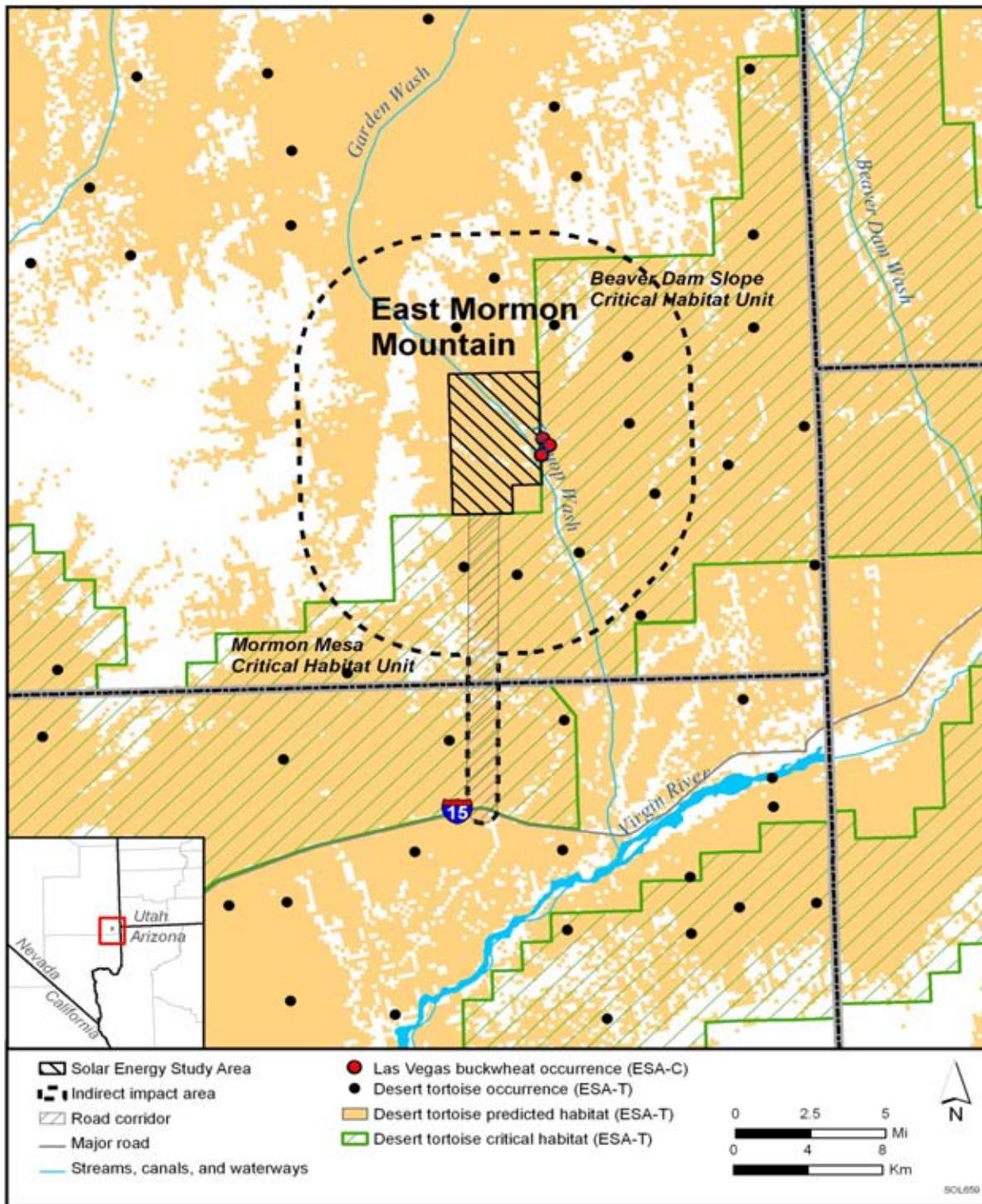
14 The Mojave population of the desert tortoise is known to occur in the SEZ region in
15 desert shrubland habitats. The nearest recorded occurrence of this species is about 2 mi (3 km)
16 south of the SEZ. Designated critical habitat for the desert tortoise occurs within the affected
17 area adjacent to the eastern and southern boundaries of the SEZ in the Beaver Dam Slope and
18 Mormon Mesa critical habitat units, respectively (Figure 11.5.12.1-1).
19

20 Desert tortoise surveys in the Mormon Mesa and Beaver Dam Slope critical habitat units
21 conducted by the USFWS have indicated a desert tortoise density of about 3.7 and
22 1.3 individuals/km², respectively (Stout 2009). The USFWS assumed that because the proposed
23 East Mormon Mountain SEZ is not separated by elevated areas from the Beaver Dam Slope
24 strata, there would be more connectivity to this critical habitat unit than to the Mormon Mesa
25 unit. Based on the density estimate for the Beaver Dam Slope critical habitat unit
26 (1.3 individuals/km²), about 47 desert tortoises have the potential to occur on the SEZ.
27

28 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, about 87,800 acres (355 km²)
29 of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the affected area of the proposed
30 East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The USGS desert tortoise model (Nussear et al. 2009) identifies
31 the SEZ as having overall high habitat suitability for desert tortoise (suitability score greater
32 than or equal to 0.8 out of 1.0). According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, about
33 2,171,300 acres (8,787 km²) of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the SEZ
34 region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
35
36

37 ***11.5.12.1.2 Species That Are Candidates for Listing under the ESA***
38

39 In scoping comments on the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, the USFWS
40 identified one ESA candidate species that may occur within the affected area of the SEZ—the
41 Las Vegas buckwheat (Stout 2009). This species is endemic to southern Nevada in the vicinity
42 of Las Vegas. It inhabits areas of gypsum soils in washes, drainages, or in areas of low relief at
43 elevations between 1,900 and 3,850 ft (580 and 1,175 m). The nearest recorded occurrence of
44 this species is about 1 mi (1.6 km) east of the SEZ (Figure 11.5.12.1-1; Table 11.5.12.1-1).
45 Additional basic information on life history, habitat needs, and threats to populations of this
46 species is provided in Appendix J.
47



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.5.12.1-1 Known or Potential Occurrences of Species Listed as Endangered or**
 3 **Threatened under the ESA, Candidates for Listing under the ESA, or Species under Review for**
 4 **ESA Listing in the Affected Area of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (Sources:**
 5 **Miskow 2009; USGS 2007)**

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Special Status Species That Could Be Affected by Solar Energy Development on the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Plants							
Antelope Canyon goldenbush	<i>Ericameria cervina</i>	NV-S1	Rock crevices and talus in shadscale and Douglas-fir-bristlecone pine communities, often on calcareous substrates, and less commonly on ash flow tuff. Elevation ranges between 3,100 and 8,800 ft. ¹ Nearest recorded occurrence is 12 mi ¹ west of the SEZ. About 1,064,900 acres ^k of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0 acres	5,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. In addition, pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the areas of direct effect; translocation of individuals from areas of direct effect; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Bearded screwmoss	<i>Pseudocrossidium crinitum</i>	NV-S1	Known from only 12 occurrences in Nevada. On or near gypsiferous deposits and outcrops or limestone boulders, especially on east to north facing slopes of loose uncompacted soil, often associated with other mosses and lichens at elevations between 1,300 and 2,300 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 35 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 209,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0 acres	5,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. See the Antelope Canyon goldenbush for a list of other potential mitigation measures.
Beaver dam breadroot	<i>Pedionelum castoreum</i>	FWS-SC	Known from Arizona, California, and Nevada. Occurs in dry, sandy desert communities. Nearest recorded occurrence is 10 mi south of the SEZ. About 2,930,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	7,175 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	70 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	95,955 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the areas of direct effect; translocation of individuals from areas of direct effect; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Eastwood milkweed	<i>Asclepias eastwoodiana</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada in Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, and Nye Counties in open areas on a wide variety of basic (pH usually >8) soils, including calcareous clay knolls, sand, carbonate or basaltic gravels, or shale outcrops, generally barren and lacking competition. Frequently occurs in small washes or other moisture-accumulating microsites at elevations between 4,700 and 7,100 ft. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 496,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat); an unquantified amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat occurs on the SEZ ^m	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	9,090 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small to large overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops and desert wash habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. The amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects is not quantified. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of other potential mitigation measures.
Gold Butte moss	<i>Didymodon nevadensis</i>	BLM-S; NV-S1	On or near gypsiferous deposits and outcrops or limestone boulders, especially on east to north-facing slopes of loose uncompacted soil. Typically associated with other mosses and lichens. Elevation ranges between 1,300 and 2,300 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 45 mi south of the SEZ. About 224,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0 acres	5,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of other potential mitigation measures.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
<i>Plants (Cont.)</i>							
Las Vegas buckwheat^l	<i>Eriogonum corymbosum</i> var. <i>nilesii</i>	ESA-C; BLM-S; NV-S1	Restricted to southern Nevada, where the species is known from 15 occurrences encompassing an area of less than 1,500 acres. Near gypsum soils, in washes, drainages, or in areas of generally low relief. Elevation ranges between 1,900 and 3,850 ft. Known to occur within 1 mi east of the SEZ. About 68,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	An unquantified amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat occurs on the SEZ ^m	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	2,120 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small to large overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. The amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects is not quantified. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of other potential mitigation measures. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in coordination with the USFWS and NDOW.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Meadow Valley sandwort	<i>Eremogone stenomeres</i>	NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada, where it is restricted to Clark and Lincoln Counties on limestone cliffs at elevations between 2,950 and 3,950 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 30 mi west of the SEZ. About 209,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0 acres	5,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of other potential mitigation measures.
Needle Mountains milkvetch	<i>Astragalus eurylobus</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Gravel washes and sandy soils in alkaline desert and arid grasslands at elevations between 4,250 and 6,250 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 40 mi north of the SEZ. About 95,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat); an unquantified amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat occurs on the SEZ ^m	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	2,230 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small to large overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and playa habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. The amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects is not quantified. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of other potential mitigation measures.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Nevada willowherb	<i>Epilobium nevadense</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Pinyon-juniper woodlands and oak/mountain mahogany communities, on talus slopes and rocky limestone outcrops. Elevation ranges between 5,000 and 8,800 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 35 mi north of the SEZ. About 1,114,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0 acres	5,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of other potential mitigation measures.
New York Mountains catseye	<i>Cryptantha tumulosa</i>	NV-S2	Gravelly or clay, granitic or carbonate substrates within Mojave Desert scrub, creosotebush scrub, and pinyon-juniper woodland. Elevation ranges between 4,500 and 9,900 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 50 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 3,771,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	8,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	70 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	94,250 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of potential mitigation measures.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Rock phacelia	<i>Phacelia petrosa</i>	BLM-S; NV-S2	Dry limestone and volcanic talus slopes of foothills, washes, and gravelly canyon bottoms on substrates derived from calcareous material. Inhabits mixed desert scrub, creosotebush, and blackbrush communities at elevations between 2,500 and 5,800 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 40 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 3,199,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	8,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	75 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	101,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of potential mitigation measures.
Rosy two-tone beardtongue	<i>Penstemon bicolor</i> ssp. <i>roseus</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Calcareous, granitic, or volcanic soils in washes, roadsides, scree at outcrop bases, rock crevices, or similar places receiving enhanced runoff, within creosote-bursage, blackbrush, and mixed-shrub communities. Elevation ranges between 1,800 and 4,850 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 25 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 315,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat); an unquantified amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat occurs on the SEZ ^m	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	7,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small to large overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops and desert wash habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. The amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects is not quantified. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of other potential mitigation measures.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Threecorner milkvetch	<i>Astragalus geyeri</i> var. <i>triquetrus</i>	NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Known only from Clark County, Nevada, and Mohave County, Arizona, on open, deep sandy soils, desert washes, or dunes, generally stabilized by vegetation and/or a gravel veneer. Elevations range between 1,500 and 2,500 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 8 mi south of the SEZ. About 83,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	An unquantified amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat occurs on the SEZ ^m	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	2,120 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small to large overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. The amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects is not quantified. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of other potential mitigation measures.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Veyo milkvetch	<i>Astragalus ensiformis</i> var. <i>gracilior</i>	NV-S1	Restricted to Lincoln County, Nevada, and Washington County, Utah, on stiff clay soil of open washes, valley floors, and hillsides under sagebrush within pinyon-juniper communities. Elevation ranges between 4,200 and 5,000 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 20 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 1,273,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	An unquantified amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat occurs on the SEZ ^m	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	2,120 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small to large overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. The amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects is not quantified. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of other potential mitigation measures.
White bearpoppy	<i>Arctomecon merriamii</i>	BLM-S	Endemic to the Mojave Desert of California and Nevada in barren gravelly areas, rocky slopes, and limestone outcrops at elevations between 2,000 and 5,900 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 30 mi west of the SEZ. About 225,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	0 acres	5,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. See the beaver dam breadroot for a list of other potential mitigation measures.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Invertebrates							
Mojave gypsum bee	<i>Andrena balsamorhizae</i>	BLM-S; NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada, where the species is restricted to gypsum soils associated with habitats of its single larval host plant <i>Enceliopsis argophylla</i> . Such habitats include warm desert shrub communities on dry slopes and sandy washes. Nearest recorded occurrence is 45 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 2,898,175 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	8,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	70 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	94,225 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats may also reduce impacts on this species.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
<i>Invertebrates (Cont.)</i>							
Mojave poppy bee	<i>Perdita meconis</i>	BLM-S; NV-S2	Known only from Clark County, Nevada, where the species is dependent on poppy plants (genus <i>Arctomecon</i>) along roadsides, and in washes and barren desert areas on gypsum soils. Nearest recorded occurrence is 30 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 84,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	An unquantified amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat occurs on the SEZ ^m	5 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	2,120 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small to large overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. The amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects is not quantified. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats may also reduce impacts on this species.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Reptiles							
Desert tortoise	<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	ESA-T; NV-P; NV-S2	Found throughout the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts in desert creosotebush communities on firm soils for digging burrows. Often found along riverbanks, washes, canyon bottoms, creosote flats, and desert oases. Known to occur within 2 mi south of the SEZ. About 2,171,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	8,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	70 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	79,250 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats on the SEZ, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effect, or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.
Birds							
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Winter resident in project area in grasslands, sagebrush, and saltbrush habitats, as well as the periphery of pinyon-juniper woodlands throughout the project area. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 660,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	7,250 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat (1.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Birds (Cont.)							
Phainopepla	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in project area in desert scrub, mesquite, pinyon-juniper woodland, desert riparian areas, and orchards. Nests in trees or shrubs. Nearest recorded occurrence is 25 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 1,200,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	15,500 acres of potentially suitable nesting or foraging habitat (1.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Swainson's hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; CA-S2; NV-S2	Summer resident in project area in savanna, open pine-oak woodlands, grasslands, and cultivated lands. Nests typically in solitary trees, bushes, or small groves; sometimes nests near urban areas. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 1,974,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	15,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Birds (Cont.)							
Western burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia hypugaea</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Summer resident in project area in open grasslands and prairies, as well as disturbed sites such as golf courses, cemeteries, and airports throughout the SEZ region. Nests in burrows constructed by mammals (prairie dog, badger, etc.). Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 3,427,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	8,950 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	70 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	96,275 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact on foraging and nesting habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied burrows in the area of direct effect or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.
Mammals							
Allen's big-eared bat	<i>Idionycteris phyllotis</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S1	Year-round resident in project area in primarily mountainous wooded areas composed of ponderosa pine, pinyon-juniper, oak brush, as well as cottonwood riparian woodlands within the range of Mohave desert scrub of low desert ranges to white fir forest zones, with summer ranges occurring at higher elevations. Roosts in caverns, rock fissures, and mines. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi southeast of the SEZ. About 2,513,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	8,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	75 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	96,525 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact primarily on foraging habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of cliffs and rock outcrops on the SEZ could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Brazilian free-tailed bat	<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>	BLM-S; NV-P	Year-round resident in project area, where it forages in desert grassland, old field, savanna, shrubland, and woodland habitats, as well as urban areas. Roosts in old buildings, caves, mines, and hollow trees. Nearest recorded occurrence is 20 mi south of the SEZ. About 3,784,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	8,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	75 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	89,525 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact primarily on foraging habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of cliffs and rock outcrops on the SEZ could reduce impacts.
Fringed myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in project area in a wide range of habitats, including lowland riparian, desert shrub, pinyon-juniper, and sagebrush habitats. Roost sites have been reported in buildings and caves. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 4,864,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	8,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	70 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	101,525 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact primarily on foraging habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of cliffs and rock outcrops on the SEZ could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>							
Nelson's bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis nelsoni</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Open, steep rocky terrain in mountainous habitats of the eastern Mojave and Sonoran Deserts in California. Rarely uses desert lowlands, but may use them as corridors for travel between mountain ranges. Known to occur in the Mormon Mountains within 5 mi west of the SEZ. About 1,252,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	4,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct affect. Impacts could be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to important movement corridors within the area of direct effects.
Silver-haired bat	<i>Lasiorycteris noctivagans</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in project area in high-elevation (1,600 to 8,500 ft) forested areas of aspen, cottonwood, white fir, pinyon-juniper, subalpine fir, willow, and spruce. Roosts in tree foliage, cavities, or under loose bark. May also forage in arid shrublands. Nearest recorded occurrence is 25 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 3,755,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	8,900 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	70 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	87,425 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Access Road (Direct Effects) ^e	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S2	Year-round resident in project area near forests and shrubland habitats below 9,000 ft elevation throughout the SEZ region. The species may use caves, mines, and buildings for day roosting and winter hibernation. Nearest recorded occurrence is 30 mi southwest of the SEZ. About 3,529,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	8,900 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	70 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	87,875 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact primarily on foraging habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of cliffs and rock outcrops on the SEZ could reduce impacts..
Western small-footed myotis	<i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in project area in a variety of woodlands and riparian habitats at elevations below 9,000 ft. Roosts in caves, buildings, mines, and crevices of cliff faces. Known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. About 4,715,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	8,900 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	70 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	101,425 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact primarily on foraging habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance of cliffs and rock outcrops on the SEZ could reduce impacts.

^a BLM-S = listed as a sensitive species by the BLM; ESA-E = listed as endangered under the ESA; ESA-T = listed as threatened under the ESA; FWS-SC = USFWS species of concern; NV-P = protected in the State of Nevada under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants); NV-S1 = ranked as S1 in the state of Nevada; NV-S2 = ranked as S2 in the state of Nevada.

^b For plant species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP land cover types. For terrestrial vertebrate species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.5.12.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^c Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. Impacts of transmission line construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this evaluation due to the proximity of existing infrastructure to the SEZ.
- ^d Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^e For access road development, direct effects were estimated within a 11-mi (8-km), 60-ft (18-m) wide road corridor from the SEZ to the nearest state highway. Direct impacts within this area were determined from the proportion of potentially suitable habitat within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide road corridor.
- ^f Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and the portion of the road corridor where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from project developments. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- ^g Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^h Species-specific mitigation measures are suggested here, but final mitigation measures should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ⁱ To convert ft to m, multiply by 0.3048.
- ^j To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.
- ^k To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.
- ^l Species in bold text have been recorded or have designated critical habitat within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary.
- ^m Although SWReGAP did not map any desert wash habitat on the SEZ, there appear to be numerous desert washes that could provide habitat for this species on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects, including Toquop Wash and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified.

1 ***11.5.12.1.3 Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA***
2

3 On the basis of information provided by the NNHP, USFWS (Stout 2009), and
4 availability of potentially suitable habitats, no species under review for ESA listing are expected
5 to occur in the affected area of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ.
6

7
8 ***11.5.12.1.4 BLM-Designated Sensitive Species***
9

10 There are 21 BLM-designated sensitive species that may occur in the affected area of the
11 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ or may be affected by solar energy development on the
12 SEZ (Table 11.5.12.1-1): (1) plants: Eastwood milkweed, Gold Butte moss, Las Vegas
13 buckwheat, Needle Mountains milkvetch, Nevada willowherb, rock phacelia, rosy two-tone
14 beardtongue, and white bearpoppy; (2) invertebrates: Mojave gypsum bee and Mojave poppy
15 bee; (3) birds: ferruginous hawk, phainopepla, Swainson’s hawk, and western burrowing owl;
16 and (4) mammals: Allen’s big-eared bat, Brazilian free-tailed bat, fringed myotis, Nelson’s
17 bighorn sheep, silver-haired bat, Townsend’s big-eared bat, and western small-footed myotis. Of
18 these species, only the Las Vegas buckwheat and the Nelson’s bighorn sheep are known to occur
19 in the affected area of the SEZ. Habitats in which BLM-designated sensitive species are found,
20 the amount of potentially suitable habitat in the affected area, and known locations of the species
21 relative to the SEZ are presented in Table 11.5.12.1-1. The Las Vegas buckwheat has been
22 discussed previously in Section 11.5.12.1.2 because of its candidate status under the ESA
23 (Section 11.5.12.1.2). The remaining 20 species as related to the SEZ are described in the
24 remainder of this section. Additional life history information for these species is provided in
25 Appendix J.
26

27
28 **Eastwood Milkweed**
29

30 The Eastwood milkweed is a perennial forb endemic to Nevada on public and private
31 lands in Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, and Nye Counties. It occurs in open areas on a wide variety
32 of basic (pH usually greater than 8) soils, including calcareous clay knolls, sand, carbonate or
33 basaltic gravels, washes, or shale outcrops at elevations between 4,700 and 7,100 ft (1,430 and
34 2,150 m). According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable rocky cliffs and
35 outcrops and desert wash habitat may occur in the SEZ, access road corridor, and within the area
36 of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1). Although SWReGAP did not map any desert wash habitat
37 on the SEZ, there appear to be numerous desert washes that could provide habitat for this species
38 on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects, including Toquop Wash and its tributaries. The
39 area of these washes has not been quantified.
40

41
42 **Gold Butte Moss**
43

44 The Gold Butte moss is a bryophyte (moss) that is known only from Nevada and Texas
45 on gypsiferous deposits and outcrops or limestone boulders. This species is typically associated
46 with other mosses and lichens at elevations between 1,300 and 2,300 ft (400 and 700 m). This

1 species is known to occur about 45 mi (72 km) south of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP
2 land cover model, potentially suitable rocky cliffs and outcrops may occur in the SEZ and within
3 the area of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
4
5

6 **Needle Mountains Milkvetch**

7

8 The Needle Mountains milkvetch is a perennial forb that occurs on gravel washes and
9 sandy soils in alkaline desert and arid grasslands at elevations between 4,250 and 6,250 ft
10 (1,295 and 1,900 m). The species is known to occur about 40 mi (64 km) north of the SEZ.
11 According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable desert wash and playa
12 habitats may occur in the SEZ, access road corridor, and within the area of indirect effects
13 (Table 11.5.12.1-1). Although SWReGAP did not map any desert wash habitat on the SEZ,
14 there appear to be numerous desert washes that could provide habitat for this species on the
15 SEZ and in the area of indirect effects, including Toquop Wash and its tributaries. The area
16 of these washes has not been quantified.
17
18

19 **Nevada Willowherb**

20

21 The Nevada willowherb is a perennial forb endemic to eastern Nevada and western Utah.
22 It occurs in pinyon-juniper woodlands and oak/mountain mahogany communities, on talus slopes
23 and rocky limestone outcrops at elevations between 5,000 and 8,800 ft (1,525 and 2,680 m). The
24 species is known to occur about 35 mi (56 km) north of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP
25 land cover model, potentially suitable rocky cliffs and outcrops may occur in the SEZ and within
26 the area of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
27
28

29 **Rock Phacelia**

30

31 The rock phacelia is an annual forb known only from Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. It
32 inhabits crevices of cliffs and boulders on volcanic substrates in washes of desert shrub
33 communities at elevations between 2,500 and 5,800 ft (750 and 1,750 m). The species is known
34 to occur about 40 mi (64 km) southwest of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover
35 model, potentially suitable habitat may occur in the SEZ, road corridor, and within the area of
36 indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
37
38

39 **Rosy Two-Tone Beardtongue**

40

41 The rosy two-tone beardtongue is a perennial forb that is known from Arizona,
42 California, and Nevada. This species occurs on calcareous, granitic, or volcanic substrates in
43 washes, roadsides, scree and outcrop bases, rock crevices, or similar places receiving enhanced
44 runoff at elevations between 1,800 and 4,850 ft (550 and 1,480 m). The species is known to
45 occur about 25 mi (40 km) southwest of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover
46 model, potentially suitable rocky cliffs and outcrops and desert wash habitat may occur in the

1 SEZ, access road corridor, and within the area of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1). Although
2 SWReGAP did not map any desert wash habitat on the SEZ, there appear to be numerous desert
3 washes that could provide habitat for this species on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects,
4 including Toquop Wash and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified.
5
6

7 **White Bearpoppy**

8
9 The white bearpoppy is a perennial forb endemic to the Mojave Desert of California
10 and Nevada. This species inhabits barren gravelly areas, rocky slopes, and limestone outcrops
11 at elevations between 2,000 and 5,900 ft (610 and 1,800 m). This species is known to occur
12 as close as 30 mi (48 km) west of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model,
13 potentially suitable rocky cliffs and outcrops may occur in the SEZ and within the area of
14 indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
15
16

17 **Mojave Gypsum Bee**

18
19 The Mojave gypsum bee is an insect that is endemic to Nevada, where the species is
20 restricted to gypsum soils associated with habitats of its single larval host plant, silverleaf sunray.
21 Such habitats include warm desert shrub communities; dry, open, relatively barren areas on
22 gypsum badlands; and volcanic gravels. This species is known to occur about 45 mi (72 km)
23 southwest of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable habitat
24 may occur in the SEZ, road corridor, and within the area of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
25
26

27 **Mojave Poppy Bee**

28
29 The Mojave poppy bee is an insect known only from Clark County, Nevada, where it is
30 dependent on poppy plants (*Arctemocon* spp.). Suitable habitats include roadsides, washes, and
31 barren desert areas. The nearest recorded occurrence of this species is about 30 mi (48 km)
32 southwest of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable desert
33 wash habitat may occur in the affected area (Table 11.5.12.1-1). Although SWReGAP did not
34 map any desert wash habitat on the SEZ, there appear to be numerous desert washes that could
35 provide habitat for this species on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects, including Toquop
36 Wash and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified.
37
38

39 **Ferruginous Hawk**

40
41 The ferruginous hawk occurs throughout the western United States. According to the
42 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, only potentially suitable winter habitat for the ferruginous
43 hawk occurs within the affected area of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, although
44 potentially suitable year-round habitat is expected to occur outside of the affected area within the
45 SEZ region. The species inhabits open grasslands, sagebrush flats, desert scrub, and the edges of
46 pinyon-juniper woodlands. This species occurs in Lincoln County, Nevada. According to the

1 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable habitat for this species does not occur
2 on the SEZ or within the access road corridor. However, potentially suitable foraging habitat
3 may occur in portions of the area of indirect affects (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
4
5

6 **Phainopepla**

7

8 The phainopepla occurs in the southwestern United States and Mexico, where it breeds
9 in suitable habitats throughout much of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ region. The
10 species occurs in desert scrub, mesquite, and pinyon-juniper woodland communities, as well as
11 desert riparian areas and orchards. Nests are typically constructed in trees and shrubs from 3 to
12 45 ft (1 to 15 m) above the ground. This species occurs in Lincoln County, Nevada. According to
13 SWReGAP, potentially suitable habitat does not occur on the SEZ or within the access road
14 corridor. However, potentially suitable foraging or nesting habitat may occur in the area of
15 indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1). According to the SWReGAP land cover model, there are no
16 riparian areas on the SEZ or in the access road corridor that may be potentially suitable nesting
17 habitats. However, about 10 acres (<0.1 km²) of riparian woodlands occur in the area of indirect
18 effects that may provide suitable nesting habitat for the phainopepla.
19
20

21 **Swainson's Hawk**

22

23 The Swainson's hawk occurs throughout the southwestern United States. According to
24 the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, only summer breeding habitat occurs in the proposed
25 East Mormon Mountain SEZ region. This species inhabits desert, savanna, open pine-oak
26 woodland, grassland, and cultivated habitats. Nests are typically constructed in solitary trees,
27 bushes, or small groves. This species is known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. According
28 to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable habitat for this species does not
29 occur on the SEZ or within the access road corridor. However, potentially suitable foraging or
30 nesting habitat may occur in portions of the area of indirect affects (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
31
32

33 **Western Burrowing Owl**

34

35 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the western burrowing owl,
36 the species is a summer (breeding) resident in open, dry grasslands and desert habitats in the
37 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ region. The species occurs locally in open areas with
38 sparse vegetation, where it forages in grasslands, shrublands, open disturbed areas and nests in
39 burrows typically constructed by mammals. The species is known to occur in Lincoln County,
40 Nevada, and potentially suitable summer breeding habitat may occur in the SEZ, access road
41 corridor, and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1). The availability of
42 nest sites (burrows) within the affected area has not been determined, but shrubland habitat that
43 may be suitable for either foraging or nesting occurs throughout the affected area.
44
45
46

1 **Allen’s Big-Eared Bat**

2
3 The Allen’s big-eared bat is known from isolated locations throughout the southwestern
4 United States and is considered to be a year-round resident in the proposed East Mormon
5 Mountain SEZ region. The species roosts in caverns, rock fissures, and mines. Foraging occurs
6 primarily in mountainous wooded areas, such as ponderosa pine, pinyon-juniper, oak, and
7 cottonwood riparian woodlands. However, this species may also forage in arid shrublands. This
8 bat species is known to occur about 15 mi (24 km) southeast of the SEZ. According to the
9 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ,
10 access road corridor, and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1). On the
11 basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is about 4 acres (<1 km²) of
12 potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ, and about 5,300 acres
13 (21 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
14

15
16 **Brazilian Free-Tailed Bat**

17
18 The Brazilian free-tailed bat is known from isolated locations throughout the
19 southwestern United States and is considered to be a year-round resident in the proposed East
20 Mormon Mountain SEZ region. The species roosts in buildings, caves, mines, and hollow trees.
21 Foraging occurs in desert grasslands, old fields, savannas, shrublands, woodlands, and urban
22 areas. This species is known to occur about 20 mi (32 km) south of the SEZ. According to the
23 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ,
24 access road corridor, and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1). On the
25 basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, no potentially suitable roosting habitat
26 (rocky cliffs and outcrops) occurs on the SEZ or access road corridor, but about 5,300 acres
27 (21 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
28

29
30 **Fringed Myotis**

31
32 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ
33 region, where it occurs in a variety of habitats including riparian, shrubland, sagebrush, and
34 pinyon-juniper woodlands. Roosting occurs in buildings and caves. This species is known to
35 occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model,
36 potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ, access road corridor, and in portions
37 of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP
38 land cover types, there is about 4 acres (<1 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky
39 cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ, and about 5,300 acres (21 km²) of potentially suitable roosting
40 habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
41

42
43 **Nelson’s Bighorn Sheep**

44
45 The Nelson’s bighorn sheep is one of several subspecies of bighorn sheep known to occur
46 in the southwestern United States. This species occurs in desert mountain ranges in Arizona,

1 California, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah. The Nelson's bighorn sheep uses primarily montane
2 shrubland, forest, and grassland habitats. It may use desert valleys as corridors for travel between
3 range habitats. This species is known to occur in the Mormon Mountains, about 5 mi (8 km) west
4 of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability
5 model, potentially suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ or within the access
6 road corridor. However, information provided by the NDOW indicates that year-round range
7 habitat within the Mormon Mountains intersects the affected area west of the SEZ. Despite the
8 apparent lack of suitable habitat on the SEZ, this species may use portions of the proposed East
9 Mormon Mountain SEZ as a migratory corridor between range habitats. Potentially suitable
10 habitat for the Nelson's bighorn sheep occurs in the area of indirect effects within 5 mi (8 km)
11 of the SEZ boundary (Table 11.5.12.1-1).

12 13 14 **Silver-Haired Bat**

15
16 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, the silver-haired bat is a year-
17 round resident in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ region, where it occurs in montane
18 forested habitats such as aspen, pinyon-juniper, and spruce communities. Foraging may occur in
19 desert shrubland habitats. This species roosts in tree foliage and cavities, or under loose bark.
20 The species is known to occur about 25 mi (40 km) southwest of the SEZ. According to the
21 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ,
22 access road corridor, and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1). On the
23 basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no potentially suitable roosting
24 habitat (woodlands) on the SEZ or in the access road corridor, but about 5,315 acres (21 km²) of
25 potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.

26 27 28 **Townsend's Big-Eared Bat**

29
30 The Townsend's big-eared bat is widely distributed throughout the western United States.
31 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, the species forages year-round in a wide
32 variety of desert and non-desert habitats in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ region.
33 The species roosts in caves, mines, tunnels, buildings, and other man-made structures. Nearest
34 recorded occurrences are about 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the proposed East Mormon
35 Mountain SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable
36 foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ, access road corridor, and in portions of the area of
37 indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover
38 types, there is about 4 acres (<1 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and
39 outcrops) on the SEZ, and about 5,300 acres (21 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat
40 occurs in the area of indirect effects.

41 42 43 **Western Small-Footed Myotis**

44
45 The western small-footed myotis is widely distributed throughout the western
46 United States. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, this species is a year-round

1 resident in southern Nevada, where it occupies a wide variety of desert and non-desert habitats
2 including cliffs and rock outcrops, grasslands, shrubland, and mixed woodlands. The species
3 roosts in caves, mines, tunnels, buildings, and other man-made structures, and beneath boulders
4 or loose bark. The species is known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. According to the
5 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ,
6 access road corridor, and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1). On the
7 basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is about 4 acres (<1 km²) of
8 potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ, and about 5,300 acres
9 (21 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.

11.5.12.1.5 *State-Listed Species*

10
11
12
13
14 There are eight species listed by the State of Nevada that may occur in the proposed East
15 Mormon Mountain SEZ affected area or may be affected by solar energy development on the
16 SEZ (Table 11.5.12.1-1). These state-listed species include (1) plant: threecorner milkvetch;
17 (2) reptile: desert tortoise; (3) birds: phainopepla and Swainson's hawk; and (4) mammals:
18 Allen's big-eared bat, Brazilian free-tailed bat, fringed myotis, and Townsend's big-eared bat.
19 All of these species are protected in the state of Nevada under NRS 501.110 or NRS 527. Of
20 these state-listed species, only the threecorner milkvetch has not been previously discussed; it is
21 described below. Additional life history information for these species is provided in Appendix J.
22

23 The threecorner milkvetch is a perennial forb that is known only from Clark County,
24 Nevada, and Mohave County, Arizona. This species inhabits open, deep sandy soils, desert
25 washes, or dunes, generally stabilized by vegetation and/or a gravel veneer at elevations between
26 1,500 and 2,500 ft (455 and 760 m). The threecorner milkvetch is a USFWS species of concern
27 and is known to occur about 8 mi (13 km) south of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land
28 cover model, potentially suitable desert wash habitat may occur in the access road corridor and
29 within the area of indirect effects (Table 11.5.12.1-1). Although SWReGAP did not map any
30 desert wash habitat on the SEZ, there appear to be numerous desert washes that could provide
31 habitat for this species on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects, including Toquop Wash
32 and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified.
33
34

11.5.12.1.6 *Rare Species*

35
36
37 There are 28 rare species (i.e., state rank of S1 or S2 in the state of Nevada or a species of
38 concern by the State of Nevada or USFWS) that may be affected by solar energy development on
39 the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (Table 11.5.12.1-1). Six of these species (all plants)
40 have not been previously discussed because of their known or pending status under the ESA
41 (Sections 11.5.12.1.1 or 11.5.12.1.2) or the BLM (Section 11.5.12.1.4). The six species are
42 Antelope Canyon goldenbush, bearded screwmoss, beaver dam breadroot, Meadow Valley
43 sandwort, New York Mountains catseye, and Veyo milkvetch. The habitats and known
44 occurrences of these species relative to the SEZ are shown in Table 11.5.12.1-1. Additional life
45 history information is provided in Appendix J.
46
47

1 **11.5.12.2 Impacts**
2

3 The potential for impacts on special status species from utility-scale solar energy
4 development within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is presented in this section. The
5 types of impacts that special status species could incur from construction and operation of utility-
6 scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.4.
7

8 The assessment of impacts on special status species is based on available information on
9 the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.5.12.1 and following the
10 analysis approach described in Appendix M. It is assumed that, prior to development, surveys
11 would be conducted to determine the presence of special status species and their habitats in and
12 near areas where ground-disturbing activities would occur. Additional NEPA assessments, ESA
13 consultations, and coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address
14 project-specific impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in
15 additional required actions to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts on special status species (see
16 Section 11.5.12.3).
17

18 Solar energy development within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ could affect
19 a variety of habitats (see Sections 11.5.9 and 11.5.10). Impacts on these habitats could in turn
20 affect special status species that are dependent on those habitats. Based on NNHP records, the
21 Las Vegas buckwheat, desert tortoise, and Nelson’s bighorn sheep are the only special status
22 species known to occur within the affected area of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ
23 boundary. As discussed in Section 11.5.12.1, this approach to identifying the species that could
24 occur in the affected area probably overestimates the number of species that actually occur there
25 and may, therefore, overestimate impacts on some special status species. No groundwater-
26 dependent species occur within the affected area of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ
27 based upon NNHP records, information provided by the USFWS (Stout 2009), and the
28 evaluation of groundwater resources from the Virgin River Valley groundwater basin within the
29 SEZ region (Section 11.5.9).
30

31 Impacts on special status species could occur during all phases of development
32 (construction, operation, and decommissioning and reclamation) of a utility-scale solar energy
33 project within the SEZ. Construction and operation activities could result in short- or long-term
34 impacts on individuals and their habitats, especially if these activities occur in areas where
35 special status species are known to or could occur. As presented in Section 11.5.1.2, an 11-mi
36 (18-km) long access road corridor is assumed to be needed to serve solar facilities within this
37 SEZ. Impacts of transmission line construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this
38 evaluation due to the proximity of existing infrastructure to the SEZ.
39

40 Direct impacts would result from habitat destruction or modification. It is assumed that
41 direct impacts would occur only within the SEZ and the access road construction area where
42 ground-disturbing activities are expected to occur. Indirect impacts could result from depletions
43 of groundwater resources, surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust
44 generated by project activities, accidental spills, harassment, and lighting. No ground-disturbing
45 activities associated with project developments are anticipated to occur within the area of
46 indirect effects. Decommissioning of facilities and reclamation of disturbed areas after

1 operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on individuals and habitats adjacent
2 to project areas, but long-term benefits would accrue if original land contours and native plant
3 communities were restored in previously disturbed areas.
4

5 The successful incorporation of programmatic design features (discussed in Appendix A,
6 Section A.2.2) would reduce direct impacts on some special status species, especially those that
7 depend on habitat types that can be easily avoided (e.g., desert washes). Indirect impacts on
8 special status species could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic
9 design features, especially those engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation,
10 spills, and fugitive dust.
11

12 13 ***11.5.12.2.1 Impacts on Species Listed under the ESA*** 14

15 One species listed under the ESA may be affected by solar energy development on the
16 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ—the Mojave population of the desert tortoise. This
17 species is listed as threatened under the ESA and is known to occur about 2 mi (3 km) south of
18 the SEZ (Figure 11.5.12.1-1). According to the USFWS (Stout 2009), desert tortoise populations
19 have the potential to occur in the area of direct effects, and designated critical habitat for this
20 species occurs in the Mormon Mesa and Beaver Dam Slope critical habitat units south and east
21 of the SEZ, respectively (Figure 11.5.12.1-1). According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability
22 model, about 8,500 acres (34 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and 70 acres
23 (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat within the access road corridor could be directly affected
24 by construction and operations of solar energy development on the SEZ (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
25 This direct effects area represents about 0.4% of available suitable habitat of the desert tortoise
26 in the region. About 79,250 acres (321 km²) of suitable habitat occurs in the area of potential
27 indirect effects; this area represents about 3.6% of the available suitable habitat in the region
28 (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
29

30 On the basis of estimates of desert tortoise density in the Beaver Dam Slope critical
31 habitat unit adjacent to the eastern border of the SEZ, the USFWS estimated that full-scale solar
32 energy development on the SEZ may directly affect up to 47 desert tortoises on the SEZ
33 (Stout 2009). In addition to direct impacts, development on the SEZ could indirectly affect desert
34 tortoises by fragmenting and degrading habitats between the Mormon Mesa and Beaver Dam
35 Slope critical habitat units and other potentially suitable habitats in the vicinity of the proposed
36 East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Fragmentation would be exacerbated by the installation of
37 exclusionary fencing at the perimeter of the SEZ or individual project areas.
38

39 The overall impact on the desert tortoise from construction, operation, and
40 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
41 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this
42 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the
43 region. The implementation of programmatic design features alone is unlikely to reduce these
44 impacts to negligible levels. Avoidance of potentially suitable habitats for this species is not a
45 feasible means of mitigating impacts because these habitats (desert scrub) are widespread
46 throughout the area of direct effect. Pre-disturbance surveys to determine the abundance of desert

1 tortoises on the SEZ and the implementation of a desert tortoise translocation plan and
2 compensation plan could further reduce direct impacts.

3
4 Development of actions to reduce impacts (e.g., reasonable and prudent alternatives,
5 reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions of incidental take statements) for the
6 desert tortoise, including development of a survey protocol, avoidance measures, minimization
7 measures, and, potentially, translocation actions, and compensatory mitigation, would require
8 formal consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the ESA. Consultation with NDOW
9 should also occur to determine any state mitigation requirements.

10
11 There are inherent dangers to tortoises associated with their capture, handling, and
12 translocation from the SEZ. These actions, if done improperly, can result in injury or death.
13 To minimize these risks, and as stated above, the desert tortoise translocation plan should be
14 developed in consultation with the USFWS and follow the *Guidelines for Handling Desert*
15 *Tortoises during Construction Projects* (Desert Tortoise Council 1994) and other current
16 translocation guidance provided by the USFWS. Consultation will identify potentially suitable
17 recipient locations, density thresholds for tortoise populations in recipient locations, procedures
18 for pre-disturbance clearance surveys and tortoise handling, as well as disease testing and post-
19 translocation monitoring and reporting requirements. Despite some risk of mortality or decreased
20 fitness, translocation is widely accepted as a useful strategy for the conservation of the desert
21 tortoise (Field et al. 2007).

22
23 To offset impacts of solar development on the SEZ, compensatory mitigation may be
24 needed to balance the acreage of habitat lost with acquisition of lands that would be improved
25 and protected for desert tortoise populations (USFWS 1994). Compensation can be accomplished
26 by improving the carrying capacity for the desert tortoise on the acquired lands. Other mitigation
27 actions may include funding for the habitat enhancement of the desert tortoise on existing federal
28 lands. Consultation with the USFWS and NDOW would be necessary to determine the
29 appropriate mitigation ratio to acquire, enhance, and preserve desert tortoise compensation lands.

30 31 32 ***11.5.12.2.2 Impacts on Species That Are Candidates for Listing under the ESA***

33
34 One species that is a candidate for listing under the ESA may be affected by solar energy
35 development on the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ—the Las Vegas buckwheat. This
36 species is known to occur within 1 mi (1.6 km) east of the SEZ (Figure 11.5.12.1-1) and,
37 according to the USFWS (Stout 2009), has the potential to occur on the SEZ and within the
38 access road corridor. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable desert
39 wash habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ, but about 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of
40 potentially suitable desert wash habitat in the access road corridor may be directly affected by
41 construction and operations of solar energy facilities on the SEZ. This direct effects area
42 represents less than 0.1% of available suitable habitat in the region. Although SWReGAP did not
43 map any desert wash habitat on the SEZ, there appear to be numerous desert washes that could
44 provide habitat for this species on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects, including Toquop
45 Wash and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified, but they could be
46 affected by construction and operations of solar energy development on the SEZ

1 (Table 11.5.12.1-1). About 2,120 acres (9 km²) of potentially suitable mapped desert wash
2 habitat occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area represents about 3.1% of the
3 available potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
4

5 Impacts of solar energy development in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ on the
6 Las Vegas buckwheat cannot be determined without quantification of the amount of potentially
7 suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects. Consequently, the overall impact on this
8 species could range from small to large. The implementation of programmatic design features is
9 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
10

11 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects
12 could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. In addition, conducting pre-
13 disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of
14 direct effects could reduce impacts. If avoidance or minimization are not feasible options, plants
15 could be translocated from the area of direct effects to protected areas that would not be affected
16 directly or indirectly by future development. Alternatively, or in combination with translocation,
17 a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects
18 on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing
19 occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive
20 mitigation strategy that used one or more of these options could be designed to completely offset
21 the impacts of development. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be
22 developed in coordination with the USFWS and NDOW.
23
24

25 ***11.5.12.2.3 Impacts on Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA***

26
27 On the basis of information provided by the NNHP, USFWS (Stout 2009), and
28 availability of potentially suitable habitats, there are no species under review for ESA listing that
29 may be affected by solar energy developments on the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ.
30
31

32 ***11.5.12.2.4 Impacts on BLM-Designated Sensitive Species***

33
34 BLM-designated sensitive species that may be affected by solar energy development on
35 the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ and were not previously discussed as ESA-listed
36 (Section 11.5.12.2.1), candidates for ESA listing (Section 11.5.12.2.2), or under review for ESA
37 listing (Section 11.5.12.2.3) are discussed below.
38
39

40 **Eastwood Milkweed**

41
42 The Eastwood milkweed is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed
43 East Mormon Mountain SEZ; however, about 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat
44 on the SEZ and 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be
45 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This direct impact area is
46 consists of rocky cliffs and outcrops (SEZ only) and desert wash habitat (road corridor only) and

1 represents less than 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. Although SWReGAP
2 did not map any desert wash habitat on the SEZ, there appear to be numerous desert washes that
3 could provide habitat for this species on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects, including
4 Toquop Wash and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified, but they
5 could be affected by construction and operations of solar energy development on the SEZ
6 (Table 11.5.12.1-1). About 9,090 acres (37 km²) of potentially suitable mapped habitat occurs in
7 the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 1.8% of the potentially suitable habitat in
8 the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).

9
10 Impacts of solar energy development in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ on the
11 Eastwood milkweed cannot be determined without quantification of the amount of potentially
12 suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects. Consequently, the overall impact on this
13 species could range from small to large. The implementation of programmatic design features is
14 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

15
16 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops and desert wash habitat
17 in the area of direct effects could reduce direct impacts on the Eastwood milkweed. In addition,
18 conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats
19 in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. If avoidance or minimization are not feasible
20 options, plants could be translocated from the area of direct effects to protected areas that would
21 not be affected directly or indirectly by future development. Alternatively, or in combination
22 with translocation, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to
23 mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and
24 enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to
25 development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or more of these options could
26 be designed to completely offset the impacts of development.

27 28 29 **Gold Butte Moss**

30
31 The Gold Butte moss is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed East
32 Mormon Mountain SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, about 5 acres
33 (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable rocky cliffs and outcrops on the SEZ could be directly affected
34 by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents less
35 than 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. No suitable habitat for this species
36 occurs in the access road corridor. About 5,300 acres (21 km²) of potentially suitable habitat
37 occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.4% of the potentially suitable
38 habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).

39
40 The overall impact on the Gold Butte moss from construction, operation, and
41 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
42 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this
43 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the
44 SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
45 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs
46 and outcrops in the area of direct effects and the implementation of mitigation measures

1 described previously for the Eastwood milkweed could reduce direct impacts on this species. The
2 need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by
3 conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
4

6 **Needle Mountains Milkvetch**

7
8 The Needle Mountains milkvetch is not known to occur in the affected area of the
9 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ; however, about 25 acres (0.1 km²) of potentially suitable
10 habitat on the SEZ and 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor
11 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This direct impact
12 area is composed of desert playa habitat (SEZ only) and desert wash habitat (road corridor only)
13 and represents less than 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. Although
14 SWReGAP did not map any desert wash habitat on the SEZ, there appear to be numerous desert
15 washes that could provide habitat for this species on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects,
16 including Toquop Wash and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified, but
17 they could be affected by construction and operations of solar energy development on the SEZ
18 (Table 11.5.12.1-1). About 2,230 acres (9 km²) of potentially suitable mapped habitat occurs in
19 the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.3% of the potentially suitable habitat in
20 the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
21

22 Impacts of solar energy development in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ on
23 the Needle Mountains milkvetch cannot be determined without quantification of the amount of
24 potentially suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects. Consequently, the overall
25 impact on this species could range from small to large. The implementation of programmatic
26 design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
27

28 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and playa habitats in the area of
29 direct effects and the implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the
30 Eastwood milkweed could reduce direct impacts on this species. The need for mitigation, other
31 than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys
32 for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
33

35 **Nevada Willowherb**

36
37 The Nevada willowherb is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed East
38 Mormon Mountain SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, about 5 acres
39 (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable rocky cliffs and outcrops on the SEZ could be directly affected
40 by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents less
41 than 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. There is no suitable habitat for this
42 species in the access road corridor. About 5,300 acres (21 km²) of potentially suitable habitat
43 occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 0.5% of the potentially suitable
44 habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
45

1 The overall impact on the Nevada willowherb from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
3 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this
4 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the
5 SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
6 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

7
8 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops in the area of direct
9 effects and the implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the Eastwood
10 milkweed could reduce direct impacts on this species. The need for mitigation, other than
11 programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for
12 the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

13 14 15 **Rock Phacelia**

16
17 The rock phacelia is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed East
18 Mormon Mountain SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, about 8,900 acres
19 (36 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and 75 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable
20 habitat in the access road corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations
21 (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents about 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat
22 in the SEZ region. About 101,700 acres (412 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the
23 area of indirect effects; this area represents about 3.2% of the potentially suitable habitat in the
24 SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).

25
26 The overall impact on the rock phacelia from construction, operation, and
27 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
28 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this
29 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the
30 SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
31 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

32
33 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts on
34 the rock phacelia because potentially suitable desert shrubland habitat is widespread throughout
35 the area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced with the implementation of
36 programmatic design features and the mitigation options described previously for the Eastwood
37 milkweed. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be
38 determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

39 40 41 **Rosy Two-Tone Beardtongue**

42
43 The rosy two-tone beardtongue is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed
44 East Mormon Mountain SEZ; however, about 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat
45 on the SEZ and 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be
46 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This direct impact area is

1 composed of rocky cliffs and outcrops (SEZ only) and desert wash habitat (road corridor only)
2 and represents less than 0.1% of the available potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region.
3 Although SWReGAP did not map any desert wash habitat on the SEZ, there appear to be
4 numerous desert washes that could provide habitat for this species on the SEZ and in the area of
5 indirect effects, including Toquop Wash and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not
6 been quantified, but they could be affected by construction and operations of solar energy
7 development on the SEZ (Table 11.5.12.1-1). About 7,500 acres (30 km²) of potentially suitable
8 mapped habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.4% of the
9 potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).

10
11 Impacts of solar energy development in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ on the
12 rosy two-tone beardtongue cannot be determined without quantification of the amount of
13 potentially suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects. Consequently, the overall
14 impact on this species could range from small to large. The implementation of programmatic
15 design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

16
17 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops and desert wash and
18 playa habitats in the area of direct effects and the implementation of mitigation measures
19 described previously for the Eastwood milkweed could reduce direct impacts on this species. The
20 need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by
21 conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

22 23 24 **White Bearpoppy**

25
26 The white bearpoppy is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed East
27 Mormon Mountain SEZ; however, about 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable rocky cliffs
28 and outcrops on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations
29 (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents less than 0.1% of potentially suitable
30 habitat in the SEZ region. No suitable habitat for this species occurs in the access road corridor.
31 About 5,300 acres (21 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects;
32 this area represents about 2.3% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region
33 (Table 11.5.12.1-1).

34
35 The overall impact on the white bearpoppy from construction, operation, and
36 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
37 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this
38 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the
39 SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
40 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

41
42 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops in the area of direct
43 effects and the implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the Eastwood
44 milkweed could reduce direct impacts on this species. The need for mitigation, other than
45 programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for
46 the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

1 **Mojave Gypsum Bee**
2

3 The Mojave gypsum bee is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed East
4 Mormon Mountain SEZ; however, about 8,900 acres (36 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on
5 the SEZ and 70 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the access road corridor could
6 be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This direct impact area
7 represents about 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 94,225 acres
8 (381 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
9 about 3.3% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).

10
11 The overall impact on the Mojave gypsum bee from construction, operation, and
12 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
13 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this
14 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the
15 SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
16 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

17
18 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts on
19 the Mojave gypsum bee because potentially suitable desert shrubland habitat is widespread
20 throughout the area of direct effects. Direct impacts could also be reduced by conducting pre-
21 disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of
22 direct effects. If avoidance or minimization are not feasible options, a compensatory mitigation
23 plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats.
24 Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable
25 habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy
26 that used one or more of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of
27 development.

28
29
30 **Mojave Poppy Bee**
31

32 The Mojave poppy bee is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed East
33 Mormon Mountain SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable
34 habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ. However, about 5 acres (<0.1 km²)
35 of potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected by construction and
36 operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This direct impact area is composed of desert wash habitat and
37 represents less than 0.1% of the available potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. Although
38 SWReGAP did not map any desert wash habitat on the SEZ, there appear to be numerous desert
39 washes that could provide habitat for this species on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects,
40 including Toquop Wash and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified, but
41 they could be affected by construction and operations of solar energy development on the SEZ
42 (Table 11.5.12.1-1). About 2,120 acres (9 km²) of potentially suitable mapped habitat occurs in
43 the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.5% of the potentially suitable habitat in
44 the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).

1 Impacts of solar energy development in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ on
2 the Mojave poppy bee cannot be quantified without quantification of the amount of potentially
3 suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects. Consequently, the overall impact on this
4 species could range from small to large. The implementation of design features is expected to be
5 sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
6

7 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects
8 and the implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the Mojave gypsum bee
9 could reduce direct impacts on this species. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic
10 design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and
11 its habitat on the SEZ.
12

13 **Ferruginous Hawk**

14
15
16 The ferruginous hawk is a winter resident in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ
17 region and is known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat
18 suitability model, suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ or within the access
19 road corridor (Table 11.5.12.1-1). However, about 7,250 acres (29 km²) of potentially suitable
20 habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 1.1% of the potentially
21 suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
22

23 The overall impact on the ferruginous hawk from construction, operation, and
24 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
25 Mountain SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs
26 in the area of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of
27 programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible
28 levels.
29

30 **Phainopepla**

31
32
33 The phainopepla is a year-round resident in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ
34 region and is known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat
35 suitability model, suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ or within the access
36 road corridor (Table 11.5.12.1-1). However, about 15,500 acres (63 km²) of potentially suitable
37 habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 1.1% of the potentially
38 suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
39

40 The overall impact on the phainopepla from construction, operation, and
41 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
42 Mountain SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs
43 in the area of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of
44 programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible
45 levels.
46
47

1 **Swainson’s Hawk**

2
3 The Swainson’s hawk is considered a summer breeding resident within the proposed East
4 Mormon Mountain SEZ region and is known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. According to
5 the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the
6 SEZ or within the access road corridor (Table 11.5.12.1-1). However, about 15,200 acres
7 (62 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
8 about 1.1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).

9
10 The overall impact on the Swainson’s hawk from construction, operation, and
11 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
12 Mountain SEZ is considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs
13 in the area of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of
14 programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible
15 levels.

16
17
18 **Western Burrowing Owl**

19
20 The western burrowing owl is considered a summer breeding resident within the
21 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ region and is known to occur in Lincoln County,
22 Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, about 8,950 acres (36 km²) of
23 potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and 70 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in
24 the road corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
25 This direct impact area represents 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region.
26 About 96,275 acres (390 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect
27 effects; this area represents about 2.8% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region
28 (Table 11.5.12.1-1). Most of this area could serve as foraging and nesting habitat (shrublands).
29 The abundance of burrows suitable for nesting on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects has
30 not been determined.

31
32 The overall impact on the western burrowing owl from construction, operation, and
33 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
34 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and
35 nesting habitat for this species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially
36 suitable foraging and nesting habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design
37 features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

38
39 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts on
40 the western burrowing owl because potentially suitable shrubland habitats are widespread
41 throughout the area of direct effect and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
42 Impacts on the western burrowing owl could be reduced through the implementation of
43 programmatic design features and by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or
44 minimizing disturbance to occupied burrows and habitat on the SEZ. If avoidance or
45 minimization are not feasible options, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and
46 implemented to mitigate direct effects. Compensation could involve the protection and

1 enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to
2 development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or both of these options could
3 be designed to completely offset the impacts of development. The need for mitigation, other than
4 programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for
5 the species and its habitat within the area of direct effects.
6
7

8 **Allen's Big-Eared Bat**

9

10 Allen's big-eared bat is a year-round resident within the proposed East Mormon
11 Mountain SEZ region and is known to occur about 15 mi (24 km) southeast of the SEZ.
12 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, about 8,900 acres (36 km²) of potentially
13 suitable habitat on the SEZ and 75 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the access
14 road corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
15 This direct impact area represents 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
16 96,525 acres (390 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effect; this
17 area represents about 3.8% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
18 Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by
19 desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, about 4 acres
20 (<1 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) occurs on the SEZ, and
21 about 5,300 acres (21 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect
22 effects.
23

24 The overall impact on the Allen's big-eared bat from construction, operation, and
25 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
26 is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in
27 the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the
28 SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
29 reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.
30

31 Avoiding or minimizing direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because
32 suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect and readily available in other
33 portions of the affected area. Impacts on the Allen's big-eared bat could be reduced by
34 conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied roosts
35 in the area of direct effects. If avoidance or minimization are not feasible options, a
36 compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on
37 occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing
38 occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive
39 mitigation strategy that used one or both of these options could be designed to completely offset
40 the impacts of development. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features,
41 should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat in the
42 area of direct effects.
43
44
45

1 **Brazilian Free-Tailed Bat**
2

3 The Brazilian free-tailed bat is a year-round resident within the proposed East Mormon
4 Mountain SEZ region and is known to occur about 20 mi (32 km) south of the SEZ. According
5 to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, about 8,900 acres (36 km²) of potentially suitable
6 habitat on the SEZ and 75 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the access road
7 corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This
8 direct impact area represents 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
9 89,525 acres (362 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
10 area represents about 2.4% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
11 Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by
12 desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, about 4 acres
13 (<1 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) occurs on the SEZ, and
14 about 5,300 acres (21 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect
15 effects.
16

17 The overall impact on the Brazilian free-tailed bat from construction, operation, and
18 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
19 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for
20 this species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging
21 habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be
22 sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.
23

24 Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitat is not a feasible way to mitigate
25 impacts on the Brazilian free-tailed bat because potentially suitable habitats are widespread
26 throughout the area of direct effect and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
27 However, implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the Allen's big-eared
28 bat could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need for mitigation, other
29 than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys
30 for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
31
32

33 **Fringed Myotis**
34

35 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident within the proposed East Mormon Mountain
36 SEZ region and is known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP
37 habitat suitability model, about 8,900 acres (36 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ
38 and 70 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the access road corridor could be directly
39 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents
40 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 101,525 acres (411 km²) of
41 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effect; this area represents about 2.1% of
42 the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.5.12.1-1). Most of the potentially suitable
43 habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by desert shrubland. On the basis of an
44 evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, about 4 acres (<1 km²) of potentially suitable roost
45 habitat (buildings and caves) occurs on the SEZ, and about 5,300 acres (21 km²) of potentially
46 suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) may occur in the area of indirect effects.
47

1 The overall impact on the fringed myotis from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
3 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for
4 this species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging
5 habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be
6 sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.
7

8 Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitat is not a feasible way to mitigate
9 impacts on the fringed myotis because potentially suitable habitats are widespread throughout the
10 area of direct effect and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region. However,
11 implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the Allen's big-eared bat could
12 reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need for mitigation, other than
13 programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for
14 the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
15

16 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

17
18
19 The Nelson's bighorn sheep is known to occur within the affected area of the proposed
20 East Mormon Mountain SEZ, but suitable range habitat is not expected to occur on the SEZ or
21 within the access road corridor. However, about 4,400 acres (18 km²) of potentially suitable
22 habitat occurs in the area of indirect effect; this area represents about 0.4% of the available
23 suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.5.12.1-1). Despite the apparent lack of suitable habitat
24 on the SEZ and the access road corridor, the Nelson's bighorn sheep may use portions of these
25 areas as migratory corridors between range habitats.
26

27 The overall impact on the Nelson's bighorn sheep from construction, operation, and
28 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
29 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this
30 species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in
31 the region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
32 reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.
33

34 Impacts on the Nelson's bighorn sheep could be further reduced by conducting pre-
35 disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats and important
36 movement corridors within in the area of direct effects. If avoidance or minimization is not a
37 feasible option, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate
38 direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement
39 of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A
40 comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or both of these options could be designed to
41 completely offset the impacts of development. The need for mitigation should first be determined
42 by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat within the area of direct
43 effects.
44
45
46

1 **Silver-Haired Bat**

2
3 The silver-haired bat is a year-round resident within the proposed East Mormon
4 Mountain SEZ region and is known to occur about 25 mi (40 km) southwest of the SEZ.
5 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, about 8,900 acres (36 km²) of potentially
6 suitable habitat on the SEZ and 70 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the access
7 road corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This
8 direct impact area represents 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
9 87,425 acres (354 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
10 area represents about 2.3% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
11 Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by
12 desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially
13 suitable roost habitat (woodland habitat) does not occur on the SEZ, but about 10 acres (<1 km²)
14 of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects.

15
16 The overall impact on the silver-haired bat from construction, operation, and
17 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
18 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for
19 this species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging
20 habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be
21 sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all
22 potentially suitable foraging habitats is not feasible because such habitat is widespread
23 throughout the area of direct effects and is readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

24
25
26 **Townsend’s Big-Eared Bat**

27
28 The Townsend’s big-eared bat is a year-round resident within the proposed East Mormon
29 Mountain SEZ region and is known to occur about 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ.
30 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, about 8,900 acres (36 km²) of potentially
31 suitable habitat on the SEZ and 70 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the access
32 road corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This
33 direct impact area represents 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
34 87,875 acres (356 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effect; this
35 area represents about 2.5% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
36 Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by
37 desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, about 4 acres
38 (<1 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) occurs on the SEZ, and
39 about 5,300 acres (21 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect
40 effects.

41
42 The overall impact on the Townsend’s big-eared bat from construction, operation, and
43 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
44 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for
45 this species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of such habitat in the SEZ region.

1 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
2 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.

3
4 Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitat is not a feasible way to mitigate
5 impacts on the Townsend's big-eared bat because potentially suitable habitats are widespread
6 throughout the area of direct effect and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
7 However, implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the Allen's big-eared
8 bat could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need for mitigation, other
9 than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys
10 for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

11 12 13 **Western Small-Footed Myotis**

14
15 The western small-footed myotis is a year-round resident within the proposed East
16 Mormon Mountain SEZ region and is known to occur in Lincoln County, Nevada. According
17 to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, about 8,900 acres (36 km²) of potentially suitable
18 habitat on the SEZ and 70 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the access road
19 corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This
20 direct impact area represents 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
21 101,425 acres (410 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
22 area represents about 2.2% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
23 Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by
24 desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, about 4 acres
25 (<1 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) occurs on the SEZ, and
26 about 5,300 acres (21 km²) of such habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects.

27
28 The overall impact on the western small-footed myotis from construction, operation,
29 and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed East Mormon
30 Mountain SEZ is considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for
31 this species in the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of such habitat in the SEZ region.
32 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
33 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels.

34
35 Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitat is not a feasible way to mitigate
36 impacts on the western small-footed myotis because potentially suitable habitats are widespread
37 throughout the area of direct effect and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
38 However, implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the Allen's big-eared
39 bat could reduce direct impacts on this species to negligible levels. The need for mitigation, other
40 than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys
41 for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

1 **11.5.12.2.5 Impacts on State-Listed Species**
2

3 There are eight species listed by the State of Nevada that may occur in the proposed East
4 Mormon Mountain SEZ affected area or may be affected by solar energy development on the
5 SEZ (Table 11.5.12.1-1). Of these species, only impacts on the threecorner milkvetch have not
6 been previously discussed. Impacts on the threecorner milkvetch are discussed below.
7

8 The threecorner milkvetch is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed East
9 Mormon Mountain SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable
10 habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ; however, about 5 acres (<0.1 km²) of
11 potentially suitable habitat in the road corridor could be directly affected by construction and
12 operations (Table 11.5.12.1-1). This direct impact area is composed of desert wash habitat and
13 represents less than 0.1% of the available potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. Although
14 SWReGAP did not map any desert wash habitat on the SEZ, there appear to be numerous desert
15 washes that could provide habitat for this species on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects,
16 including Toquop Wash and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified, but
17 they could be affected by construction and operations of solar energy development on the SEZ
18 (Table 11.5.12.1-1). About 2,120 acres (9 km²) of potentially suitable mapped habitat occurs in
19 the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.5% of the potentially suitable habitat in
20 the SEZ region (Table 11.5.12.1-1).
21

22 Impacts of solar energy development in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ on the
23 threecorner milkvetch cannot be determined without quantification of the amount of potentially
24 suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects. Consequently, the overall impact on this
25 species could range from small to large. The implementation of programmatic design features is
26 expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
27

28 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects
29 and the implementation of mitigation measures described previously for the Eastwood milkweed
30 (Section 11.5.12.2.4) could reduce direct impacts on this species. The need for mitigation, other
31 than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys
32 for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
33

34
35 **11.5.12.2.6 Impacts on Rare Species**
36

37 There are 28 rare species (state rank of S1 or S2 in Nevada or a species of concern by the
38 State of Nevada or USFWS) that may be affected by solar energy development on the proposed
39 East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Impacts on 22 of these species have been previously discussed
40 because of their known or pending status under the ESA (Sections 11.5.12.2.1 or 11.5.12.2.2) or
41 designation under the BLM (Section 11.5.12.2.4). The remaining six species that have not been
42 previously discussed include the following plants: Antelope Canyon goldenbush, bearded
43 screwmoss, beaver dam breadroot, Meadow Valley sandwort, New York Mountains catseye, and
44 Veyo milkvetch. Impacts and potentially applicable mitigation measures (if necessary) for each
45 of these species is provided in Table 11.5.12.1-1. Additional life history information is provided
46 in Appendix J.
47

11.5.12.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness

The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects of utility-scale solar energy development on special status species. While some SEZ-specific design features are best established when specific project details are being considered, some design features can be identified at this time, including the following:

- Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the SEZ to determine the presence and abundance of special status species, including those identified in Table 11.5.12.1-1; disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing impacts on occupied habitats is not possible, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effect, or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy for special status species that used one or more of these options to offset the impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the appropriate federal and state agencies.
- Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and playa habitats, could reduce or eliminate impacts on the following seven special status species: Eastwood milkweed, Las Vegas buckwheat, Needle Mountains milkvetch, rosy two-tone beardtongue, threecorner milkvetch, Veyo milkvetch, and Mojave poppy bee.
- Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to rocky cliffs and outcrops within the area of direct effects could reduce or eliminate impacts on the following twelve special status species: Antelope Canyon goldenbush, bearded screwmoss, Eastwood milkweed, Meadow Valley sandwort, Nevada willowherb, rosy two-tone beardtongue, white bearpoppy, Allen’s big-eared bat, Brazilian free-tailed bat, fringed myotis, Townsend’s big-eared bat, and western small footed-myotis.
- Consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW should be conducted to address the potential for impacts on the desert tortoise. Consultation would identify an appropriate survey protocol, avoidance and minimization measures, and, if appropriate, reasonable and prudent alternatives, reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions for incidental take statements.
- Coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW should be conducted for the Las Vegas buckwheat, a candidate species for listing under the ESA. Coordination would identify an appropriate survey protocol and mitigation requirements, which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or compensation.

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- Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the affected area should be mitigated. This can be accomplished by identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary protective measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.

If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to required programmatic design features, impacts on the special status and rare species could be reduced.

1 **11.5.13 Air Quality and Climate**

2
3
4 **11.5.13.1 Affected Environment**

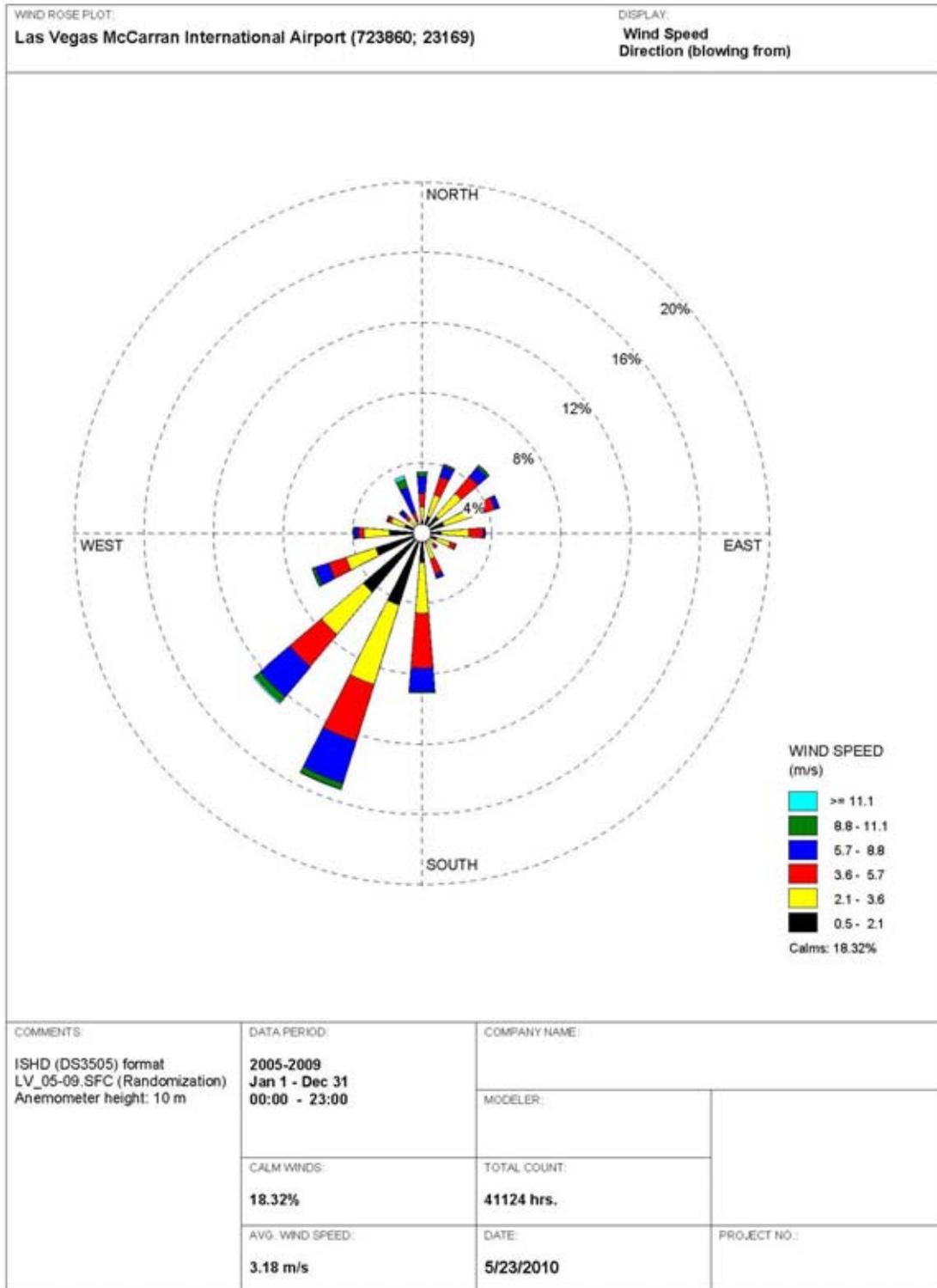
5
6
7 **11.5.13.1.1 Climate**

8
9 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in the southeast corner of
10 Lincoln County in southeastern Nevada. Nevada lies on the eastern lee side of the Sierra
11 Nevada Range, which markedly influences the climate of the state under the prevailing
12 westerlies (NCDC 2010a). In addition, the mountains east and north of Nevada act as barriers
13 to cold arctic air masses, and thus long periods of extremely cold weather are uncommon. The
14 SEZ lies at an average elevation of about 2,710 ft (826 m) in the northeastern portion of the
15 Mojave Desert, which has an arid climate marked by mild winters and hot summers, large daily
16 temperature swings due to dry air, scant precipitation, high evaporation rates, low relative
17 humidity, and abundant sunshine. Meteorological data collected at the Las Vegas McCarran
18 International Airport, about 75 mi (121 km) southwest of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
19 boundary, and at the Lytle Ranch, Utah, about 15 mi (24 km) northeast, are summarized below.
20

21 A wind rose from the Las Vegas McCarran International Airport, based on data
22 collected 33 ft (10 m) above the ground over the 5-year period 2005 to 2009, is presented in
23 Figure 11.5.13.1-1 (NCDC 2010b).⁵ During this period, the annual average wind speed at the
24 airport was about 7.1 mph (3.2 m/s); the prevailing wind direction was from the south-southwest
25 (about 15.3% of the time) and secondarily from the southwest (about 12.7% of the time). South-
26 southwesterly winds occurred most frequently throughout the year. Wind speeds categorized as
27 calm (less than 1.1 mph [0.5 m/s]) occurred frequently (about 18.3% of the time) because of the
28 stable conditions caused by strong radiative cooling from late night to sunrise. Average wind
29 speeds were highest in spring at 8.6 mph (3.8 m/s); lower in summer and fall at 7.6 mph
30 (3.4 m/s) and 6.2 mph (2.8 m/s), respectively; and lowest in winter at 6.0 mph (2.7 m/s).
31

32 In southern Nevada, the summers are long and hot, while the winters are short and mild
33 (NCDC 2010a). For the period 1988 to 2010, the annual average temperature at the Lytle Ranch,
34 Utah, was 60.7°F (15.9°C) (WRCC 2010a). December was the coldest month, with an average
35 minimum of 25.5°F (-3.6°C), and July was the warmest, with an average maximum of 102.3°F

⁵ Associated with the Toquop Energy Project, wind data were collected in the southeastern SEZ between April 20, 2006 and April 30, 2007 (BLM 2009f). Although this represents only one year of data, onsite wind data, which are more affected by nearby mountains to the west, are quite dissimilar to the Las Vegas data. Wind speed onsite is about 10.0 mph (4.5 m/s), about 40% higher than that in Las Vegas, and prevailing wind direction is primarily from the north-northwest (about 32% of the time) and secondarily from the south-southwest (about 15% of the time). Therefore, the wind data summaries and air quality impact analysis presented here, based on Las Vegas wind data, may not be representative for the site. Based on the onsite wind data, prevailing wind direction is toward nearby towns such as Bunkerville and Mesquite, about 12 mi (19 km) from the SEZ. Predicted concentrations using onsite wind data could be lower at site boundaries (due to high wind speeds) but a little higher at nearby towns (due to higher wind speeds and a long distance from the SEZ) than those presented in Section 11.5.13.2.1.



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FIGURE 11.5.13.1-1 Wind Rose at 33 ft (10 m) at the Las Vegas McCarran International Airport, Nevada, 2005 to 2009 (Source: NCDC 2010b)

1 (39.1°C). In summer, daytime maximum temperatures higher than 100°F (37.8°C) are common,
2 and minimums are in the mid-50s. The minimum temperatures recorded were below freezing
3 ($\leq 32^\circ\text{F}$ [0°C]) during the colder months (from October to May, with a peak of about 23 days in
4 January and about 26 days in December), but subzero temperatures were never recorded. During
5 the same period, the highest temperature, 115°F (46.1°C), was reached in July 2001 and the
6 lowest, 3°F (-16.1°C), in January 2004. In a typical year, about 125 days had a maximum
7 temperature of at least 90°F (32.2°C), while about 98 days had minimum temperatures at or
8 below freezing.

9
10 Because of rain shadow effects caused by the Sierra Nevada Range to the west, very little
11 precipitation occurs in Nevada (NCDC 2010a). For the 1988 to 2010 period, annual precipitation
12 at the Lytle Ranch, Utah, averaged about 10.43 in. (26.5 cm) (WRCC 2010a). On average,
13 29 days a year have measurable precipitation (0.01 in. [0.025 cm] or higher). Seasonally,
14 precipitation is the highest in winter (about 42% of the annual total), lower in spring (about 24%)
15 and fall (about 19%), and the lowest in summer. Snow occurs mostly from December to
16 February but is a rarity in the area. The annual average snowfall at the Lytle Ranch, Utah, was
17 about 1.1 in. (2.8 cm), with the highest monthly snowfall of 9.0 in. (22.9 cm) in December 2008.

18
19 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is far from major water bodies (more
20 than 310 mi [499 km] to the Pacific Ocean). Severe weather events, such as severe
21 thunderstorms, hurricanes, and tornadoes, are rare in Lincoln County, which encompasses the
22 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (NCDC 2010c).

23
24 In Nevada, flooding could occur from melting of heavy snowpack. On occasion, heavy
25 summer thunderstorms also cause flooding of local streams, usually in sparsely populated
26 mountainous areas, but they are seldom destructive (NCDC 2010a). Since 1996, 18 floods
27 (17 flash floods and 1 flood), most of which occurred in July and August (NCDC 2010c), were
28 reported in Lincoln County. These floods caused no deaths or injuries, but they did cause
29 significant property and some crop damage. In January 2005, heavy rain and rapid snow melt
30 caused extensive flooding in southern Lincoln and northeast Clark Counties, which brought
31 about significant property damage.

32
33 In Lincoln County, 7 hail events have been reported since 1981, none of which caused
34 property damage (NCDC 2010c). Hail measuring 1.5 in (3.8 cm) in diameter was reported in
35 1981. In Lincoln County, 22 high wind events have been reported since 1995, which caused
36 some property damage. Such events, with a maximum wind speed of up to 83 mph (37 m/s),
37 have occurred at any time of the year, with a peak during spring months. In addition, 4
38 thunderstorm wind events have been reported since 1964. Thunderstorm winds, with a maximum
39 wind speed of up to 69 mph (31 m/s), occurred mostly during summer months; one of these
40 caused minor property damage.

41
42 In Lincoln County, no dust storm events were reported (NCDC 2010c). However, the
43 ground surface of the SEZ is covered primarily with fine sandy loams of the Mormon Mesa
44 association (covering about 84%) and Bracken gravelly fine sandy loams (covering about 10%),
45 which have relatively moderate dust storm potential. High winds can trigger large amounts of
46 blowing dust in areas of dry and loose soils with sparse vegetation in Lincoln County. Dust

1 storms can deteriorate air quality and visibility and may have adverse effects on health,
2 particularly for people with asthma or other respiratory problems. No dust storm data are
3 available for the Lincoln County, but dust storm data for Clark County might be applicable to
4 the East Mormon Mountain SEZ, considering that the SEZ is located in the Mojave Desert along
5 with Clark County, and such storms are prevalent over a wide area. From 2002 to 2004, Clark
6 County experienced between two and four high-wind events per year when dust levels exceeded
7 federal health standards (Clark County DAQEM 2005). In Clark County, dust storm events with
8 unhealthy PM₁₀ levels are likely to occur during late winter and early spring.
9

10 Hurricanes and tropical storms formed off the coast of Central America and Mexico
11 weaken over the cold waters off the California coast. Accordingly, hurricanes never hit Nevada.
12 Historically, one tropical depression passed within 100 mi (160 km) of the proposed East
13 Mormon Mountain SEZ (CSC 2010). In the period from 1950 to July 2010, a total of six
14 tornadoes (0.1 per year each) were reported in Lincoln County (NCDC 2010c). Most tornadoes
15 occurring in Lincoln County were relatively weak (i.e., one was F [uncategorized⁶], four were
16 F0, and one was F1 on the Fujita tornado scale), and these tornadoes caused no deaths or injuries,
17 although they did cause some property damage. Most of these tornadoes occurred far from the
18 SEZ; the nearest one hit about 27 mi (43 km) southwest of the SEZ.
19
20

21 ***11.5.13.1.2 Existing Air Emissions***

22
23 Lincoln County has several industrial emission sources scattered over the county, but
24 their emissions are relatively small. No emission sources are located around the proposed East
25 Mormon Mountain SEZ. Because of the sparse population, only a handful of major roads exist in
26 Lincoln County; these include U.S. 93 and State Routes 318, 319, and 375. Thus, onroad mobile
27 source emissions are not substantial. Data on annual emissions of criteria pollutants and VOCs in
28 Lincoln County are presented in Table 11.5.13.1-1 for 2002 (WRAP 2009). Emissions data are
29 classified into six source categories: point, area, onroad mobile, nonroad mobile, biogenic, and
30 fire (wildfires, prescribed fires, agricultural fires, structural fires). In 2002, nonroad sources were
31 major contributors to total SO₂ and NO_x emissions (about 56% and 57%, respectively). Biogenic
32 sources (i.e., vegetation—including trees, plants, and crops—and soils) that release naturally
33 occurring emissions contributed primarily to CO emissions (about 56%) and secondarily to NO_x
34 emissions (about 22%), and accounted for most of the VOC emissions (about 99%). Fire sources
35 were primary contributors to PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions (about 60% and 83%, respectively) and
36 secondary contributors to SO₂ and CO emissions (41% and 33%, respectively). Area sources
37 accounted for about 37% of PM₁₀ and 13% of PM_{2.5}. In Lincoln County, point sources were
38 minor contributors to criteria pollutants and VOCs.
39

⁶ Not categorized by the Fujita tornado scale because damage level was not reported.

1 In 2005, Nevada produced about 56.3 MMt of *gross*⁷
 2 carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_{2e})⁸ emissions, which is about
 3 0.8% of total U.S. GHG emissions in that year (NDEP 2008).
 4 Gross GHG emissions in Nevada increased by about 65% from
 5 1990 to 2005 because of Nevada’s rapid population growth,
 6 compared to 16.3% growth in U.S. GHG emissions during the
 7 same period. In 2005, electrical generation (48%) and
 8 transportation (30%) were the primary contributors to gross
 9 GHG emission sources in Nevada. Fuel use in the residential,
 10 commercial, and industrial sectors combined accounted for
 11 about 12% of total state emissions. Nevada’s *net* emissions
 12 were about 51.3 MMt CO_{2e}, considering carbon sinks from
 13 forestry activities and agricultural soils throughout the state.
 14 The EPA (2009a) also estimated 2005 emissions in Nevada. Its
 15 estimate of CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion was
 16 49.6 MMt, which was comparable to the state’s estimate.
 17 Electric power generation and transportation accounted for
 18 about 52.7% and 33.6% of the CO₂ emissions total,
 19 respectively, while the residential, commercial, and industrial
 20 sectors accounted for the remainder (about 13.7%).

21 11.5.13.1.3 Air Quality

22
 23 The EPA set NAAQS for six criteria pollutants (EPA
 24 2010a): SO₂, NO₂, CO, O₃, PM (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and Pb.
 25 Nevada has its own SAAQS, which are similar to the NAAQS
 26 with some differences (NAC 445B.22097). In addition, Nevada
 27 has set standards for 1-hour H₂S, which is not addressed by the
 28 NAAQS. The NAAQS and Nevada SAAQS for criteria
 29 pollutants are presented in Table 11.5.13.1-2.
 30
 31
 32

33 Lincoln County is located administratively within the
 34 Nevada Intrastate AQCR, along with the 10 other counties in Nevada, other than the Las Vegas
 35 Intrastate AQCR (Clark County only), which encompasses Las Vegas, and the Northwest
 36 Nevada Intrastate AQCR (five northwest counties), which encompasses Reno. Currently, the
 37 area surrounding the proposed SEZ is designated as being in unclassifiable/attainment of
 38 NAAQS for all criteria pollutants (40 CFR 81.329).
 39

TABLE 11.5.13.1-1 Annual Emissions of Criteria Pollutants and VOCs in Lincoln County, Nevada, Encompassing the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, 2002^a

Pollutant ^b	Emissions (tons/yr) ^c
SO ₂	230
NO _x	3,453
CO	47,458
VOCs	172,491
PM ₁₀	2,586
PM _{2.5}	1,604

^a Includes point, area, onroad and nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire emissions.

^b Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 μm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 μm; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; and VOCs = volatile organic compounds.

^c To convert tons to kilograms, multiply by 907.

Source: WRAP (2009).

⁷ Excluding GHG emissions removed as a result of forestry and other land uses and excluding GHG emissions associated with exported electricity.

⁸ A measure used to compare the emissions from various GHGs on the basis of their global warming potential, defined as the cumulative radiative forcing effects of a gas over a specified time horizon resulting from the emission of a unit mass of gas relative to a reference gas, CO₂. The CO_{2e} for a gas is derived by multiplying the mass of the gas by the associated global warming potential.

TABLE 11.5.13.1-2 NAAQS, SAAQS, and Background Concentration Levels Representative of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ in Lincoln County, Nevada, 2004 to 2008

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	NAAQS	SAAQS	Background Concentration Level	
				Concentration ^{b,c}	Data Source ^d
SO ₂	1-hour	75 ppb ^e	NA ^f	NA	NA
	3-hour	0.5 ppm	0.5 ppm	0.009 ppm (1.8%)	Las Vegas, 2005
	24-hour	0.14 ppm	0.14 ppm	0.008 ppm (5.7%)	Las Vegas, 2005
	Annual	0.030 ppm	0.030 ppm	0.006 ppm (20%)	Las Vegas, 2005
NO ₂	1-hour	100 ppb ^g	NA	NA	NA
	Annual	0.053 ppm	0.053 ppm	0.007 ppm (13%)	Mesquite, 2007
CO	1-hour	35 ppm	35 ppm	5.7 ppm (16%)	Las Vegas, 2004
	8-hour	9 ppm	9 ppm	3.9 ppm (43%)	Las Vegas, 2005
O ₃	1-hour	0.12 ppm ^h	0.12 ppm	0.098 ppm (82%)	Mesquite, 2005
	8-hour	0.075 ppm	NA	0.073 ppm (97%)	Mesquite, 2004
PM ₁₀	24-hour	150 µg/m ³	150 µg/m ³	142 µg/m ³ (95%)	Mesquite, 2006
	Annual	NA	50 µg/m ³	26 µg/m ³ (52%)	Mesquite, 2005
PM _{2.5}	24-hour	35 µg/m ³	NA	10.2 µg/m ³ (29%)	North Las Vegas, 2005
	Annual	15.0 µg/m ³	NA	4.1 µg/m ³ (27%)	North Las Vegas, 2005
Pb	Calendar quarter	1.5 µg/m ³	1.5 µg/m ³	NA	NA
	Rolling 3-month	0.15 µg/m ³ ⁱ	NA	NA	NA

^a Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO₂ = nitrogen dioxide; O₃ = ozone; Pb = lead; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 µm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 µm; and SO₂ = sulfur dioxide.

^b Monitored concentrations are the second-highest for all averaging times less than or equal to 24-hour averages, except fourth-highest daily maximum for 8-hour O₃ and the 98th percentile for 24-hour PM_{2.5}, and arithmetic mean for annual SO₂, NO₂, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}.

^c Values in parentheses are background concentration levels as a percentage of NAAQS or SAAQS, respectively. Calculation of 1-hour SO₂ and NO₂ to NAAQS was not made, because no measurement data based on new NAAQS are available.

^d All air monitoring stations listed are located in Clark County.

^e Effective August 23, 2010.

^f NA = not applicable or not available.

^g Effective April 12, 2010.

^h The EPA revoked the 1-hour O₃ standard in all areas, although some areas have continuing obligations under that standard (“anti-backsliding”).

ⁱ Effective January 12, 2009.

Sources: EPA (2010a,b); NAC 445B.22097.

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1 Because of Lincoln County’s low population density, it has no significant emission
2 sources of its own and only minor mobile emissions along major highways. Accordingly,
3 ambient air quality in Lincoln County is relatively good. There are no ambient air-monitoring
4 stations in Lincoln County. To characterize ambient air quality around the SEZ, four monitoring
5 stations in Clark County were chosen. Mesquite is located about 13 mi (21 km) southeast of the
6 SEZ and has recorded ambient concentrations of NO₂, O₃, and PM₁₀. Apex, which is located in
7 the northeast corner of North Las Vegas, about 51 mi (82 km) southwest and upwind of the
8 SEZ, was the closest PM_{2.5} monitoring station. CO concentrations at the East Tonopah station
9 in Las Vegas, which is the farthest downwind station of Las Vegas, were presented. The
10 East Sahara Avenue station, which is on the outskirts of Las Vegas, has the only SO₂ monitor
11 in the area. No Pb measurements have been made in the State of Nevada because of low Pb
12 concentration levels after the phaseout of leaded gasoline. The highest background
13 concentrations of criteria pollutants at these stations for the period 2004 to 2008 are presented
14 in Table 11.5.13.1-2 (EPA 2010b). Except for 8-hour O₃ and 24-hour PM₁₀, which approach
15 their respective standards, the highest concentration levels were lower than their respective
16 standards (up to 82%).
17

18 The PSD regulations (see 40 CFR 52.21), which are designed to limit the growth of air
19 pollution in clean areas, apply to a major new source or modification of an existing major source
20 within an attainment or unclassified area (see Section 4.11.2.3). As a matter of policy, the EPA
21 recommends that the permitting authority notify the Federal Land Managers when a proposed
22 PSD source would locate within 62 mi (100 km) of a sensitive Class I area. Several Class I areas
23 are located in Arizona and Utah; two of these are within 62 mi (100 km) of the proposed SEZ.
24 The nearest is Grand Canyon NP in Arizona (40 CFR 81.403), about 58 mi (93 km) southeast of
25 the East Mormon Mountain SEZ. This Class I area is not located downwind of prevailing winds
26 at the East Mormon Mountain SEZ (Figure 11.5.13.1-1). The next nearest Class I areas include
27 Zion and Bryce Canyon NPs in Utah, which are located about 62 mi (100 km) and 111 mi
28 (178 km) east–northeast of the SEZ, respectively.
29
30

31 **11.5.13.2 Impacts**

32

33 Potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with a solar project would be of
34 most concern during the construction phase. Impacts on ambient air quality from fugitive dust
35 emissions resulting from soil disturbances are anticipated, but they would be of short duration.
36 During the operations phase, only a few sources with generally low levels of emissions would
37 exist for any of the four types of solar technologies evaluated. A solar facility would either
38 not burn fossil fuels or burn only small amounts during operation. (For facilities using HTFs,
39 fuel could be used to maintain the temperature of the HTFs for more efficient daily start up.)
40 Conversely, use of solar facilities to generate electricity could offset air emissions that would
41 otherwise be released from fossil fuel power plants.
42

43 Air quality impacts shared by all solar technologies are discussed in detail in
44 Section 5.11.1, and technology-specific impacts are discussed in Section 5.11.2. Impacts specific
45 to the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are presented in the following sections. Any such
46 impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design

1 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any additional mitigation applied.
2 Section 11.5.13.3 below identifies SEZ-specific design features of particular relevance to the
3 East Mormon Mountain SEZ.
4
5

6 **11.5.13.2.1 Construction**

7

8 The East Mormon Mountain SEZ site has a relatively flat terrain; thus, only a minimum
9 number of site preparation activities, perhaps with no large-scale earthmoving operations,
10 would be required. However, fugitive dust emissions from soil disturbances during the entire
11 construction phase would be a major concern because of the large areas that would be disturbed
12 in a region that experiences windblown dust problems. Fugitive dusts, which are released near
13 ground level, typically have more localized impacts than similar emissions from an elevated
14 stack with additional plume rise induced by buoyancy and momentum effects.
15
16

17 **Methods and Assumptions**

18

19 Air quality modeling for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions associated with construction
20 activities was performed using the EPA-recommended AERMOD model (EPA 2009b). Details
21 for emissions estimation, the description of AERMOD, input data processing procedures, and
22 modeling assumption are described in Section M.13 of Appendix M. Estimated air
23 concentrations were compared with the applicable NAAQS/SAAQS levels at the site boundaries
24 and nearby communities and with Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) increment
25 levels at nearby Class I areas.⁹ However, no receptors were modeled for PSD analysis at the
26 nearest Class I areas, Grand Canyon NP in Arizona and Zion NP in Utah, because they are about
27 58 mi (93 km) and 62 mi (100 km) from the SEZ, respectively, which is over the maximum
28 modeling distance of 31 mi (50 km) for the AERMOD. Instead, several regularly spaced
29 receptors in the direction of the Grand Canyon NP and Zion NP were selected as surrogates for
30 the PSD analysis. For the East Mormon Mountain SEZ, the modeling was conducted based on
31 the following assumptions and input:
32

- 33 • Emissions of 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) total were uniformly distributed in the
34 southern portion of the SEZ, close to the nearest residences and towns such
35 Bunkerville and Mesquite;
- 36
- 37 • Surface hourly meteorological data came from the Las Vegas McCarran
38 International Airport and upper air sounding data came from the
39 Mercury/Desert Rock Airport for the 2005 to 2009 period; and
40

⁹ To provide a quantitative assessment, the modeled air impacts of construction were compared to the NAAQS/SAAQS levels and the PSD Class I increment levels. Although the Clean Air Act exempts construction activities from PSD requirements, a comparison with the Class I increment levels was used to quantify potential impacts. Only monitored data can be used to determine the attainment status. Modeled data are used to assess potential problems and as a consideration in the permitting process.

- A receptor grid was regularly spaced over a modeling domain of 62 mi × 62 mi (100 km × 100 km), centered on the proposed SEZ, and there were additional discrete receptors at the SEZ boundaries.

Results

Modeling results are summarized in Table 11.5.13.2-1 for concentration increments and total concentrations (modeled plus background concentrations) of both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} that would result from construction-related fugitive emissions. Maximum 24-hour PM₁₀ concentration increments modeled to occur at the site boundaries would be an estimated 567 µg/m³, which far exceeds the relevant standard level of 150 µg/m³. Total 24-hour PM₁₀ concentrations of 709 µg/m³ would also exceed the standard level at the SEZ boundary. However, high PM₁₀ concentrations would be limited to the immediate areas surrounding the SEZ boundary and would decrease quickly with distance. Predicted maximum 24-hour PM₁₀ concentration increments would be about 10 µg/m³ at Mesquite (closest town, about 12 mi [19 km] southeast of the SEZ), about 5 µg/m³ at Bunkerville, and less than 4 µg/m³ at Moapa Valley towns such as Moapa Valley and Overton. Annual average modeled concentration increments and total concentrations (increment plus background) for PM₁₀ at the SEZ boundary would be about 63.7 µg/m³ and 89.7 µg/m³, respectively, which are higher than the SAAQS level of 50 µg/m³. Annual PM₁₀ increments would be much lower, about 0.1 µg/m³ or less, at all aforementioned towns.

Total 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentrations would be 47.8 µg/m³ at the SEZ boundary, which is higher than the NAAQS level of 35 µg/m³; modeled increments contribute more than three times the amount of background concentration to this total. The total annual average PM_{2.5} concentration would be 10.4 µg/m³, which is lower than the NAAQS level of 15.0 µg/m³. At Mesquite, predicted maximum 24-hour and annual PM_{2.5} concentration increments would be about 0.1 and 0.01 µg/m³, respectively.

Predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ concentration increments at the surrogate receptors for the nearby Class I Area—Zion NP, Utah—would be about 10.8 µg/m³ and 0.17 µg/m³, or 135% and 4.2% of the PSD increments for the Class I area, respectively. These surrogate receptors are more than 33 mi (54 km) from the Zion NP; thus, predicted concentrations in Zion NP would be lower than the above values (about 66% of the PSD increments for 24-hour PM₁₀), considering the same decay ratio with distance.

In conclusion, predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ and 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentration levels could exceed the standard levels at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding areas during the construction of solar facilities. To reduce potential impacts on ambient air quality and in compliance with programmatic design features, aggressive dust control measures would be used. Potential air quality impacts on nearby communities would be much lower. Annual PM_{2.5} concentration levels are predicted to be lower than its standard level. Modeling indicates that emissions from construction activities are not anticipated to exceed Class I PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearby federal Class I areas (Grand Canyon NP and Zion NP). Construction activities are not subject to the PSD program, and the comparison provides only a

TABLE 11.5.13.2-1 Maximum Air Quality Impacts from Emissions Associated with Construction Activities for the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	Rank ^b	Concentration ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)			Percentage of NAAQS/SAAQS		
			Maximum Increment ^b	Background ^c	Total	NAAQS/SAAQS	Increment	Total
PM ₁₀	24 hours	H6H	567	142	709	150	378	473
	Annual	– ^d	63.7	26.0	89.7	50	127	179
PM _{2.5}	24 hours	H8H	37.6	10.2	47.8	35	107	136
	Annual	–	6.4	4.1	10.4	15.0	42	69

^a PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 2.5 \mu\text{m}$; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 10 \mu\text{m}$.

^b Concentrations for attainment demonstration are presented. H6H = highest of the sixth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. H8H = highest of the multiyear average of the eighth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. For the annual average, multiyear averages of annual means over the 5-year period are presented. Maximum concentrations are predicted to occur at the site boundaries.

^c See Table 11.5.13.1-2.

^d A dash indicates not applicable.

1
2
3 screen for gauging the magnitude of the impact. Accordingly, it is anticipated that impacts of
4 construction activities on ambient air quality would be moderate and temporary.

5
6 Emissions from the engine exhaust of heavy construction equipment and vehicles have
7 the potential to cause impacts on AQRVs (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at the nearby
8 federal Class I areas. However, SO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be very low, because
9 programmatic design features would require ultra-low-sulfur fuel with a sulfur content of
10 15 ppm. NO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be the primary contributors to potential
11 impacts on AQRVs. Construction-related emissions are temporary in nature, and thus would
12 cause some unavoidable but short-term impacts.

13
14 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
15 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 500-kV transmission line
16 might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-
17 specific analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However,
18 some construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ and over a short distance
19 (about 0.25 mi [0.4 km]) to the regional grid. Potential impacts on ambient air quality would be a
20 minor component of construction impacts in comparison to solar facility construction, and would
21 be temporary in nature.

1 **11.5.13.2.2 Operations**

2
3 Emission sources associated with the operation of a solar facility would include auxiliary
4 boilers; vehicle (commuter, visitor, support, and delivery) traffic; maintenance (e.g., mirror
5 cleaning and repair and replacement of damaged mirrors); and drift from cooling towers for the
6 parabolic trough or power-tower technology, if wet cooling were implemented (drift constitutes
7 low-level PM emissions).

8
9 The type of emission sources caused by and offset by operation of a solar facility are
10 discussed in Section M.13.4 of Appendix M.

11
12 Estimates of potential air emissions displaced by solar project development at the East
13 Mormon Mountain SEZ are presented in Table 11.5.13.2-2. Total power generation capacity
14 ranging from 797 to 1,435 MW is estimated for the East Mormon Mountain SEZ for various
15 solar technologies (see Section 11.5.2). The estimated amount of emissions avoided for the solar
16 technologies evaluated depends only on the megawatts of conventional fossil fuel-generated
17 power displaced, because a composite emission factor per megawatt-hour of power by
18 conventional technologies is assumed (EPA 2009c). It is estimated that if the East Mormon
19 Mountain SEZ would eventually have development on 80% of its land, emissions avoided
20 could range from 3.7 to 6.6% of total emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ from electric power
21 systems in the state of Nevada (EPA 2009c). Avoided emissions could be up to 1.4% of total
22 emissions from electric power systems in the six-state study area. When compared to all source
23 categories, power production from the same solar facilities could displace up to 5.4% of SO₂,
24 2.0% of NO_x, and 3.6% of CO₂ emissions in the state of Nevada (EPA 2009a; WRAP 2009).
25 These emissions could be up to 0.75% of total emissions from all source categories in the
26 six-state study area. Power generation from fossil fuel-fired power plants accounts for about
27 93% of the total electric power generated in Nevada (EPA 2009c). The contribution of natural
28 gas combustion is about 47%, followed by coal combustion of about 45%. Thus, solar facilities
29 built in the East Mormon Mountain SEZ could displace relatively more fossil fuel emissions than
30 those built in other states that rely less on fossil fuel-generated power.

31
32 As discussed in Section 5.11.1.5, the operation of associated transmission lines would
33 generate some air pollutants from activities such as periodic site inspections and maintenance.
34 However, these activities would occur infrequently, and the amount of emissions would be small.
35 In addition, transmission lines could produce minute amounts of O₃ and its precursor NO_x
36 associated with corona discharge (i.e., the breakdown of air near high-voltage conductors),
37 which is most noticeable for high-voltage lines during rain or very humid conditions. Since the
38 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in an arid desert environment, these emissions
39 would be small, and potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with transmission lines
40 would be negligible, considering the infrequent occurrences and small amount of emissions from
41 corona discharges.

TABLE 11.5.13.2-2 Annual Emissions from Combustion-Related Power Generation Avoided by Full Solar Development of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Area Size (acres)	Capacity (MW) ^a	Power Generation (GWh/yr) ^b	Emissions Displaced (tons/yr; 10 ³ tons/yr for CO ₂) ^c			
			SO ₂	NO _x	Hg	CO ₂
8,968	797–1,435	1,397–2,514	1,970–3,547	1,690–3,042	0.011–0.020	1,085–1,952
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in Nevada ^d			3.7–6.6%	3.7–6.6%	3.7–6.6%	3.7–6.6%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in Nevada ^e			3.0–5.4%	1.1–2.0%	– ^f	2.0–3.6%
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in the six-state study area ^d			0.79–1.4%	0.46–0.82%	0.38–0.69%	0.41–0.74%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in the six-state study area ^e			0.42–0.75%	0.06–0.11%	–	0.13–0.23%

- ^a It is assumed that the SEZ would eventually have development on 80% of the lands and that a range of 5 acres (0.020 km²) per MW (for parabolic trough technology) to 9 acres (0.036 km²) per MW (power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies) would be required.
- ^b A capacity factor of 20% was assumed.
- ^c Composite combustion-related emission factors for SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ of 2.82, 2.42, 1.6 × 10⁻⁵, and 1,553 lb/MWh, respectively, were used for the state of Nevada.
- ^d Emission data for all air pollutants are for 2005.
- ^e Emission data for SO₂ and NO_x are for 2002, while those for CO₂ are for 2005.
- ^f A dash indicates not estimated.

Sources: EPA (2009a,c); WRAP (2009).

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11.5.13.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation

As discussed in Section 5.11.1.4, decommissioning/reclamation activities are similar to construction activities but occur on a more limited scale and are of shorter duration. Potential impacts on ambient air quality would be correspondingly smaller than those from construction activities. Decommissioning activities would last for a short period, and their potential impacts would be moderate and temporary. The same mitigation measures adopted during the construction phase would also be implemented during the decommissioning phase (Section 5.11.5).

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11.5.13.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness

No SEZ-specific design features are required. Limiting dust generation during construction and operations at the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (such as increased watering frequency or road paving or treatment) is a required design feature under BLM’s Solar Energy Program. These extensive fugitive dust control measures would keep off-site PM levels as low as possible during construction.

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1 **11.5.14 Visual Resources**

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4 **11.5.14.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in Lincoln County in southeastern
7 Nevada. It is located 9.3 mi (15.0 km) west of the Arizona and Utah state borders. The SEZ
8 occupies 8,968 acres (36.29 km²) and extends approximately 5.1 mi (8.2 km) in a north–south
9 direction and is approximately 3.0 mi (4.8 km) wide. The SEZ ranges in elevation from 2,568 ft
10 (782.7 m) in the southeastern portion to 2,840 ft (865.6 m) in the northeastern portion.

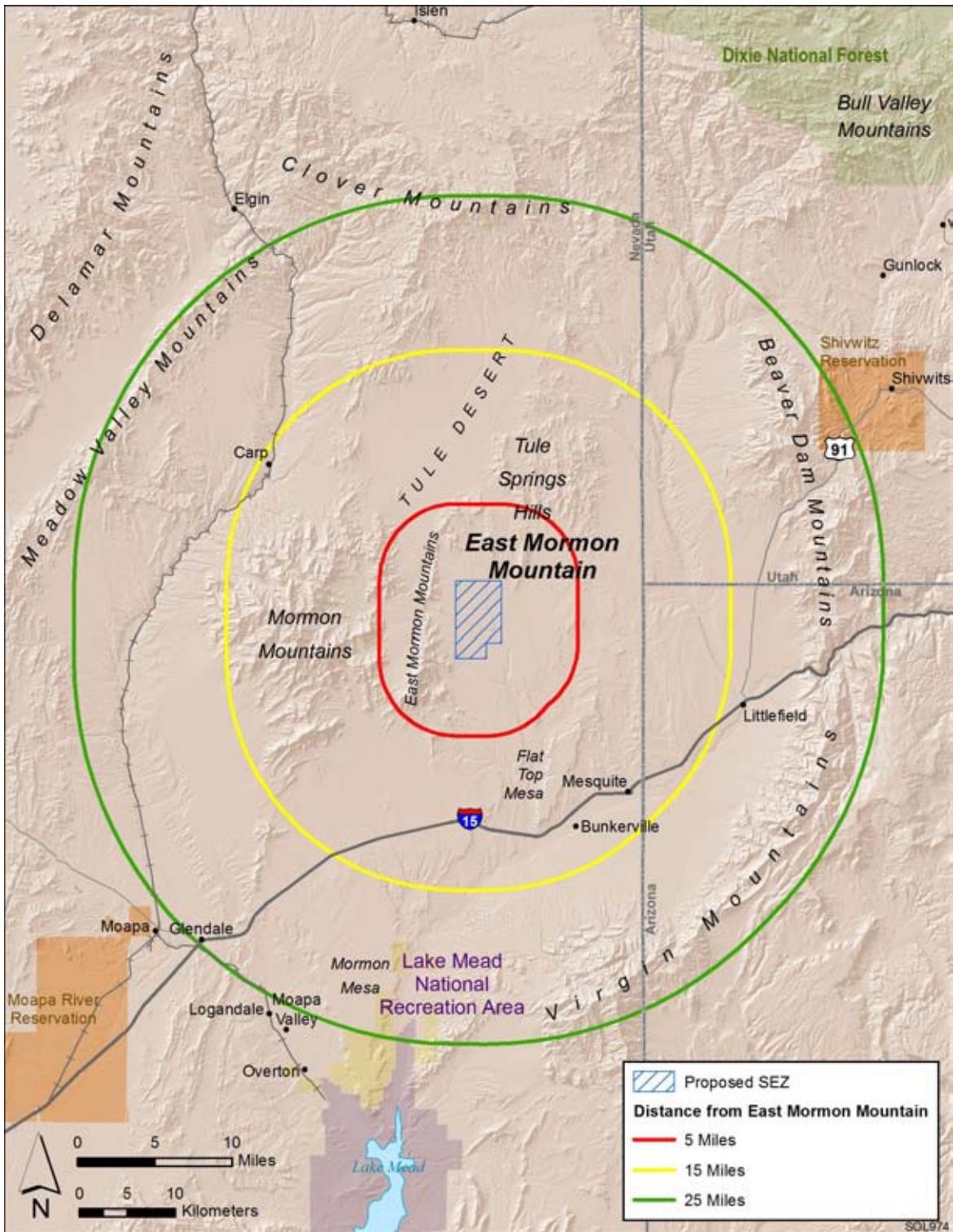
11
12 The SEZ lies within the Mojave Basin and Range Level III ecoregion, which consists of
13 broad basins and scattered mountains. Heavy use of OHVs and motorcycles in some areas has
14 caused soil erosion, and there is relatively little grazing activity because of the lack of water and
15 forage for livestock. Most land is federally owned. The East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located
16 within the Creosotebush-Dominated Basins Level IV ecoregion, which includes valleys that lie
17 between scattered mountain ranges. These valleys contain stream terraces, floodplains, alluvial
18 fans, isolated hills, mesas, buttes, and eroded washes (Bryce et al. 2003).

19
20 The SEZ is located in a valley east of the East Mormon Mountains and south of the Tule
21 Springs Hills. These nearby mountains add significantly to the scenic value of the SEZ. These
22 mountains range in elevation from 3,000 ft (900 m) to more than 5,000 ft (1,500 m). The
23 mountain slopes and peaks surrounding the SEZ generally are visually pristine. The SEZ and
24 surrounding mountain ranges are shown in Figure 11.5.14.1-1.

25
26 The SEZ is located within a relatively flat desert floor, with the strong horizon line and
27 surrounding mountain ranges being the dominant visual features. Light-colored, unvegetated
28 playas provide strong color and texture contrast. Toquop Wash is a large, deep wash that roughly
29 bisects the SEZ, running from northwest to southeast, and is a prominent visual feature in some
30 locations within the SEZ. Other washes that generally run from northwest to southeast also add
31 some vertical relief to the SEZ. The surrounding mountains are generally red to brown in color,
32 with distant mountains appearing blue to purple. In contrast, pink to tan gravels dominate the
33 desert floor, which is sparsely dotted with the greens of vegetation. No permanent surface water
34 is present within the SEZ.

35
36 Vegetation is generally sparse in much of the SEZ, with widely spaced shrubs growing
37 on more or less barren gravel flats. Vegetation within the SEZ is predominantly scrubland, with
38 creosotebush and other low shrubs dominating the desert floor within the SEZ. Small Joshua
39 trees add short vertical accents and color contrasts that add visual interest to portions of the SEZ.
40 During an August 2009 site visit, the vegetation presented a range of greens (mostly the olive
41 green of creosotebushes) with some grays and tans (from lower shrubs), with medium to coarse
42 textures. Visual interest within the SEZ is generally low.

43
44 Other than a few roads and a visually prominent (500-kV) transmission line located
45 outside the SEZ, but within 0.3 mi (0.5 km) of its southeast corner, the area is relatively free of
46 cultural modifications that would detract from scenic qualities of the landscape.



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FIGURE 11.5.14.1-1 Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ and Surrounding Lands

1 The general lack of topographic relief, water, and physical variety results in low scenic
2 value within the SEZ itself; however, because of the flatness of the landscape, the lack of trees,
3 and the breadth of the open desert, the SEZ presents a vast panoramic landscape with sweeping
4 views of the surrounding mountains that add significantly to the scenic values within the SEZ
5 viewshed. In general, the mountains appear to be devoid of vegetation; their varied and irregular
6 forms and red to brown colors provide visual contrasts to the strong horizontal line, green
7 vegetation, and pink to tan gravels of the valley floor, particularly when viewed from nearby
8 locations within the SEZ. Panoramic views of the SEZ are shown in Figures 11.5.14.1-2 and
9 11.5.14.1-3.

10
11 The BLM conducted a visual resource inventory (VRI) for the SEZ and surrounding
12 lands in 2007 (BLM 2009d). The VRI evaluates BLM-administered lands based on scenic
13 quality; sensitivity level, in terms of public concern for preservation of scenic values in the
14 evaluated lands; and distance from travel routes or KOPs. Based on these three factors, BLM-
15 administered lands are placed into one of four VRI Classes, which represent the relative value of
16 the visual resources. Classes I and II are the most valued; Class III represents a moderate value;
17 and Class IV represents the least value. Class I is reserved for specially designated areas, such as
18 national wildernesses and other congressionally and administratively designated areas where
19 decisions have been made to preserve a natural landscape. Class II is the highest rating for lands
20 without special designation. More information about VRI methodology is presented in
21 Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Inventory*, BLM Manual Handbook 8410-1 (BLM 1986a).

22
23 The VRI values for the SEZ are VRI Class III, indicating moderate visual values.
24 Immediately to the west of the SEZ, in the Mormon Mountains, the values are VRI Class II;
25 east of the SEZ, the values are VRI Class IV. The BLM conducted a new VRI for the SEZ and
26 surrounding lands in 2010; however, the VRI was not completed in time for the new data to be
27 included in the draft PEIS. The new VRI data will be incorporated into the analyses presented in
28 the final PEIS.

29
30 The *Proposed Las Vegas Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact*
31 *Statement* (BLM 1998b) indicates that the SEZ is managed as VRM Classes III and IV. VRM
32 Class III objectives include partial retention of landscape character and permit moderate
33 modification of the existing character of the landscape. VRM Class IV permits major
34 modification of the existing character of the landscape. More information about the BLM VRM
35 program is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Management*, BLM Manual
36 Handbook 8400 (BLM 1984).

37 38 39 **11.5.14.2 Impacts**

40
41 The potential for impacts from utility-scale solar energy development on visual resources
42 within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ and surrounding lands, and the impacts of
43 related developments (e.g., access roads and transmission lines) outside of the SEZ, are
44 presented in this section.
45

1



2 **FIGURE 11.5.14.1-2 Approximately 180° Panoramic View of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ Facing North with East**
3 **Mormon and Mormon Mountains (left) and Tule Hills (center)**

4

5

6



7 **FIGURE 11.5.14.1-3 Panoramic View of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ Facing Southwest toward the East Mormon**
8 **Mountains (foreground) and Mormon Mountains (background)**

1 Site-specific impact assessment is needed to systematically and thoroughly assess visual
2 impact levels for a particular project. Without precise information about the location of a project,
3 a relatively complete and accurate description of its major components, and their layout, it is not
4 possible to precisely assess the visual impacts associated with the facility. However, if the
5 general nature and location of a facility are known, a more generalized assessment of potential
6 visual impacts can be made by describing the range of expected visual changes and discussing
7 contrasts typically associated with these changes. In addition, a general analysis can identify
8 sensitive resources that may be at risk if a future project is sited in a particular area. Detailed
9 information about the methodology employed for the visual impact assessment used in this
10 PEIS, including assumptions and limitations, is presented in Appendix M.
11
12

13 *Potential Glint and Glare Impacts.* Similarly, the nature and magnitude of potential glint-
14 and glare-related visual impacts for a given solar facility is highly dependent on viewer position,
15 sun angle, the nature of the reflective surface and its orientation relative to the sun and the
16 viewer, atmospheric conditions and other variables. The determination of potential impacts from
17 glint and glare from solar facilities within a given proposed SEZ would require precise
18 knowledge of these variables, and is not possible given the scope of the PEIS. Therefore, the
19 following analysis does not describe or suggest potential contrast levels arising from glint and
20 glare for facilities that might be developed within the SEZ; however, it should be assumed that
21 glint and glare are possible visual impacts from *any* utility-scale solar facility, regardless of size,
22 landscape setting, or technology type. The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could
23 potentially cause large though temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities.
24 The visual contrast levels projected for sensitive visual resource areas discussed in the following
25 analysis do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these effects would be
26 incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be conducted for
27 specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more information about potential glint
28 and glare impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy facilities, see Section 5.12 of this
29 PEIS.
30
31

32 ***11.5.14.2.1 Impacts on the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ*** 33

34 Some or all of the SEZ could be developed for one or more utility-scale solar energy
35 projects, utilizing one or more of the solar energy technologies described in Appendix F.
36 Because of the industrial nature and large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities large visual
37 impacts on the SEZ would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and decommissioning
38 of solar energy projects. In addition, large impacts could occur at solar facilities utilizing highly
39 reflective surfaces or major light-emitting components (solar dish, parabolic trough, and power
40 tower technologies), with lesser impacts associated with reflective surfaces expected from PV
41 facilities. These impacts would be expected to involve major modification of the existing
42 character of the landscape and would likely dominate the views nearby. Additional, and
43 potentially large impacts would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and
44 decommissioning of related facilities, such as access roads and electric transmission lines. While
45 the primary visual impacts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ would

1 occur during daylight hours, lighting required for utility-scale solar energy facilities would be a
2 potential source of visual impacts at night, both within the SEZ and on surrounding lands.

3
4 Common and technology-specific visual impacts from utility-scale solar energy
5 development, as well as impacts associated with electric transmission lines, are discussed in
6 Section 5.12 of this PEIS. Impacts would last throughout construction, operation, and
7 decommissioning, and some impacts could continue after project decommissioning. Visual
8 impacts resulting from solar energy development in the SEZ would be in addition to impacts
9 from solar energy development and other development that may occur on other public or private
10 lands within the SEZ viewshed, and are subject to cumulative effects. For discussion of
11 cumulative impacts, see Section 11.5.22.4.13.

12
13 The changes described above would be expected to be consistent with BLM VRM
14 objectives for VRM Class IV, as seen from nearby KOPs. More information about impact
15 determination using the BLM VRM program is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource*
16 *Contrast Rating*, BLM Manual Handbook 8431-1 (BLM 1986b).

17
18 Implementation of the programmatic design features intended to reduce visual impacts
19 (described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would be expected to reduce visual impacts associated
20 with utility-scale solar energy development within the SEZ; however, the degree of effectiveness
21 of these design features could be assessed only at the site- and project-specific level. Given the
22 large scale, reflective surfaces, and strong regular geometry of utility-scale solar energy facilities
23 and the lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities
24 away from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive viewing areas would be the primary
25 means of mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other visual impact mitigation measures
26 would generally be limited, but would be important to reduce visual contrasts to the greatest
27 extent possible.

28 29 30 ***11.5.14.2.2 Impacts on Lands Surrounding the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ***

31
32 Because of the large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat,
33 open nature of the proposed SEZ, lands outside the SEZ would be subjected to visual impacts
34 related to construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities.
35 The affected areas and extent of impacts would depend on a number of visibility factors and
36 viewer distance (for a detailed discussion of visibility and related factors, see Section 5.12).
37 A key component in determining impact levels is the intervisibility between the project and
38 potentially affected lands; if topography, vegetation, or structures screen the project from
39 viewer locations, there is no impact.

40
41 Preliminary viewshed analyses were conducted to identify which lands surrounding
42 the proposed SEZ would have views of solar facilities in at least some portion of the SEZ
43 (see Appendix M for information on the assumptions and limitations of the methods used).
44 Four viewshed analyses were conducted, assuming four different heights representative of
45 project elements associated with potential solar energy technologies: PV and parabolic trough
46 arrays (24.6 ft [7.5 m]), solar dishes and power blocks for CSP technologies (38 ft [11.6 m]),

1 transmission towers and short solar power towers (150 ft [45.7 m]), and tall solar power towers
2 (650 ft [198.1 m]). Viewshed maps for the SEZ for all four solar technology heights are
3 presented in Appendix N.
4

5 Figure 11.5.14.2-1 shows the combined results of the viewshed analyses for all four solar
6 technologies. The colored segments indicate areas with clear lines of sight to one or more areas
7 within the SEZ and from which solar facilities within these areas of the SEZ would be expected
8 to be visible, assuming the absence of screening vegetation or structures and adequate lighting
9 and other atmospheric conditions. The light brown areas are locations from which PV and
10 parabolic trough arrays located in the SEZ could be visible. Solar dishes and power blocks for
11 CSP technologies would be visible from the areas shaded in light brown and the additional areas
12 shaded in light purple. Transmission towers and short solar power towers would be visible from
13 the areas shaded light brown, light purple, and the additional areas shaded in dark purple. Power
14 tower facilities located in the SEZ could be visible from areas shaded light brown, light purple,
15 and dark purple, and at least the upper portions of power tower receivers could be visible from
16 the additional areas shaded in medium brown.
17

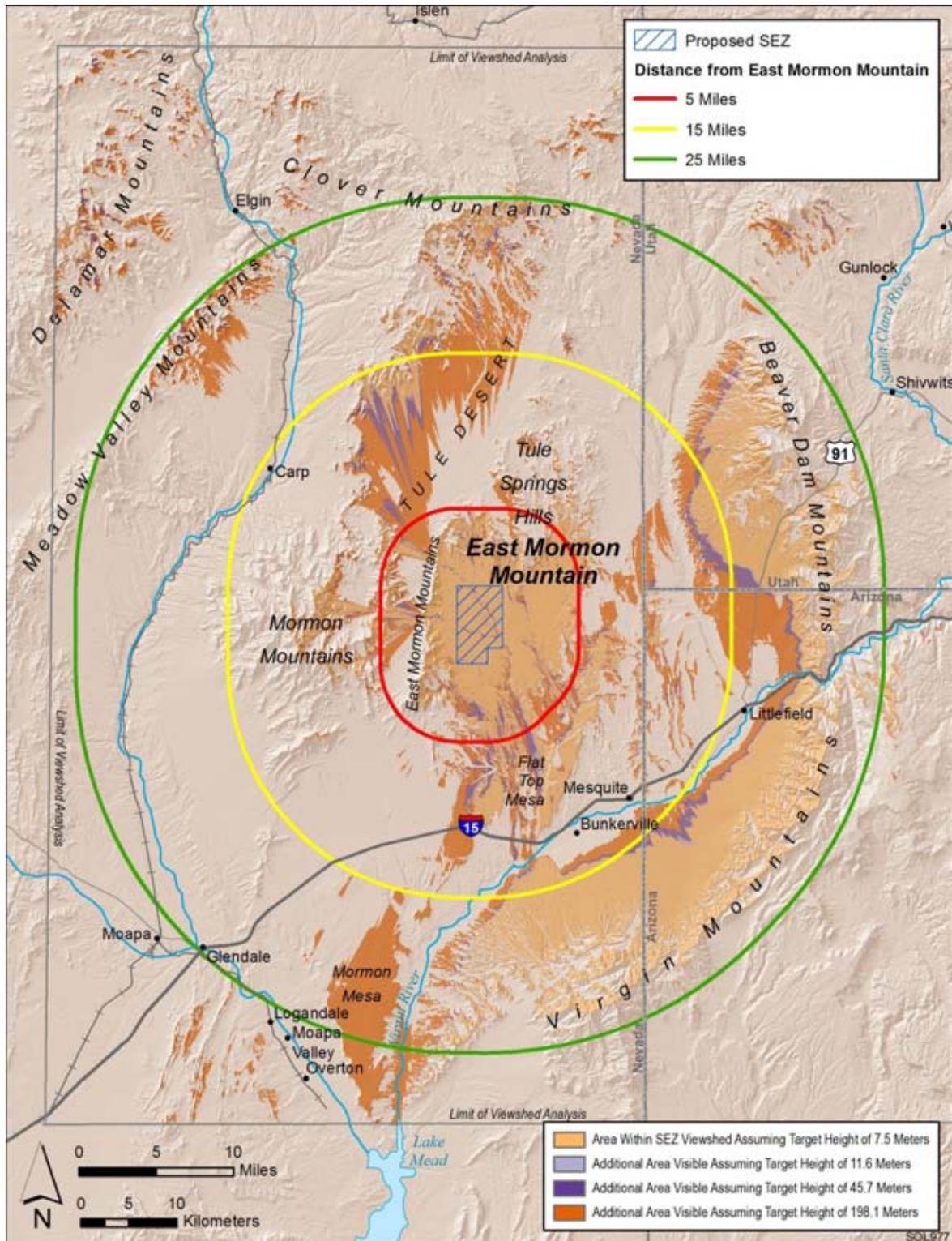
18 For the following visual impact discussion, the tall solar power tower (650 ft [198.1 m])
19 and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds are shown in the figures and
20 discussed in the text. These heights represent the maximum and minimum landscape visibility
21 for solar energy technologies analyzed in this PEIS. Viewsheds for solar dish and CSP
22 technology power blocks (38 ft [11.6 m]), and for transmission towers and short solar power
23 towers (150 ft [45.7 m]) are presented in Appendix N. The visibility of these facilities would fall
24 between that for tall power towers and PV and parabolic trough arrays.
25
26

27 **Impacts on Selected Federal-, State-, and BLM-Designated Sensitive Visual** 28 **Resource Areas** 29

30 Figure 11.5.14.2-2 shows the results of a GIS analysis that overlays selected federal,
31 state, and BLM-designated sensitive visual resource areas onto the combined tall solar power
32 tower (650 ft [198.1 m]) and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds in order
33 to illustrate which of these sensitive visual resource areas would have views of solar facilities
34 within the SEZ and therefore potentially would be subject to visual impacts from those facilities.
35 Distance zones that correspond with BLM's VRM system-specified foreground-midground
36 distance (5 mi [8 km]), background distance (15 mi [24 km]), and a 25-mi (40-km) distance zone
37 are shown as well, in order to indicate the effect of distance from the SEZ on impact levels,
38 which are highly dependent on distance.
39

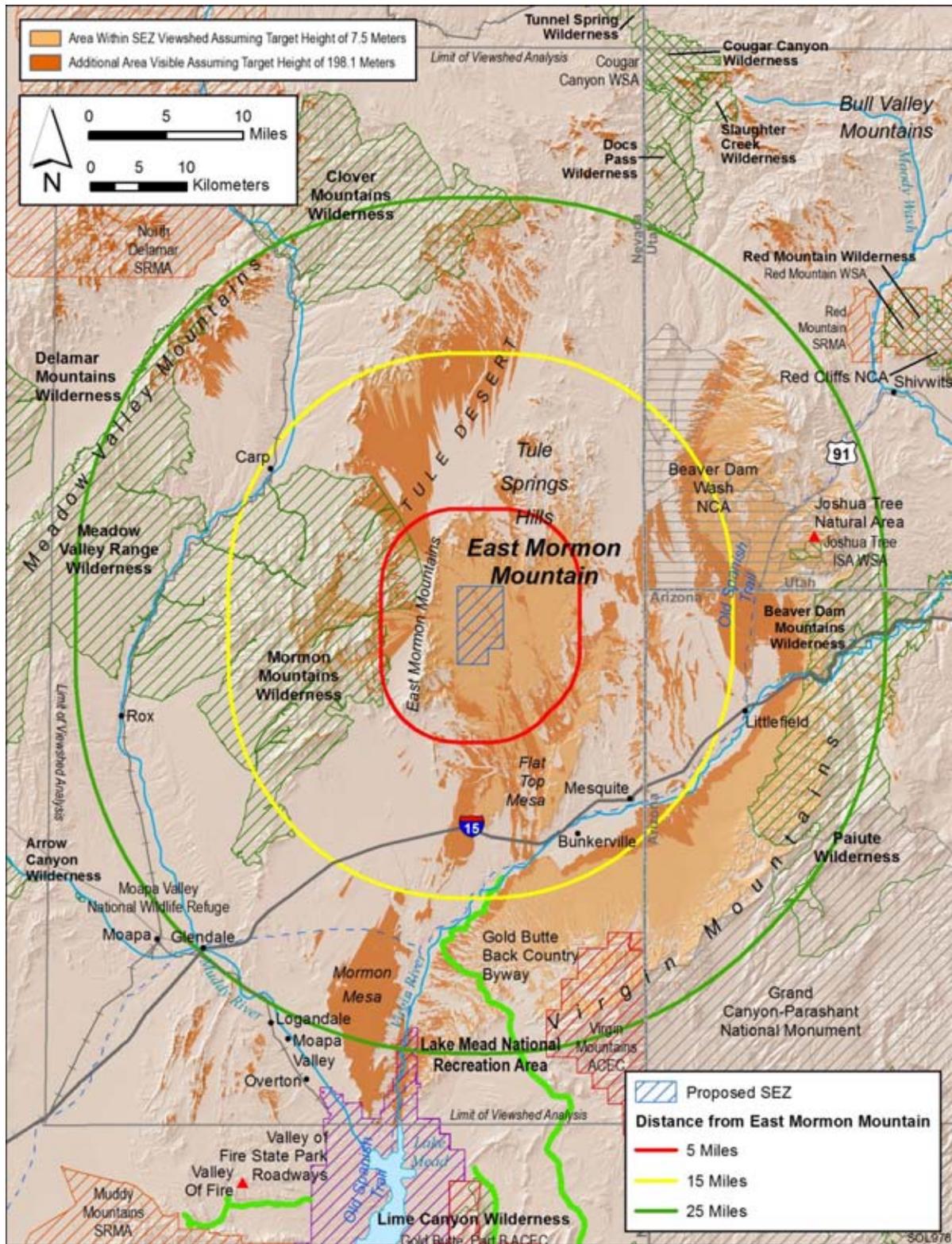
40 The scenic resources included in the analyses were as follows:
41

- 42 • National Parks, National Monuments, National Recreation Areas, National
43 Preserves, National Wildlife Refuges, National Reserves, National
44 Conservation Areas, National Historic Sites;
45
46



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FIGURE 11.5.14.2-1 Viewshed Analyses for the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ and Surrounding Lands, Assuming Solar Technology Heights of 24.6 ft (7.5 m), 38 ft (11.6 m), 150 ft (45.7 m), and 650 ft (198.1 m) (shaded areas indicate lands from which solar development within the SEZ could be visible)



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.5.14.2-2 Overlay of Selected Sensitive Visual Resource Areas onto Combined 650-ft**
 3 **(198.1-m) and 24.6-ft (7.5-m) Viewsheds for the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ**
 4

- 1 • Congressionally authorized Wilderness Areas;
- 2
- 3 • Wilderness Study Areas;
- 4
- 5 • National Wild and Scenic Rivers;
- 6
- 7 • Congressionally authorized Wild and Scenic Study Rivers;
- 8
- 9 • National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails;
- 10
- 11 • National Historic Landmarks and National Natural Landmarks;
- 12
- 13 • All-American Roads, National Scenic Byways, State Scenic Highways, and
- 14 BLM- and USFS-designated scenic highways/byways;
- 15
- 16 • BLM-designated Special Recreation Management Areas; and
- 17
- 18 • ACECs designated because of outstanding scenic qualities.
- 19

20 Potential impacts on specific sensitive resource areas visible from and within 25 mi
21 (40 km) of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are discussed below. The results of this
22 analysis are also summarized in Table 11.5.14.2-1. Further discussion of impacts on these areas
23 is presented in Sections 11.5.3 (Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness
24 Character) and Section 11.5.17 (Cultural Resources).
25

26 The following visual impact analysis describes *visual contrast levels* rather than *visual*
27 *impact levels*. *Visual contrasts* are changes in the landscape as seen by viewers, including
28 changes in the forms, lines, colors, and textures of objects seen in the landscape. A measure of
29 *visual impact* includes potential human reactions to the visual contrasts arising from a
30 development activity, based on viewer characteristics, including attitudes and values,
31 expectations, and other characteristics that are viewer- and situation-specific. Accurate
32 assessment of visual impacts requires knowledge of the potential types and numbers of viewers
33 for a given development and their characteristics and expectations, specific locations from which
34 the project might be viewed, and other variables that were not available or not feasible to
35 incorporate in the PEIS analysis. These variables would be incorporated into a future site- and
36 project-specific assessment that would be conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar
37 energy projects. For more discussion of visual contrasts and impacts, see Section 5.12.
38
39

GOOGLE EARTH™ VISUALIZATIONS

The visual impact analysis discussion in this section utilizes three-dimensional Google Earth™ perspective visualizations of hypothetical solar facilities placed within the SEZ. The visualizations include simplified wireframe models of a hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed at various locations within the SEZ as visual aids for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of utility-scale solar facilities. The visualizations are intended to show the apparent size, distance, and configuration of the SEZ, as well as the apparent size of a typical utility-scale solar power tower project and its relationship to the surrounding landscape, as viewed from potentially sensitive visual resource areas within the viewshed of the SEZ.

The visualizations are not intended to be realistic simulations of the actual appearance of the landscape or of proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. The placement of models within the SEZ did not reflect any actual planned or proposed projects within the SEZ, and did not take into account engineering or other constraints that would affect the siting or choice of facilities for this particular SEZ. The number of facility models placed in the SEZ does not reflect the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, but it should be noted that the discussion of expected visual contrast levels does account for the 80% development scenario. A solar power tower was chosen for the models because the unique height characteristics of power tower facilities make their visual impact potential extend beyond other solar technology types.

National Monument

- *Grand Canyon-Parashant*—Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument occupies 1,045,789 acres (4,232 km²) and is located about 22 mi (35 km) southeast of the SEZ at the point of closest approach. The National Monument is located on the northern edge of the Grand Canyon, and is jointly managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and the BLM. The National Monument is remote and undeveloped, providing opportunities for solitude. There are no paved roads into the monument and no visitor services.

As shown in Figure 11.5.14.2-2, within the National Monument, visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ would be limited to the most northwestern portion of the park. The area with views of the SEZ includes about 447 acres (1.8 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or 0.04% of the total national monument acreage, and 427 acres (1.7 km²), 0.04%, are within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. The visible area of the National Monument is from the point of closest approach, and a small portion extends to beyond 25 mi (40 km) from the southeastern boundary of the SEZ.

Within the 25-mi (40- km) SEZ viewshed, solar development in the SEZ could be visible from a number of small areas of land, the largest of which covers approximately 145 acres (0.6 km²), and the rest are much smaller in size. These areas are located on the peaks and northwest-facing slopes of Virgin Peak Ridge, Lime Kiln Mountain, the Virgin Mountains, and the ridge immediately northwest of Hatchet Valley.

TABLE 11.5.14.2-1 Selected Potentially Affected Sensitive Visual Resources within a 25-mi (40-km) Viewshed of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, Assuming a Target Height of 650 ft (198.1 m)

Feature Type	Feature Name (Total Acreage/Highway Length) ^a	Feature Area or Linear Distance ^b		
		Visible within 5 mi	Visible between	
			5 and 15 mi	15 and 25 mi
National Monument	Grand Canyon-Parashant, Arizona (1,045,789 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	447 acres (0.04%)
National Recreation Area	Lake Mead National Recreation Area	0 acres	0 acres	558 acres (0.05%)
National Conservation Area	Beaver Dam Wash, Utah (20,667 acres)	0 acres	329 acres (2%)	11,631 acres (56%)
	Beaver Dam Wash Designated Road Area, Utah (51,373 acres)	0 acres	12,335 acres (24%)	9,565 acres (19%)
WAs	Beaver Dam Mountains, Arizona (18,635 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	2,748 acres (15%)
	Clover Mountains (85,621 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	3,471 acres (4%)
	Meadow Valley Range (123,481 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	1,477 acres (1%)
	Mormon Mountains (157,645 acres)	3,143 acres (2%)	12,166 acres (10%)	0 acres
	Pauite, Arizona (87,908 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	15,359 acres (18%)
National Natural Landmark and ISA	Joshua Tree, Utah (1,047 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	744 acres (71%)
National Historic Trail	Old Spanish	0 mi	0.5 mi	15.1 mi (+2.4 mi high potential)
ACECs	Virgin Mountains (35,826 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	6,257 acres (18%)
Scenic Byways	Gold Butte Backcountry (62 mi)	0 mi	0 mi	1.8 mi

^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047. To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

^b Percentage of total feature or road length viewable.

1 Because of the very long distance to the SEZ, the SEZ would occupy a small
2 amount of the horizontal field of view, and the vertical angle of view would
3 be very low, which would reduce the visible area of solar facilities within the
4 SEZ, tending to reduce visual contrasts. Figure 11.5.14.2-3 is a Google Earth
5 visualization of the SEZ as seen from a point on the ridge immediately
6 northwest of Hatchet Valley in the far northwestern portion of the National
7 Monument, about 23 mi (37 km) from the southeastern corners of the SEZ.
8 The visualization includes simplified wireframe models of a hypothetical solar
9 power tower facility. The models were placed within the SEZ as a visual aid
10 for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of utility-scale solar
11 facilities. The receiver towers depicted in the visualization are properly scaled
12 models of a 459-ft (140-m) power tower with an 867-acre (3.5-km²) field of
13 12-ft (3.7-m) heliostats, and the tower/heliostat system represents about
14 100 MW of electric generating capacity. Four power tower models were
15 placed in the SEZ for this and other visualizations shown in this section of this
16 PEIS. In the visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in orange, the heliostat
17 fields in blue.

18
19 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 2,400 ft (730 m) higher in
20 elevation than the SEZ. Despite the elevated viewpoint, collector/reflector
21 arrays for solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen nearly edge-on
22 because of the long distance to the SEZ, and they would repeat the line of the
23 valley floor in which the SEZ is located, tending to reduce visual contrast. The
24 SEZ is viewed along its narrower south to north axis, and is far enough away
25 from the viewpoint that it would occupy a very small portion of the horizontal
26 field of view. Operating power tower receivers within the SEZ would likely
27 appear as distant points of light against the floor of the valley in which the
28 SEZ is located, or against the base of the East Mormon Mountains and/or the
29 Tule Hills. If more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, the power towers could have red or
30 white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely be visible from this
31 location at night. Despite the distance, the lighting could be noticeable, given
32 the dark night skies typical of the remote SEZ location.

33
34 Visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ would depend
35 on the numbers, types, sizes and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and
36 other visibility factors. Depending on project location within the SEZ, the
37 types of solar facilities and their designs, and other visibility factors, weak
38 visual contrasts from solar energy development within the SEZ could be
39 expected at this viewpoint. Weak levels of visual contrast would also be
40 expected for the other areas in the National Monument contained within the
41 SEZ 25-mi (40-km) viewshed.

42
43



FIGURE 11.5.14.2-3 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (shown in orange tint with blue, at center background only) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Viewpoint in Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument

1 **National Recreation Area**

- 2
- 3 • *Lake Mead National Recreation Area*—Lake Mead NRA contains
4 1,105,951 acres (4,476 km²) and is located about 24 mi (38 km) south of the
5 SEZ at the point of closest approach. The Lake Mead NRA offers year-round
6 recreational opportunities for boaters, swimmers, and fishermen as well as
7 hikers, wildlife photographers, and roadside sightseers.

8

9 As shown in Figure 11.5.14.2-2, within the NRA, visibility of solar facilities
10 within the SEZ would be limited to the most northern portion of the park. The
11 area within the NRA with views of the SEZ includes about 558 acres
12 (2.3 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or 0.05% of the total NRA
13 acreage. None of the NRA is within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. The visible
14 area of the NRA extends from the point of closest approach to beyond 25 mi
15 (40 km) from the southern boundary of the SEZ.

16

17 The viewshed analysis indicates that the upper portions of tall power towers
18 located within the SEZ could be visible from the farthest northern sections of
19 the Lake Mead NRA, on and along the Virgin River; however, the river valley
20 is about 1,500 ft (460 m) lower in elevation than the SEZ, and at nearly 24 mi
21 (38 km), the angle of view would be extremely low. If power towers were
22 visible within the SEZ, at most they could span only a very small amount of
23 the horizontal field of view. Furthermore, much of the river valley is heavily
24 vegetated, and some views toward the SEZ are likely screened by vegetation.
25 If visible at all, operating power towers in the SEZ would be seen as distant
26 points of light on the northern horizon. If more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, power
27 towers would have navigation warning lights that could potentially be visible
28 from the NRA at night. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the
29 PEIS, visual contrast levels from solar energy development within the SEZ
30 would be expected to be minimal for viewpoints within the Lake Mead NRA.

31

32

33 **National Conservation Area**

- 34
- 35 • *Beaver Dam Wash*—The Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area
36 (NCA) was designated by Congress through the Omnibus Public Land
37 Management Act of 2009. It is located in southwestern Utah, along the
38 Nevada and Arizona state lines, and is 9.2 mi (14.8 km) from the SEZ at the
39 point of closest approach. The NCA is within an ecological transition zone
40 between the Mojave Desert and the Great Basin. At this time, there are no
41 developed recreational facilities within the NCA.

42

43 The NCA contains 20,667 acres (83.6 km²), with an additional 51,373 acres
44 (208 km²) as designated road area. Portions of the Beaver Dam Wash NCA
45 within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed for the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
46 include approximately 11,960 acres (48.4 km²), or 58% of the total NCA

1 acreage. Portions of the NCA within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed encompass
2 about 10,212 acres (41.3 km²), or 49% of the total NCA acreage. Portions of
3 the Beaver Dam Wash NCA designated road area within the 650-ft (198.1-m)
4 viewshed for the East Mormon Mountain SEZ include approximately
5 21,900 acres (88.6 km²), or 43% of the total NCA acreage. Portions of the
6 NCA designated road area within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed encompass
7 about 10,845 acres (43.9 km²), or 21% of the total NCA acreage. The visible
8 area of the NCA extends from the point of closest approach to about 22 mi
9 (35 km) east of the SEZ.

10
11 The NCA consists of low-elevation lands in and along Beaver Dam Wash and
12 on the bajada of the Beaver Dam Mountains on the western side of the NCA,
13 and higher-elevation lands in the Beaver Dam Mountains on the eastern side
14 of the NCA. Near Beaver Dam Wash, elevations are similar to or a few
15 hundred feet lower than the SEZ, so the vertical angles of view are very low,
16 and many views are partially or completely screened by intervening
17 topography. In the Beaver Dam Mountains within the NCA, viewpoints are up
18 to 2,300 ft (700 m) or more higher in elevation than the SEZ, with more open
19 views, and slightly higher vertical angles of view, though farther from the
20 SEZ.

21
22 Figure 11.5.14.2-4 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from a
23 road on the Beaver Dam Mountains bajada in the western portion of the NCA,
24 on the boundary between the designated road area and the rest of the NCA,
25 about 15 mi (24 km) east–northeast of the SEZ. In the visualization, the SEZ
26 area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.

27
28 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 750 ft (240 m) higher in elevation
29 than the SEZ. Because of the long distance to the SEZ, the SEZ would be seen
30 at a very low angle, and solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen in a thin
31 band at the base of the East Mormon and Mormon Mountains. The northern
32 portion of the SEZ would be partially screened by the intervening Tule Hills.
33 Where visible, the collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities within the SEZ
34 would appear edge-on, which would reduce their apparent size, conceal their
35 strong regular geometry, and cause them to appear to repeat the line of the
36 valley floor in which the SEZ is located, all of which would tend to reduce
37 visual contrast. The SEZ is far enough away from the viewpoint that it would
38 occupy a very small portion of the horizontal field of view, especially given
39 the partial screening by the Tule Hills. Taller ancillary facilities, such as
40 buildings, transmission structures, and cooling towers, and plumes (if
41 present), could be visible projecting above the collector/reflector arrays, but
42 depending on visibility factors might not be noticed by casual observers.

43
44 At a distance of 15 mi (32 km) or more, operating power tower receivers
45 within the SEZ would likely appear as points of light against the backdrop of
46 the East Mormon and Mormon Mountains. If sufficiently tall, the power



1

2 **FIGURE 11.5.14.2-4 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding**
3 **Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Viewpoint on a Road in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA**

1 towers could have red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would
2 likely be visible from this location at night. Despite the distance, the lighting
3 could be noticeable, given the dark night skies typical of the remote SEZ
4 location.

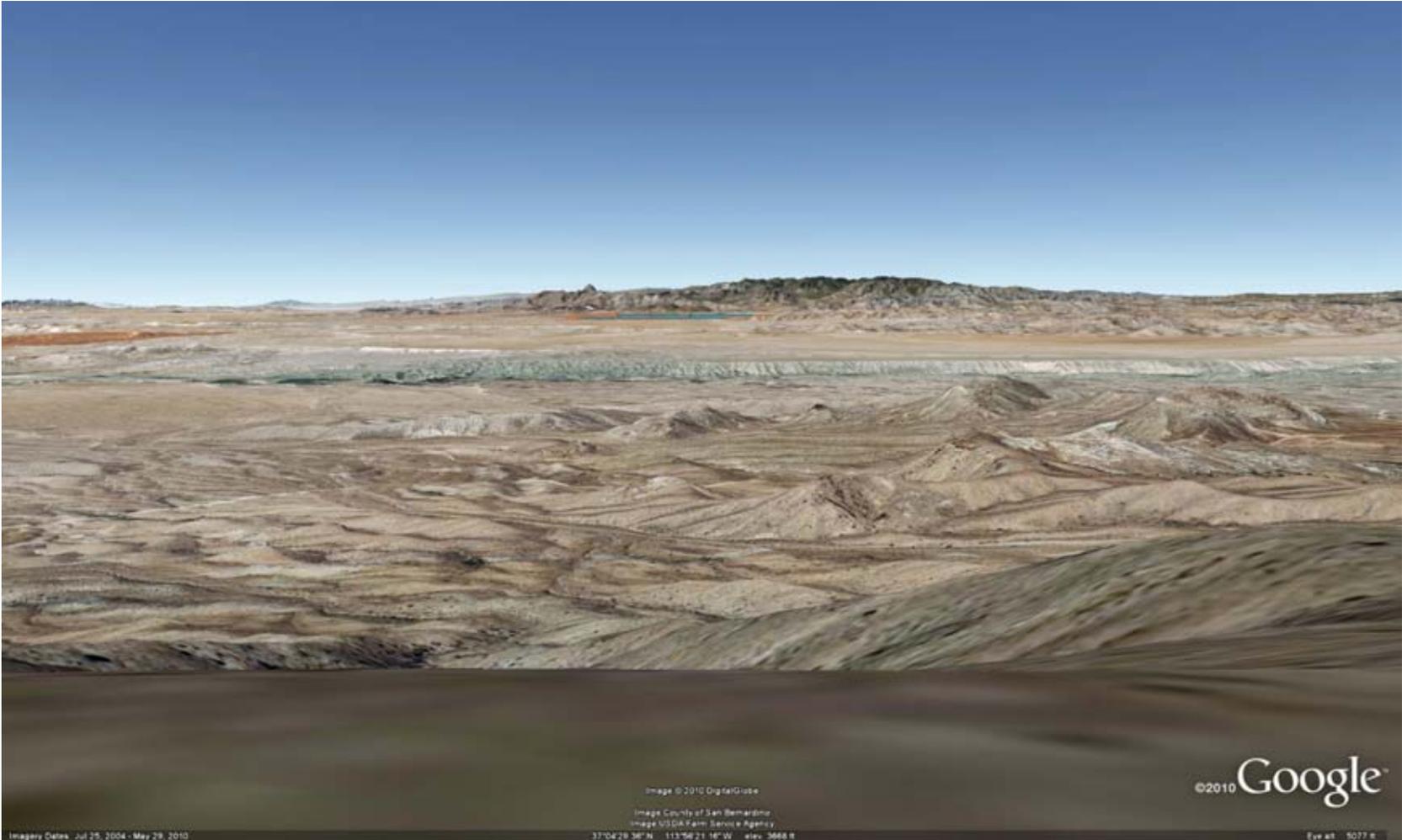
5
6 Given the very low angle of view to the SEZ, the relatively long distance to
7 the SEZ, and partial screening of solar facilities within the SEZ, weak visual
8 contrasts from solar energy development within the SEZ could be expected at
9 this viewpoint.

10
11 Figure 11.5.14.2-5 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from an
12 unnamed peak in the eastern portion of the NCA, about 19 mi (31 km) east of
13 the SEZ. In the visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in orange, the heliostat
14 fields in blue.

15
16 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 2,400 ft (730 m) higher in
17 elevation than the SEZ, with a slightly elevated and open view of all but the
18 most northern portion of the SEZ. Because of the long distance to the SEZ, the
19 SEZ would be seen at a very low angle, and solar facilities within the SEZ
20 would be seen in a thin band at the base of the East Mormon and Mormon
21 Mountains. The collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities within the SEZ
22 would appear almost edge-on, which would reduce their apparent size,
23 conceal their strong regular geometry, and cause them to appear to repeat the
24 line of the valley floor in which the SEZ is located, all of which would tend to
25 reduce visual contrast. The SEZ is far enough away from the viewpoint that it
26 would occupy a small portion of the horizontal field of view.

27
28 At a distance of 19 mi (31 km) or more, operating power tower receivers
29 within the SEZ would likely appear as distant points of light against the floor
30 of the valley in which the SEZ is located. If sufficiently tall, the power towers
31 could have red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely
32 be visible from this location at night. Despite the distance, the lighting could
33 be noticeable, given the dark night skies typical of the remote SEZ location.

34
35 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
36 their designs, and other visibility factors, weak visual contrasts from solar
37 energy development within the SEZ could be expected at this viewpoint. In
38 general, under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, given the
39 long distance to the SEZ, weak visual contrasts from solar energy
40 development within the SEZ could be expected for viewpoints in the NCA
41 located within the SEZ 25-mi (40-km) viewshed.



1

FIGURE 11.5.14.2-5 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Viewpoint in Beaver Dam Mountains in Beaver Dam Wash NCA

2

3

4

1 **Wilderness Areas**

- 2
- 3 • *Beaver Dam Mountains*—Beaver Dam Mountains is a 18,635-acre (75.4-km²)
4 congressionally designated WA located in Arizona, 19 mi (31 km) east of the
5 SEZ. The WA is an increasingly popular destination for primitive recreation.
6 There are no maintained or developed trails within the WA.
7

8 As shown in Figure 11.5.14.2-2, within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar
9 energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible from the western portions of
10 the WA (about 2,748 acres [11.1 km²] in the 650-ft [198.1-m] viewshed, or
11 15% of the total WA acreage, and 2,539 acres [10.3 km²] in the 25-ft [7.5-m]
12 viewshed, or 14% of the total WA acreage). The visible area of the WA
13 extends from the point of closest approach to a small portion beyond 25 mi
14 (40 km) from the eastern boundary of the SEZ.
15

16 Within the WA, many peaks and west-facing slopes within the Beaver Dam
17 Mountains would have open views of the proposed SEZ. Figure 11.5.14.2-6
18 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from an unnamed peak in
19 the western portion of the WA, about 20 mi (32 km) east of the SEZ. In the
20 visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
21

22 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 800 ft (240 m) higher in elevation
23 than the SEZ. Because of the long distance to the SEZ, the SEZ would be
24 seen at a very low angle, and solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen in
25 a thin band at the base of the East Mormon and Mormon Mountains. The
26 collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities within the SEZ would appear edge-
27 on, which would reduce their apparent size, conceal their strong regular
28 geometry, and cause them to appear to repeat the line of the valley floor in
29 which the SEZ is located, all of which would tend to reduce visual contrast.
30 The SEZ is far enough away from the viewpoint that it would occupy a small
31 portion of the horizontal field of view.
32

33 At a distance of 20 mi (32 km) or more, operating power tower receivers
34 within the SEZ would likely appear as distant points of light against the floor
35 of the valley in which the SEZ is located. If sufficiently tall, the power towers
36 could have red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely
37 be visible from this location at night. Despite the distance, the lighting could
38 be noticeable, given the dark night skies typical of the remote SEZ location.
39

40 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
41 their designs, and other visibility factors, weak visual contrasts from solar
42 energy development within the SEZ could be expected at this viewpoint. In
43 general, under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, given
44 the long distance to the SEZ, weak visual contrasts from solar energy
45 development within the SEZ could be expected for viewpoints in the WA
46 located within the SEZ 25-mi (40-km) viewshed.

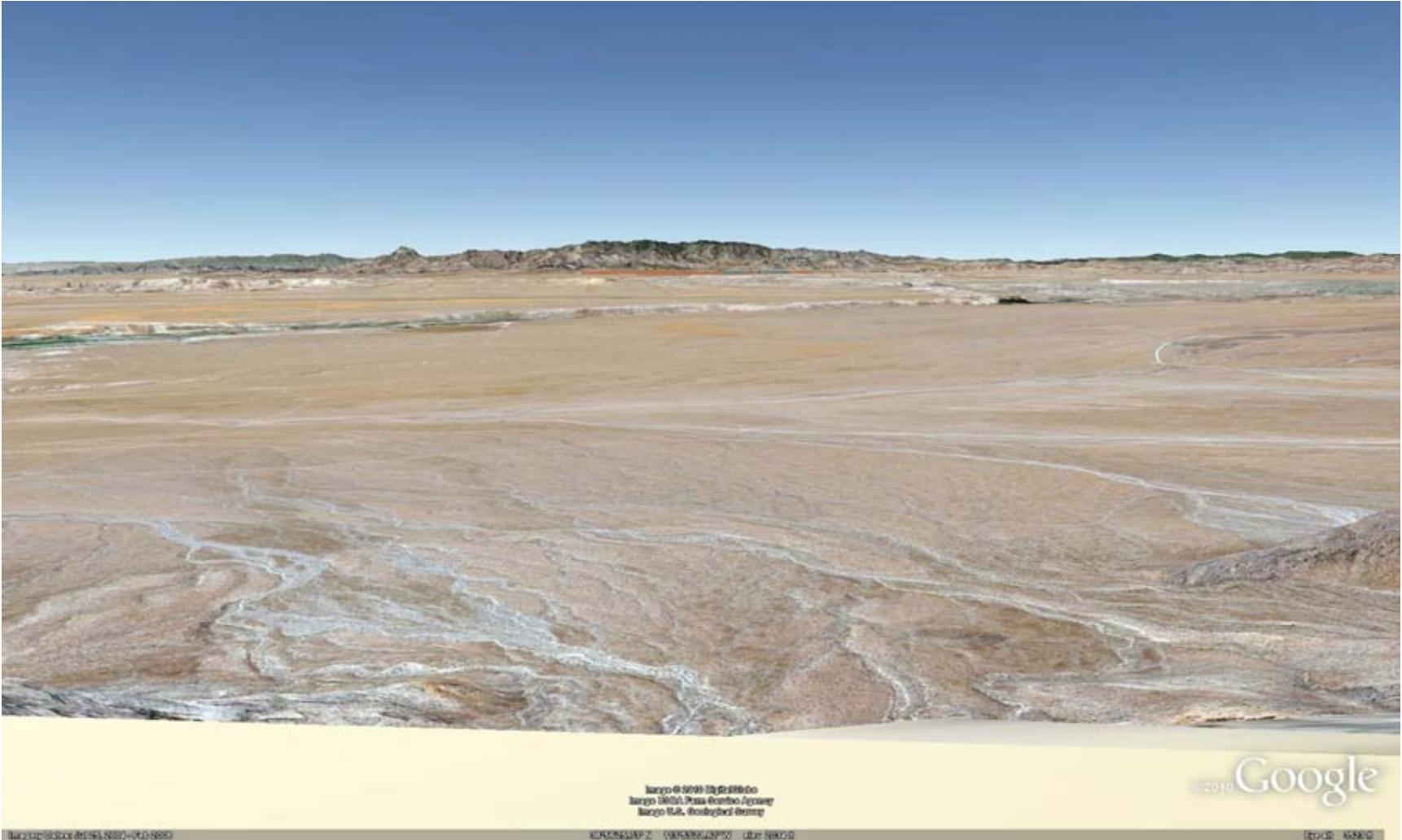


FIGURE 11.5.14.2-6 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Viewpoint in Beaver Dam Mountains WA

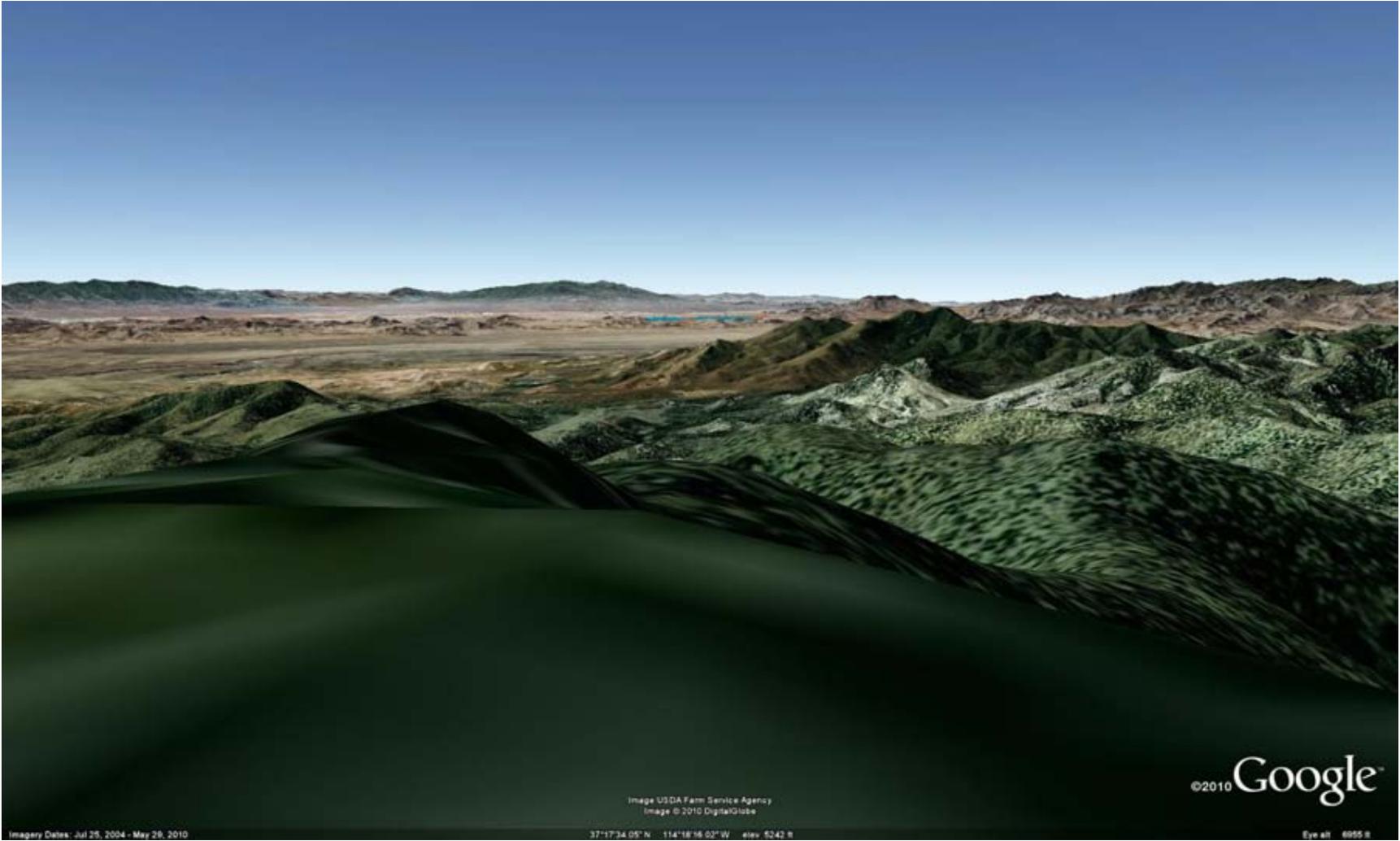
- 1 • *Clover Mountains*—Clover Mountains is a 85,621-acre (346.5-km²)
2 congressionally designated WA located 19 mi (31 km) north to northwest of
3 the SEZ at the point of closest approach. Opportunities for hiking, camping,
4 climbing, and rock scrambling, as well as horseback riding within the WA are
5 outstanding due to the variety of scenic topography.
6

7 As shown in Figure 11.5.14.2-2, within 25 mi (40 km), solar energy facilities
8 within the SEZ could be visible from scattered areas in the southern portion of
9 the WA. Visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi (40-km) radius of analysis
10 total about 3,471 acres (14.1 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or 4%
11 of the total WA acreage, and 2,396 acres (9.7 km), or 3% of the total WA
12 acreage, are visible within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. The visible area of
13 the WA extends from the point of closest approach to beyond 25 mi (40 km)
14 from the northern boundary of the SEZ.
15

16 Except for the highest elevations in the Clover Mountains, solar facilities
17 within the SEZ would be viewed through narrow gaps in the Tule Hills and
18 would be largely screened from view. In some areas, only the upper portions
19 of tall power towers could be visible, while in a few areas, the upper portions
20 of transmission towers and other taller solar facilities might be seen. Because
21 of the screening, only a very small portion of the SEZ would be visible from
22 these areas; at the long distance to the SEZ, expected visual contrasts would
23 be minimal to weak.
24

25 At higher elevations in the Clover Mountains within the SEZ 25-mi (40-km)
26 viewshed, more of the SEZ would be visible, though much of it would still be
27 screened by the Tule Hills. Figure 11.5.14.2-7 is a Google Earth visualization
28 of the SEZ as seen from an unnamed peak in the southern portion of the
29 WA, about 23 mi (37 km) from the northwest corner of the SEZ. In the
30 visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
31

32 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 4,300 ft (1,300 m) higher in
33 elevation than the SEZ. The mountain top is pinyon-juniper forest, which
34 could partially screen views from this location and other nearby viewpoints.
35 Where visible, solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen just above the
36 Tule Hills. Because of the elevated viewpoint, the tops of collector/reflector
37 arrays of solar facilities within the SEZ would be visible, but because of the
38 very long distance to the SEZ, the facilities would be seen at a very low angle,
39 which would reduce their apparent size and cause them to appear to repeat the
40 line of the valley floor in which the SEZ is located, tending to reduce visual
41 contrast. The SEZ is far enough away from the viewpoint that it would occupy
42 a very small portion of the horizontal field of view, particularly in view of the
43 partial screening of the SEZ by the Tule Hills.
44



1

2

3

FIGURE 11.5.14.2-7 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (shown in orange tint with blue) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Viewpoint in Clover Mountains WA

1 At a distance of 23 mi (37 km) or more, operating power tower receivers
2 within the SEZ would likely appear as distant points of light against the floor
3 of the valley in which the SEZ is located. If sufficiently tall, the power towers
4 could have red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely
5 be visible from this location at night. Despite the distance, the lighting could
6 be noticeable, given the dark night skies typical of the remote SEZ location.
7

8 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
9 their designs, and other visibility factors, weak visual contrasts from solar
10 energy development within the SEZ could be expected at this viewpoint. In
11 general, under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, given the
12 partial screening of solar facilities within the SEZ and the long distance to the
13 SEZ, weak visual contrasts from solar energy development within the SEZ
14 could be expected for viewpoints in the WA located within the SEZ 25-mi
15 (40-km) viewshed.
16

- 17 • *Meadow Valley Range*—Meadow Valley Range is a 123,481-acre (499.7-km²)
18 congressionally designated WA located 17 mi (27 km) west to northwest of
19 the SEZ at the point of closest approach. The long ridgeline offers many
20 peaks, narrow canyons and passes to explore.
21

22 As shown in Figure 11.5.14.2-2, within 25 mi (40 km), solar energy facilities
23 within the SEZ could be visible from scattered areas in the far northern
24 portion of the WA, on the southeast-facing slopes of the Meadow Valley
25 Range. Visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi (40-km) radius of analysis
26 total about 1,477 acres (6.0 km²) in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed, or 1%
27 of the total WA acreage, and 91 acres (0.37 km²), or 0.07%, are visible in the
28 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. The visible area of the WA extends from 23 mi
29 (37 km) northwest of the SEZ, to just within 25 mi (40 km) from the
30 northwestern boundary of the SEZ.
31

32 Views of solar facilities within the SEZ would largely be screened by
33 intervening mountains. In more than 93% of the area within the SEZ 25-mi
34 (40-km) viewshed in the WA, views of low-height solar facilities such as
35 parabolic trough and PV arrays, would be screened from view. In most of
36 these areas, only the upper portions of tall power towers could be visible,
37 although the upper portions of transmission towers and other taller solar
38 facilities might be seen in a few areas. In 12 very small areas totaling 91 acres
39 (0.37 km²), low-height solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible, but
40 even at these locations, most of the SEZ is screened from view by the
41 Mormon Mountains and East Mormon Mountains, and as a result, the SEZ
42 would occupy a very small portion of the horizontal field of view.
43

44 Despite the elevated viewpoints in the WA, because of the long distance to the
45 SEZ, collector/reflector arrays for solar facilities within the SEZ would be
46 seen nearly edge on, which would reduce their apparent size, and would also

1 cause them to appear to repeat the line of the valley floor in which the SEZ is
2 located, tending to reduce visual contrast. At more than 17 mi (27 km) away,
3 operating power tower receivers within the SEZ would likely appear as distant
4 points of light against the floor of the valley in which the SEZ is located, or
5 against the base of the Virgin Mountains. If sufficiently tall, the power towers
6 could have red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely
7 be visible from this location at night. Despite the distance, the lighting could
8 be noticeable, given the dark night skies typical of the remote SEZ location.
9

10 Given the partial screening of solar facilities within the SEZ and the long
11 distance to the SEZ, weak visual contrasts from solar energy development
12 within the SEZ could be expected for viewpoints in the WA located within the
13 SEZ 25-mi (40-km) viewshed.
14

- 15 • *Mormon Mountains*—Mormon Mountains is a 157,645-acre (638.0-km²)
16 congressionally designated WA located 2.4 mi (3.9 km) west of the SEZ at
17 the point of closest approach. The rocky cliffs, narrow drainages, and rolling
18 bajadas provide numerous opportunities for solitude in the Mormon
19 Mountains WA. Recreational opportunities include camping, hiking,
20 backpacking, hunting, and horseback riding.
21

22 As shown in Figure 11.5.14.2-2, visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi
23 (40-km) radius of analysis total about 15,304 acres (61.9 km²) in the 650-ft
24 (198.1-m) viewshed, or 10% of the total WA acreage, and 7,803 acres
25 (31.6 km²) in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 5% of the total WA acreage.
26 The visible area of the WA extends from 3.1 mi (5.0 km) to 11 mi (18 km)
27 west of the SEZ's western boundary.
28

29 Solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible from the summits and east-
30 facing slopes of some of the mountains in the eastern part of the WA, at
31 distances from about 3 to 11 mi (5 to 18 km) west of the SEZ's western
32 boundary. From many locations within the WA, views of solar facilities
33 within the SEZ would be largely screened by the intervening East Mormon
34 Mountains, or limited to views of taller solar facilities, or both, but there is a
35 substantial portion of the WA with open or nearly open views of the SEZ.
36 These views are generally through two gaps in the East Mormon Mountains,
37 one directly west of the central portion of the SEZ, and another northwest of
38 the northwest corner of the SEZ.
39

40 Figure 11.5.14.2-8 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen through
41 the gap west of the SEZ from a low-elevation viewpoint in the eastern portion
42 of the WA, about 3.9 mi (6.2 km) from the western boundary of the SEZ
43 where visible through the gap. In the visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in
44 orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
45



1

2

3

FIGURE 11.5.14.2-8 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (shown in blue) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Low-Elevation Viewpoint in Mormon Mountain WA

1 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 800 ft (240 m) higher in elevation
2 than the SEZ. Solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible through the gap
3 in the East Mormon Mountains, but most of the SEZ would be completely
4 screened from view. Where visible through the gap, collector/reflector arrays
5 of solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen at a very low angle, which
6 would reduce their apparent size, and would also cause them to appear to
7 repeat the line of the valley floor in which the SEZ is located, tending to
8 reduce visual contrast. However, at 3.9 mi (6.2 km) from the SEZ, if ancillary
9 facilities such as buildings, transmission structures, cooling towers, and
10 plumes (if present) were visible through the gap, they would project above the
11 collector arrays and could create strong visual contrasts with the surrounding
12 landscape in form, line, and color. Furthermore, the view of the SEZ would be
13 “framed” by the gap, which would tend to focus views on the solar facilities
14 within the SEZ, highlighting the contrasts. If operating power towers were
15 visible through the gap, the receivers could appear as brilliant white non-point
16 light sources atop discernable tower structures, viewed against the backdrop
17 of the Virgin Mountains east of the SEZ. They would command visual
18 attention, particularly because of the framed view through the gap. If
19 sufficiently tall, the power towers could have red or white flashing hazard
20 navigation lighting that would likely be conspicuous from this location at
21 night; they would command visual attention, especially given the dark night
22 skies typical of the remote SEZ location. Other lighting associated with solar
23 facilities in the SEZ would likely be visible as well.

24
25 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
26 their designs, and other visibility factors, moderate visual contrasts from solar
27 energy development within the SEZ could occur at this viewpoint despite the
28 screening by the East Mormon Mountains if one or more power towers were
29 visible through the gap in the East Mormon Mountains.

30
31 Figure 11.5.14.2-9 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from an
32 unnamed peak in the eastern portion of the WA, about 5.6 mi (9.1 km) from
33 the western boundary of the SEZ. In the visualization, the SEZ area is
34 depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.

35
36 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 2,500 ft (760 m) higher in
37 elevation than the SEZ. Solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible
38 through and over the gap in the East Mormon Mountains, and only the
39 southern part of the SEZ would be completely screened from view. From this
40 viewpoint, the SEZ would occupy much of the horizontal field of view. Where
41 visible through and over the gap, collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities
42 within the SEZ would be seen at a relatively high vertical angle, so that the
43 tops of the arrays would be visible, which would make their large areal extent
44 and strong regular geometry more apparent, tending to increase visual
45 contrast. At 5.6 mi (9.1 km) from the SEZ, ancillary facilities such as
46 buildings, transmission structures, cooling towers, and plumes (if present)

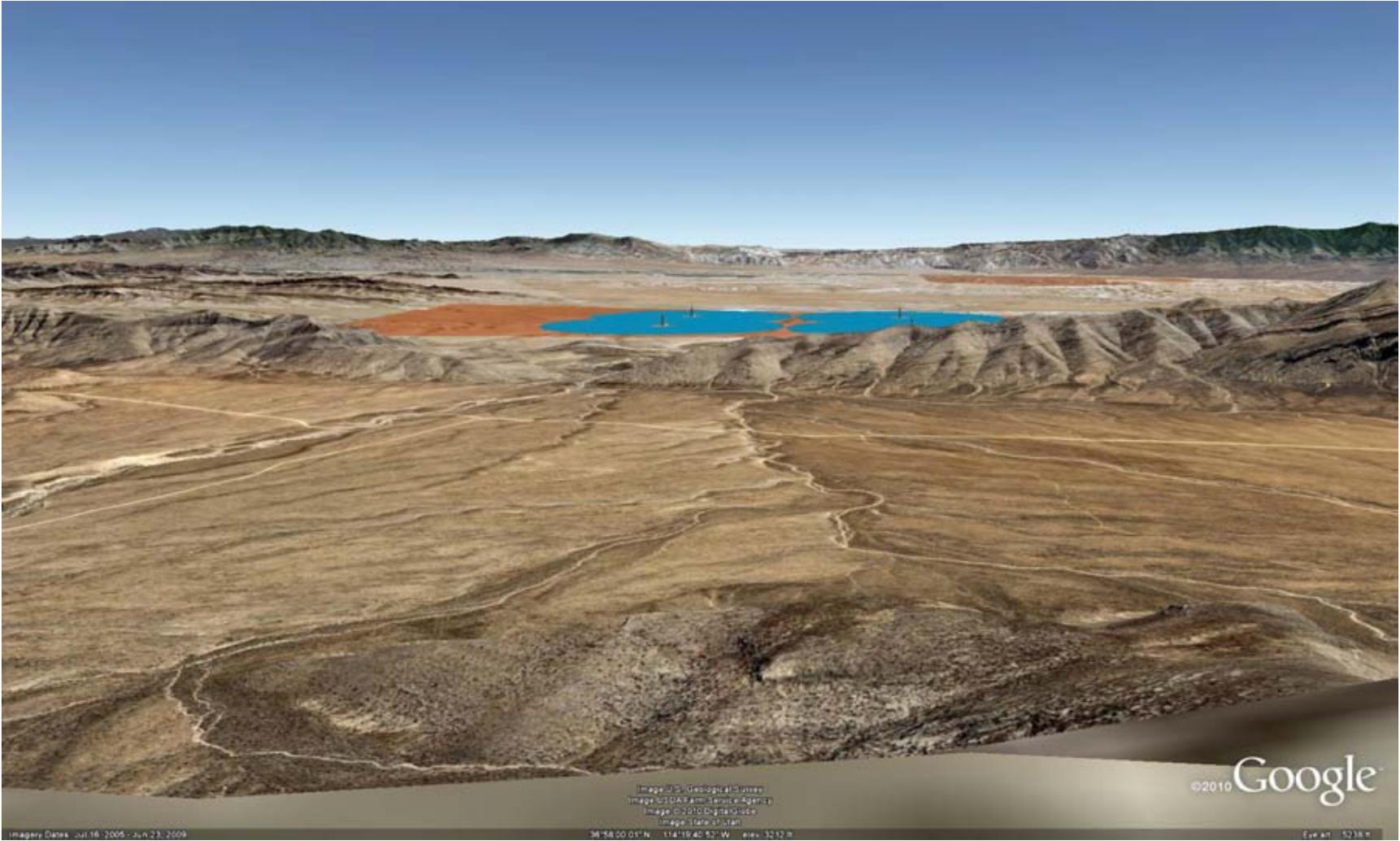


FIGURE 11.5.14.2-9 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from High-Elevation Viewpoint in Mormon Mountain WA

1 would be visible, and could create strong visual contrasts in form, line, and
2 color with the surrounding landscape, and the strongly horizontal
3 collector/reflector arrays. If operating power towers were visible through the
4 gap, the receivers could appear as very bright non-point light sources atop
5 discernable tower structures, viewed against the backdrop of the valley floor
6 in which the SEZ is located. They would likely strongly command visual
7 attention. If sufficiently tall, the power towers could have red or white
8 flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely be conspicuous from this
9 location at night; they would command visual attention, especially given the
10 dark night skies typical of the remote SEZ location. Other lighting associated
11 with solar facilities in the SEZ would likely be visible as well.

12
13 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
14 their designs, and other visibility factors, under the 80% development scenario
15 analyzed in this PEIS, strong visual contrasts from solar energy development
16 within the SEZ could occur at this viewpoint.

17
18 In general, visual contrast levels from solar facilities within the SEZ as seen
19 from viewpoints within the WA would be highly dependent on viewpoint
20 elevation. For low-elevation viewpoints, partial screening and low-angle
21 views would tend to cause weak levels of visual contrast, except where clear
22 views of power towers or highly reflective surfaces were visible through gaps
23 in the East Mormon Mountains; where these views occurred, contrasts could
24 rise to moderate levels. Higher elevation viewpoints on some peaks and high
25 ridges within the WA have clearer views of the SEZ and from higher viewing
26 angles, which would be expected to result in moderate to strong visual
27 contrast levels.

- 28
29 • *Pauite*—Pauite is a 87,908-acre (355.8 km²) congressionally designated WA
30 located in Arizona, 19 mi (30 km) southeast of the SEZ at the point of closest
31 approach. Mt. Bangs, the highest peak at 8,012 ft (2,442 m), provides a
32 commanding view of the Basin and Range province to the west and the
33 Colorado Plateau to the east (BLM 1990).

34
35 As shown in Figure 11.5.14.2-2, visible areas of the WA within the 25-mi
36 (40-km) radius of analysis total about 15,359 acres (62.2 km²) in the 650-ft
37 (198.1-m) viewshed, or 18% of the total WA acreage, and 15,087 acres
38 (61.1 km²) in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 17% of the total WA acreage.
39 The visible area of the WA extends from the point of closest approach to
40 beyond 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ's eastern boundary.

41
42 Within the WA, many peaks and west- and northwest-facing slopes within
43 the Virgin Mountains would have open views of the proposed SEZ.
44 Figure 11.5.14.2-10 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen
45 from an unnamed peak in the northern portion of the WA, just east of
46 Hedrick's Canyon, and about 22 mi (35 km) east-southeast of the SEZ.

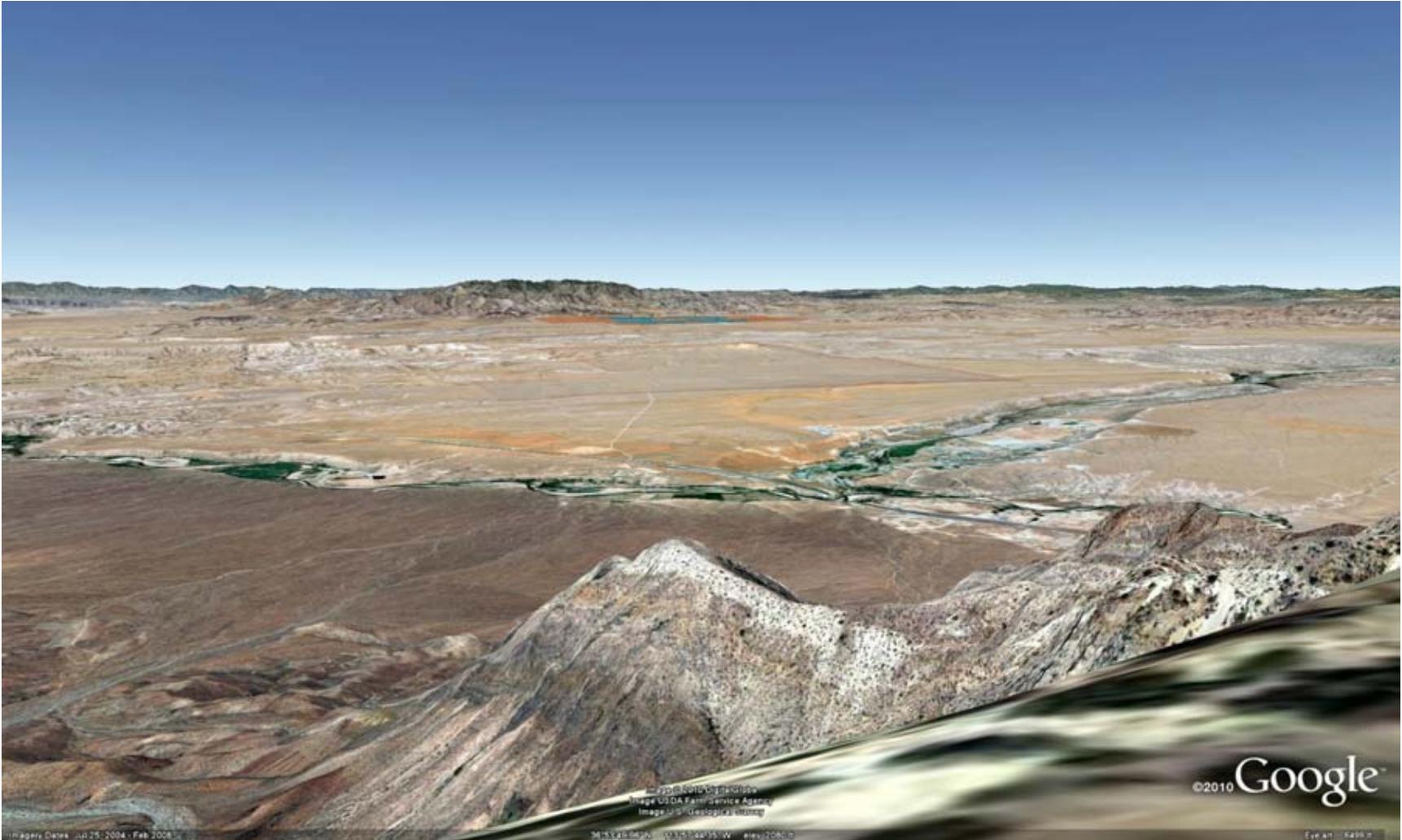


FIGURE 11.5.14.2-10 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Viewpoint in Paiute WA

1 In the visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields
2 in blue.

3
4 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 3,800 ft (1,200 m) higher in
5 elevation than the SEZ. Because of the long distance to the SEZ, the SEZ
6 would be seen at a very low angle, and solar facilities within the SEZ would
7 be seen in a thin band at the base of the East Mormon and Mormon
8 Mountains. The collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities within the SEZ
9 would appear nearly edge-on, which would reduce their apparent size, conceal
10 their strong regular geometry, and would also cause them to appear to repeat
11 the line of the valley floor in which the SEZ is located, tending to reduce
12 visual contrast. The SEZ is far enough away from the viewpoint that it would
13 occupy a small portion of the horizontal field of view.

14
15 At a distance of 22 mi (35 km), operating power tower receivers within the
16 SEZ would likely appear as distant points of light against the floor of the
17 valley in which the SEZ is located. If sufficiently tall, the power towers could
18 have red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely be
19 visible from this location at night. Despite the distance, the lighting could be
20 noticeable, given the dark night skies typical of the remote SEZ location.

21
22 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
23 their designs, and other visibility factors, weak visual contrasts from solar
24 energy development within the SEZ could be expected at this viewpoint.
25 There are higher elevation viewpoints within the WA that would have higher-
26 angle views of solar facilities within the SEZ, and lower elevation viewpoints
27 that are slightly closer to the SEZ, but in general, because of the long distance
28 to the SEZ, under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, weak
29 visual contrasts from solar energy development within the SEZ could be
30 expected for viewpoints in the WA located within the SEZ 25-mi (40-km)
31 viewshed.

32 33 34 ***Instant Study Area***

- 35
36 • *Joshua Tree ISA*—Joshua Tree is a 1,047-acre (4.2-km²) congressionally
37 designated ISA located 19 mi (31 km) east of the SEZ at the point of closest
38 approach, on the upper slopes of the Beaver Dam Mountains.

39
40 As shown in Figure 11.5.14.2-2, visible areas of the ISA within the 25-mi
41 (40-km) radius of analysis total about 744 acres (3.0 km²) in the 650-ft
42 (198.1-m) viewshed, or 71% of the total ISA acreage, and 715 acres (2.9 km²)
43 in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 68% of the total ISA acreage. The visible
44 area of the ISA extends about 21 mi (33 km) from the northeastern boundary
45 of the SEZ.
46

1 Much of the ISA would have open views of the distant SEZ, but despite
2 elevations more than 2,800 ft (850 m) higher than the SEZ in some locations,
3 because of the long distance to the SEZ the vertical angle of view is low, and
4 the SEZ would occupy only a small portion of the horizontal field of view.
5

6 At a distance of 19 mi (31 km) or more, operating power tower receivers
7 within the SEZ would likely appear as distant points of light against the floor
8 of the valley in which the SEZ is located. If sufficiently tall, the power towers
9 could have red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely
10 be visible from this location at night. Despite the distance, the lighting could
11 be noticeable, given the dark night skies typical of the remote SEZ location.
12

13 In general, visual contrasts associated with solar facilities within the SEZ would depend on
14 viewer location, the numbers, types, sizes and locations of solar facilities in the SEZ, and other
15 project- and site-specific factors. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS,
16 where there were unobstructed views, contrasts would be expected to be weak.
17

18 *National Historic Trail*

- 19 • *Old Spanish National Historic Trail*—The Old Spanish National Historic
20 Trail is a congressionally designated multi-state historic trail that passes
21 within 12 mi (19 km) of the SEZ at the point of closest approach on the east
22 side of the SEZ. A high potential segment of the trail is located about 18 mi
23 (29 km) south of the SEZ. Nearly 18 mi (29 km) of the trail are within the
24 viewshed to the south and east of the SEZ, including 2.4 mi (3.9 km) of the
25 high-potential segment.
26

27 For about 13 mi (21 km) of the trail within the SEZ 25-mi (40 km) viewshed,
28 including the entirety of the high-potential segment, visibility of solar
29 facilities within the SEZ would be limited to the upper portions of taller power
30 towers. Low-height facility components, such as parabolic trough arrays,
31 heliostats, and PV panels would be potentially visible from about 5 mi (8 km)
32 of the trail, but this section of the trail ranges from about 17 to 22 mi (27 to
33 35 km) from the SEZ, so the views would be from relatively long distances.
34

35 Solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible from the trail in a number of
36 places. The largest segment with visibility is a 12-mi (19-km) stretch closely
37 paralleling U.S. 91 in a north–south direction between 16 and 19 mi (26 and
38 31 km) east of the SEZ, after the trail leaves the Virgin Valley and before it
39 enters the Beaver Dam Mountains. Within the southernmost 7 mi (11 km) of
40 this trail segment, visibility would be limited to the upper portions of
41 sufficiently tall power towers within the SEZ, and expected visual contrast
42 levels in this portion of the segment would be minimal. The northern 5 mi
43 (8 km) of the segment would have more or less open views of the SEZ, but at
44 distances exceeding 16 mi (26 km), the SEZ would occupy a very small
45
46

1 portion of the horizontal field of view, and the vertical angle of view would be
2 very low. Figure 11.5.14.2-11 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as
3 seen from a point on the trail along U.S. 91 on the bajada of the Beaver Dam
4 Mountains about 18 mi (29 km) east-northeast of the SEZ. In the
5 visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
6

7 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 560 ft (170 m) higher in elevation
8 than the SEZ. Because of the long distance to the SEZ, the SEZ would be seen
9 at a very low angle, and solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen in a very
10 thin band at the base of the East Mormon and Mormon Mountains. The
11 collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities within the SEZ would appear edge-
12 on, which would greatly reduce their apparent size, conceal their strong
13 regular geometry, and would also cause them to appear to repeat the line of
14 the valley floor in which the SEZ is located, tending to reduce visual contrast.
15 The SEZ is far enough away from the viewpoint that it would occupy a small
16 portion of the horizontal field of view.
17

18 At a distance of 18 mi (29 km), operating power tower receivers within the
19 SEZ would likely appear as distant points of light against the backdrop of the
20 East Mormon and Mormon Mountains. If sufficiently tall, the power towers
21 could have red or white flashing hazard navigation lighting that would likely
22 be visible from this location at night. Despite the distance, the lighting could
23 be noticeable, given the dark night skies typical of the remote SEZ location.
24 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
25 their designs, and other visibility factors, weak visual contrasts from solar
26 energy development within the SEZ could be expected at this viewpoint.
27

28 North of this viewpoint on the trail, viewpoint elevations would be slightly
29 higher, but the viewpoints are farther from the SEZ, and in addition, the trail
30 enters a canyon, the walls of which would screen portions of the SEZ from
31 view. Expected visual contrast levels from solar facilities within the SEZ
32 would not be expected to increase.
33

34 South of this viewpoint on the trail, the elevation drops, and views of the SEZ
35 are gradually screened by terrain east of Beaver Dam Wash, resulting in lower
36 visual contrast levels. East of Beaver Dam Wash, the trail elevation drops to
37 900 to 1,300 ft (280 to 400 m) lower in elevation than the SEZ, greatly
38 limiting visibility of solar facilities in the SEZ and causing the angle of view
39 to be extremely low. Only the upper portions of tall power towers could
40 potentially be visible as distant points of light on the northern horizon. For the
41 13 mi of the trail within the viewshed where visibility is thus limited, and
42 including the high-potential segment of the trail, the expected visual contrast
43 levels would be minimal. In general, under the 80% development scenario
44 analyzed in this PEIS, minimal to weak visual contrasts would be expected for
45 viewpoints on the Old Spanish National Historic Trail within the SEZ 25-mi
46 (40-km) viewshed.



1

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FIGURE 11.5.14.2-11 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Viewpoint on Old Spanish National Historic Trail

1 ***National Natural Landmark***
2

- 3 • *Joshua Tree*—Joshua Tree NNL is about 20 mi (33 km) east of the SEZ, on
4 the upper slopes of the Beaver Dam Mountains. The NNL is located within
5 the Joshua Tree ISA (see analysis above), and where the SEZ is visible within
6 the NNL, expected visual contrasts would be the same as expected for the
7 ISA. Some portions of the NNL may have open views of the distant SEZ, but
8 despite elevations more than 2,800 ft (853 m) higher than the SEZ in some
9 locations, the vertical angle of view is low because of the long distance to the
10 SEZ, and the SEZ would occupy only a small portion of the horizontal field of
11 view. Weak contrast levels would be expected from solar facilities within the
12 SEZ as viewed from the NNL.
13

14
15 ***Scenic Byway***
16

- 17 • *Gold Butte Backcountry Byway*—The Gold Butte Backcountry Byway is a
18 BLM-designated scenic byway that begins approximately 14 mi (23 km) south
19 of the SEZ. As shown in Figure 11.5.14.2-2, approximately 1.8 mi (2.9 km)
20 are within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ, and 0.2 mi (0.3 km) of
21 the byway are within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed.
22

23 As the Gold Butte Backcountry Byway traverses the lower slopes of the
24 Virgin Mountains near the Virgin River, there are four short stretches of road
25 where solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible. The longest stretch of
26 the byway with visibility is 1.1 mi (1.7 km) long; in this stretch, visibility
27 would be limited to the upper portions of power towers in the SEZ. If visible,
28 operating power towers would likely appear as points of light against the
29 backdrop of the Tule Hills. Total visibility would not last more than a few
30 minutes, and because the viewpoint is nearly 1,000 ft (304 m) lower in
31 elevation than the SEZ, the angle of view would be extremely low, and the
32 lights would not likely be noticed by the casual viewer. Under the 80%
33 development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, visual contrast levels from solar
34 energy development within the SEZ would be expected to be minimal for
35 viewpoints on the Gold Butte Backcountry Byway.
36
37

38 ***ACEC Designated because of Outstanding Scenic Qualities***
39

- 40 • *Virgin Mountains*—The 35,826-acre (145.0-km²) Virgin Mountains ACEC
41 is located 19 mi (31 km) southeast of the SEZ at the closest point of approach.
42 The resource values under protection within the Virgin Mountains ACEC
43 include wildlife habitat, scenic, and botanical values (BLM 1998a).
44

45 As shown in Figure 11.5.14.2-2, approximately 6,257 acres (25.32 km²), or
46 18% of the ACEC, is within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ, and

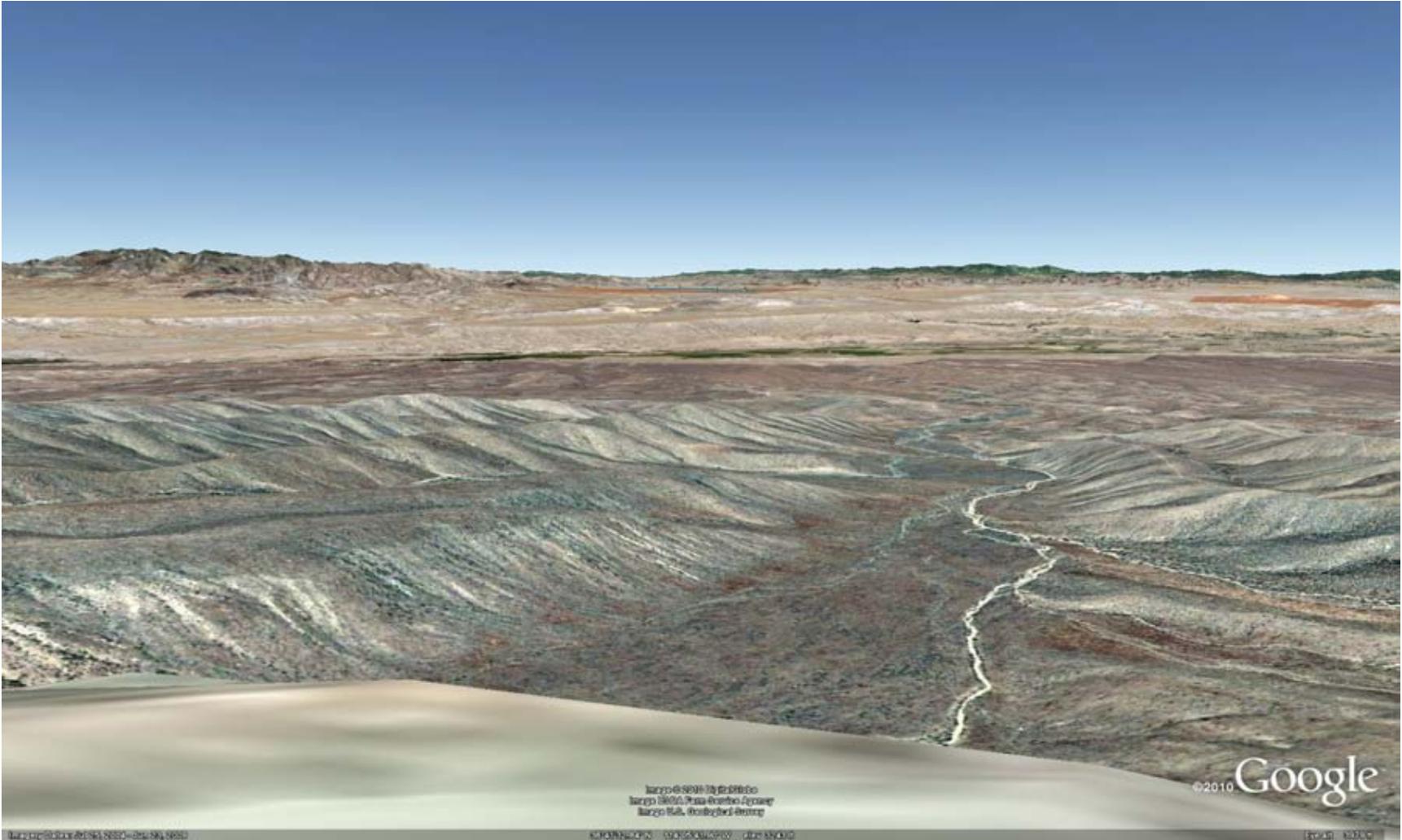
1 6,082 acres (24.6 km²) is in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 17% of the total
2 ACEC acreage. The visible area of the ACEC extends from the point of
3 closest approach to approximately 24 mi (39 km) from the southeastern
4 boundary of the SEZ.

5
6 Figure 11.5.14.2-12 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from
7 an unnamed ridge in the far northern portion of the ACEC, about 19 mi
8 (31 km) from the southeast corner of the SEZ. In the visualization, the SEZ
9 area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.

10
11 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 1,300 ft (400 m) higher in
12 elevation than the SEZ. Solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen just
13 below the Tule Hills. Despite the elevated viewpoint, because of the long
14 distance to the SEZ, collector/reflector arrays for solar facilities within the
15 SEZ would be seen nearly edge on, which would reduce their apparent size,
16 and would also cause them to appear to repeat the line of the valley floor in
17 which the SEZ is located, tending to reduce visual contrast. The SEZ is far
18 enough away from the viewpoint that it would occupy a small portion of the
19 horizontal field of view. Operating power tower receivers within the SEZ
20 would likely appear as distant points of light against the floor of the valley in
21 which the SEZ is located, or against the base of the Tule Hills. If sufficiently
22 tall, the power towers could have red or white flashing hazard navigation
23 lighting that would likely be visible from this location at night. Despite the
24 distance, the lighting could be noticeable, given the dark night skies typical of
25 the remote SEZ location.

26
27 Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and
28 their designs, and other visibility factors, weak visual contrasts from solar
29 energy development within the SEZ could be expected at this viewpoint.
30 Farther south from this viewpoint within the ACEC, the elevation rises
31 rapidly, so that views of the SEZ would be elevated, which would tend to
32 increase visual contrasts from solar facilities within the SEZ; however, the
33 potentially increased contrast from increased viewing angle is offset by the
34 increased distance to the SEZ, such that expected contrasts would not rise
35 above weak levels for the higher elevation viewpoints. In general, under the
36 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, weak levels of visual
37 contrast would also be expected for viewpoints in the ACEC located within
38 the SEZ 25-mi (40-km) viewshed.

39
40 Additional scenic resources exist at the national, state, and local levels, and impacts may
41 occur on both federal and nonfederal lands, including sensitive traditional cultural properties
42 important to Tribes. Note that in addition to the resource types and specific resources analyzed
43 in this PEIS, future site-specific NEPA analyses would include state and local parks, recreation
44 areas, other sensitive visual resources, and communities close enough to the proposed project to
45 be affected by visual impacts. Selected other lands and resources are included in the discussion
46 below.



1

2

3

FIGURE 11.5.14.2-12 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (shown in orange tint with blue, at center background only) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Viewpoint in Virgin Mountains ACEC

1 In addition to impacts associated with the solar energy facilities themselves, sensitive
2 visual resources could be affected by facilities that would be built and operated in conjunction
3 with the solar facilities. With respect to visual impacts, the most important associated facilities
4 would be access roads and transmission lines, the precise location of which cannot be determined
5 until a specific solar energy project is proposed. There is currently a 500-kV transmission line
6 adjacent to the proposed SEZ, so construction and operation of a transmission line outside the
7 proposed SEZ would not be required; however, transmission lines to connect facilities to the
8 existing line would be required. For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of
9 transmission lines outside of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing 500-kV
10 transmission line might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that
11 additional project-specific analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line
12 upgrades. Note that depending on project- and site-specific conditions, visual impacts associated
13 with access roads, and particularly transmission lines, could be large. Detailed information about
14 visual impacts associated with transmission lines is presented in Section 5.7.1. A detailed site-
15 specific NEPA analysis would be required to determine visibility and associated impacts
16 precisely for any future solar projects, based on more precise knowledge of facility location and
17 characteristics.
18
19

20 **Impacts on Selected Other Lands and Resources**

21
22

23 ***I-15.*** About 4 mi (6.4 km) of I-15 are within the SEZ viewshed in two segments. One
24 segment a little more than 1 mi (1.6 km) long is located about 11 mi (18 km) south of the SEZ.
25 Visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ in this segment would be limited to the upper portions
26 of tall power towers; views would last less than 1 minute at highway speeds, and expected visual
27 contrast levels would be minimal. The other segment (about 3 mi [5 km] in length) is located
28 about 18 to 20 mi (29 to 32 km) east of the SEZ, east of Littlefield but west of the Beaver Dam
29 Mountains. Visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ in this segment would also be limited to
30 the upper portions of tall power towers. Views would last less than 3 minutes at highway speeds,
31 and expected visual contrast levels would be minimal.
32
33

34 ***U.S. 91.*** Almost 11 mi (18 km) of U.S. 91 are within the SEZ viewshed to the east of the
35 SEZ in a stretch running north–south between 16 and 19 mi (26 and 31 km) east of the SEZ,
36 between Littlefield and the Beaver Dam Mountains. Within the southernmost 6 mi (10 km) of the
37 roadway within the viewshed, visibility would be limited to the upper portions of sufficiently tall
38 power towers within the SEZ, and expected visual contrast levels in this portion of the segment
39 would be minimal. The northern 5 mi (8 km) of the segment would have more or less open views
40 of the SEZ, but at distances exceeding 16 mi (26 km) the SEZ would occupy a very small portion
41 of the horizontal field of view, and the vertical angle of view would be very low. Visual contrast
42 levels would be expected to be weak.
43
44

45 ***Other Impacts.*** In addition to the impacts described for the resource areas above, nearby
46 residents and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities

1 located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) from their
2 residences, or as they travel area roads. The range of impacts experienced would be highly
3 dependent on viewer location, project types, locations, sizes, and layouts, as well as the presence
4 of screening, but under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, from some
5 locations, strong visual contrasts from solar development within the SEZ could potentially be
6 observed.

9 ***11.5.14.2.3 Summary of Visual Resource Impacts for the Proposed East Mormon*** 10 ***Mountain SEZ***

11
12 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, the SEZ would contain
13 multiple solar facilities utilizing differing solar technologies, as well as a variety of roads and
14 ancillary facilities. The array of facilities could create a visually complex landscape that would
15 contrast strongly with the strongly horizontal, relatively uncluttered, and generally natural
16 appearing landscape of the flat valley in which the SEZ is located. Large visual impacts on the
17 SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed would be associated with solar energy
18 development within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ because of major modification of
19 the character of the existing landscape. There is the potential for additional impacts from
20 construction and operation of transmission lines and access roads within and outside the SEZ.

21
22 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, utility-scale solar energy
23 development within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is likely to result in strong visual
24 contrasts for some viewpoints within the Mormon Mountains WA, which is within 2.4 mi
25 (3.9 km) of the SEZ at the point of closest approach. Minimal to weak visual contrasts would be
26 expected for some viewpoints within other sensitive visual resource areas within the SEZ 25-mi
27 (40 km) viewshed.

28
29 Visitors to the area, workers, and residents of nearby communities may experience visual
30 impacts from solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access
31 roads and transmission lines) as they travel other area roads.

32 33 34 **11.5.14.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

35
36 The presence and operation of large-scale solar energy facilities and equipment would
37 introduce major visual changes into non-industrialized landscapes and could create strong visual
38 contrasts in line, form, color, and texture that could not easily be mitigated substantially.
39 Implementation of programmatic design features intended to reduce visual impacts (described in
40 Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would be expected to reduce visual impacts associated with utility-
41 scale solar energy development within the SEZ; however, the degree of effectiveness of these
42 design features could be assessed only at the site- and project-specific level. Given the large
43 scale, reflective surfaces, strong regular geometry of utility-scale solar energy facilities, and the
44 lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities away
45 from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive viewing areas is the primary means of

1 mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other visual impact mitigation measures would
2 generally be limited.

3
4 While the applicability and appropriateness of some design features would depend on
5 site- and project- specific information that would only be available after a specific solar energy
6 project had been proposed, there is an SEZ-specific design feature that can be identified for the
7 East Mormon Mountains SEZ at this time.

- 8
9 • The development of power tower facilities should be prohibited within the
10 SEZ.

11
12 Application of the SEZ-specific design feature above would substantially reduce visual
13 impacts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ and would substantially also
14 reduce potential visual impacts on Mormon Mountains WA. Application of the SEZ-specific
15 design feature would also reduce impacts on the other sensitive visual resource areas listed
16 above.

1 **11.5.15 Acoustic Environment**

2
3
4 **11.5.15.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in the southeast corner of Lincoln
7 County in southeastern Nevada. Neither the State of Nevada nor Lincoln County has established
8 quantitative noise-limit regulations applicable to solar energy development.
9

10 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is generally isolated and undeveloped, and its
11 overall character is considered wilderness to rural. No major roads are in proximity to the SEZ.
12 I-15 runs east–west as close as 10 mi (16 km) to the south, and several dirt roads exist in and
13 around the SEZ. A railroad runs north–south 14 mi (23 km) to the northwest. The nearest airport
14 is Mesquite Airport, which is located about 12 mi (19 km) southeast of the SEZ, is under military
15 airspace. The next nearest airport is Overton Municipal Airport, which is located about 27 mi
16 (43 km) south-southwest of the SEZ. There are no agricultural activities in or around the SEZ,
17 but cattle grazing occurs within the SEZ. A local transmission corridor with three large power
18 transmission lines and at least one pipeline runs adjacent to the southeast side of the SEZ. No
19 recreational land use is evident within the SEZ, but some quail and antelope hunting may occur.
20 No sensitive receptors (e.g., residences, hospitals, schools, or nursing homes) exist close to the
21 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The nearest residences lie about 9 mi (14.5 km)
22 southeast of the SEZ, near Mesquite. Nearby towns include Bunkerville and Mesquite, which
23 are located about 12 mi (19 km) south-southeast and southeast of the SEZ, respectively.
24 Accordingly, noise sources around the SEZ include infrequent road traffic, aircraft flyover, cattle
25 grazing, and possibly hunting. Considering noise sources in and around the SEZ, background
26 noise levels are anticipated to be low.¹⁰ An environmental noise survey has been conducted in
27 the proposed SEZ, and noise levels range from 25 to 50 dBA (BLM 2009f). On the basis of the
28 population density, the day–night average noise level (L_{dn} or DNL) is estimated to be 18 dBA
29 for Lincoln County, well below the range of 33 to 47 dBA L_{dn} typical of a rural area
30 (Eldred 1982; Miller 2002).¹¹
31
32

33 **11.5.15.2 Impacts**

34
35 Potential noise impacts associated with solar projects in the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
36 would occur during all phases of the projects. During the construction phase, potential noise
37 impacts on the nearest residences (about 9 mi [14.5 km] to the southeast of the SEZ boundary)
38 associated with operation of heavy equipment would be minimal because of the considerable
39 separation distance. During the operations phase, potential impacts on the nearest residences

¹⁰ The Toquop natural gas–fired power plant is proposed within the southeastern corner of the SEZ (BLM 2009f).
If this facility were built and operated, the noise level around the southeast corner of the SEZ would be industrial
in character.

¹¹ Rural and undeveloped areas have sound levels in the range of 33 to 47 dBA as L_{dn} (Eldred 1982). Typically, the
nighttime level is 10 dBA lower than the daytime level. This can be interpreted as 33 to 47 dBA (mean 40 dBA)
during daytime hours and 23 to 37 dBA (mean 30 dBA) during nighttime hours.

1 would be anticipated to be minimal as well. If the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ were
2 fully developed, potential noise impacts on residences along the roads from commuter, visitor,
3 support, and delivery vehicular traffic to and from the SEZ would be minimal, compared with
4 the current heavy traffic volume along I-15. However, some potential noise impacts on
5 residences along local roads leading to the SEZ would be anticipated if construction-related
6 vehicles travel through either Bunkerville or Mesquite. Noise impacts shared by all solar
7 technologies are discussed in detail in Section 5.13.1, and technology-specific impacts are
8 presented in Section 5.13.2. Impacts specific to the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are
9 presented in this section. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of
10 required programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any
11 additional SEZ-specific design features applied (see Section 11.5.15.3 below). This section
12 primarily addresses potential noise impacts on humans, although potential impacts on wildlife at
13 nearby sensitive areas are discussed. Additional discussion on potential noise impacts on wildlife
14 is presented in Section 5.10.2.

15 16 17 **11.5.15.2.1 Construction** 18

19 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ has a relatively flat terrain; thus, minimal site
20 preparation activities would be required, and associated noise levels would be lower than those
21 during general construction (e.g., erecting building structures and installing equipment, piping,
22 and electrical).
23

24 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, the highest construction noise
25 levels would occur at the power block area, where key components (e.g., steam turbine/
26 generator) needed to generate electricity are located; a maximum of 95 dBA at a distance of
27 50 ft (15 m) is assumed, if impact equipment such as pile drivers or rock drills is not being used.
28 Typically, the power block area is located in the center of the solar facility, at a distance of more
29 than 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from the facility boundary. Noise levels from construction of the solar array
30 would be lower than 95 dBA. When geometric spreading and ground effects are considered, as
31 explained in Section 4.13.1, noise levels would attenuate to about 40 dBA at a distance of
32 1.2 mi (1.9 km) from the power block area. This noise level is typical of daytime mean rural
33 background levels. In addition, mid- and high-frequency noise from construction activities is
34 significantly attenuated by atmospheric absorption under the low-humidity conditions typical of
35 an arid desert environment, and by temperature lapse conditions typical of daytime hours; thus,
36 noise attenuation to a 40-dBA level would occur at distances somewhat shorter than 1.2 mi
37 (1.9 km). If a 10-hour daytime work schedule is considered, the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA
38 L_{dn} for residential areas (EPA 1974) would occur about 1,200 ft (370 m) from the power block
39 area, which would be well within the facility boundary. For construction activities occurring
40 near the residences closest to the southern SEZ boundary, estimated noise levels at the nearest
41 residences would be about 17 dBA, which is well below the typical daytime mean rural
42 background level of 40 dBA. In addition, an estimated 40 dBA L_{dn} at these residences¹² (i.e., no

¹² For this analysis, background levels of 40 and 30 dBA for daytime and nighttime hours, respectively, are assumed, which result in a day-night average noise level (L_{dn}) of 40 dBA.

1 contribution from construction activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for
2 residential areas.

3
4 In addition, noise levels were estimated at the specially designated areas within a 5-mi
5 (8-km) range of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ, which is the farthest distance at which noise,
6 other than extremely loud noise, would be discernable. There are three specially designated areas
7 within the range where noise might be an issue: Mormon Mesa ACEC, adjacent to the SEZ's
8 southern boundary; Beaver Dam Slope ACEC, about 0.7 mi (1.1 km) east of the SEZ; and
9 Mormon Mountains WA, about 2.3 mi (3.8 km) west of the SEZ. For construction activities
10 occurring near the SEZ boundary close to the specially designated areas, noise levels are
11 estimated to be approximately 74 and 47 dBA at the boundaries of the Mormon Mesa ACEC and
12 Beaver Dam Slope ACEC, respectively, both of which are higher levels than the typical daytime
13 mean rural background level of 40 dBA. As discussed in Section 5.10.2, sound levels above
14 90 dB are likely to adversely affect wildlife (Manci et al. 1988). Thus, construction noise from
15 the SEZ is not likely to adversely affect wildlife at nearby specially designated areas, except in
16 areas within Mormon Mesa ACEC directly adjacent to the construction site.

17
18 Depending on soil conditions, pile driving might be required for installation of solar dish
19 engines. However, the pile drivers used, such as vibratory or sonic drivers, would be relatively
20 small and quiet, in contrast to the impulsive impact pile drivers frequently used at large-scale
21 construction sites. Potential impacts on the nearest residences would be anticipated to be
22 negligible, considering the distance to the nearest residences (about 9 mi [14.5 km] from the
23 southern SEZ boundary).

24
25 It is assumed that most construction activities would occur during the day, when noise is
26 better tolerated than at night because of the masking effects of background noise. In addition,
27 construction activities for a utility-scale facility are temporary in nature (typically a few years).
28 Construction within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ would cause negligible
29 unavoidable, but localized, short-term noise impacts on neighboring communities, even when
30 construction activities occurred near the southern SEZ boundary, close to the nearest residences.

31
32 Construction activities could result in various degrees of ground vibration, depending
33 on the equipment used and construction methods employed. All construction equipment causes
34 ground vibration to some degree, but activities that typically generate the most severe vibrations
35 are high-explosive detonations and impact pile driving. As is the case for noise, vibration would
36 diminish in strength with distance. For example, vibration levels at receptors beyond 140 ft
37 (43 m) from a large bulldozer (87 VdB at 25 ft [7.6 m]) would diminish below the threshold of
38 perception for humans, which is about 65 VdB (Hanson et al. 2006). During the construction
39 phase, no major construction equipment that can cause ground vibration would be used, and no
40 residences or sensitive structures are located in close proximity. Therefore, no adverse vibration
41 impacts are anticipated from construction activities, including pile driving for dish engines.

42
43 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
44 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 500-kV transmission line
45 might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-
46 specific analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However,

1 some construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ and over a short distance
2 (about 0.25 mi [0.4 km]) to the regional grid. Potential noise impacts on nearby residences would
3 be a minor component of construction impacts in comparison to solar facility construction, and
4 would be temporary in nature.
5
6

7 **11.5.15.2.2 Operations**

8

9 Noise sources common to all or most types of solar technologies include equipment
10 motion from solar tracking, maintenance and repair activities (e.g., washing mirrors or
11 replacing broken mirrors) at the solar array area, commuter/visitor/support/delivery traffic
12 within and around the solar facility, and control/administrative buildings, warehouses, and
13 other auxiliary buildings/structures. Diesel-fired emergency power generators and firewater
14 pump engines would be additional sources of noise, but their operation would be limited to
15 several hours per month (for preventive maintenance testing).
16

17 With respect to the main solar energy technologies, noise-generating activities in the
18 PV solar array area would be minimal, related mainly to solar tracking, if used. On the other
19 hand, dish engine technology, which employs collector and converter devices in a single unit,
20 generally has the strongest noise sources.
21

22 For parabolic trough and power tower technologies, most noise sources during operations
23 would be in the power block area, including the turbine generator (typically in an enclosure),
24 pumps, boilers, and dry- or wet-cooling systems. The power block is typically located in the
25 center of the facility. On the basis of a 250-MW parabolic trough facility with a cooling tower
26 (Beacon Solar, LLC 2008), simple noise modeling indicates that noise levels around the power
27 block would be more than 85 dBA, but about 51 dBA at the facility boundary, about 0.5 mi
28 (0.8 km) from the power block area. For a facility located near the southern SEZ boundary, the
29 predicted noise level would be about 22 dBA at the nearest residences, located about 9 mi
30 (14.5 km) from the SEZ boundary, which is well below the typical daytime mean rural
31 background level of 40 dBA. If TES were not used (i.e., if the operation were limited to daytime,
32 12 hours only¹³), the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA (as L_{dn} for residential areas) would occur at
33 about 1,370 ft (420 m) from the power block area, and thus would not be exceeded outside of the
34 proposed SEZ boundary. At the nearest residences, about 40 dBA L_{dn} (i.e., no contribution from
35 facility operation) would be estimated, which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for
36 residential areas. However, day–night average noise levels higher than those estimated above by
37 using simple noise modeling would be anticipated if TES were used during nighttime hours, as
38 explained below and in Section 4.13.1.
39

40 On a calm, clear night typical of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ setting, the
41 air temperature would likely increase with height (temperature inversion) because of strong
42 radiative cooling. Such a temperature profile tends to focus noise downward toward the ground.
43 There would be little, if any, shadow zone¹⁴ within 1 or 2 mi (1.6 or 3 km) of the noise source in

¹³ Maximum possible operating hours at the summer solstice, but limited to 7 to 8 hours at the winter solstice.

¹⁴ A shadow zone is defined as the region in which direct sound does not penetrate because of upward diffraction.

1 the presence of a strong temperature inversion (Beranek 1988). In particular, such conditions
2 add to the effect of noise being more discernable during nighttime hours, when the background
3 noise levels are lowest. To estimate the day–night average noise level (L_{dn}), 6-hour nighttime
4 generation with TES is assumed after 12-hour daytime generation. For nighttime hours under
5 temperature inversion, 10 dB is added to noise levels estimated from the uniform atmosphere
6 (see Section 4.13.1). On the basis of these assumptions, the estimated nighttime noise level at the
7 nearest residences (about 9 mi [14.5 km] from the SEZ boundary) would be 32 dBA, which is
8 somewhat higher than the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. The day–
9 night average noise level is estimated to be about 41 dBA L_{dn} , which is still well below the EPA
10 guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. The assumptions are conservative in terms of
11 operating hours, and no credit was given to other attenuation mechanisms, so it is likely that
12 noise levels would be lower than 41 dBA L_{dn} at the nearest residences, even if TES were used at
13 a solar facility. Consequently, operating parabolic trough or power tower facilities using TES
14 and located near the southern SEZ boundary would result in minimal adverse noise impacts on
15 the nearest residences, depending on background noise levels and meteorological conditions
16

17 Associated with operation of solar facilities located near the southern SEZ boundary and
18 using TES, the estimated daytime level of 51 dBA at the boundary of the Mormon Mesa ACEC
19 is higher than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA, while the estimated
20 nighttime level of 61 dBA is much higher than the typical nighttime mean rural background level
21 of 30 dBA. For a solar facility located near the eastern SEZ boundary, daytime and nighttime
22 noise levels at the Beaver Dam Slope ACEC are estimated to be 43 and 53 dBA, respectively.
23 However, sound levels above 90 dB are likely to adversely affect wildlife (Manci et al. 1988);
24 thus, operations noise from solar facilities with TES is not likely to adversely affect wildlife at
25 the nearby specially designated areas.
26

27 In the permitting process, refined noise propagation modeling might be warranted, along
28 with measurement of background noise levels.
29

30 The solar dish engine is unique among CSP technologies because it generates electricity
31 directly and does not require a power block. A single, large solar dish engine has relatively
32 low noise levels, but a solar facility might employ tens of thousands of dish engines, which
33 would cause high noise levels around such a facility. For example, the proposed 750-MW SES
34 Solar Two dish engine facility in California would employ as many as 30,000 dish engines
35 (SES Solar Two, LLC 2008). At the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, on the basis of the
36 assumption of dish engine facilities of up to 797-MW total capacity (covering 80% of the total
37 area, or 7,174 acres [29.0 km²]), up to 31,890 25-kW dish engines could be employed. For a
38 large dish engine facility, several hundred step-up transformers would be embedded in the dish
39 engine solar field, along with a substation; however, the noise from these sources would be
40 masked by dish engine noise.
41

42 The composite noise level of a single dish engine would be about 88 dBA at a distance of
43 3 ft (0.9 m) (SES Solar Two, LLC 2008). This noise level would be attenuated to about 40 dBA
44 (typical of the mean rural daytime environment) within 330 ft (100 m). However, the combined
45 noise level from tens of thousands of dish engines operating simultaneously would be high in the
46 immediate vicinity of the facility, about 50 dBA at 1.0 mi (1.6 km) and 46 dBA at 2 mi (3 km)

1 from the boundary of the square-shaped dish engine solar field, for example; both values are
2 higher than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. However, these levels
3 would occur at somewhat shorter distances than the aforementioned distances, considering noise
4 attenuation by atmospheric absorption and temperature lapse during daytime hours. To estimate
5 noise levels at the nearest residences, it was assumed dish engines were placed all over the East
6 Mormon Mountain SEZ at intervals of 98 ft (30 m). Under these assumptions, the estimated
7 noise level at the nearest residences, about 9 mi (14.5 km) southeast of the SEZ boundary, would
8 be about 33 dBA, which is below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA.
9 On the basis of 12-hr daytime operation, the estimated 40 dBA L_{dn} at these residences (i.e., no
10 contribution from dish engines) is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential
11 areas. On the basis of other noise attenuation mechanisms, noise levels at the nearest residences
12 would be lower than the values estimated above. Accordingly, noise from dish engines is not
13 anticipated to cause adverse impacts on the nearest residences, irrespective of background noise
14 levels and meteorological conditions.

15
16 For dish engines placed all over the SEZ, estimated noise levels would be about 59 and
17 50 dBA at the boundaries of the Mormon Mesa ACEC and Beaver Dam Slope ACEC,
18 respectively, both of which are higher levels than the typical daytime mean rural background
19 level of 40 dBA. However, dish engine noise from the SEZ is not likely to adversely affect
20 wildlife at the nearby specially designated areas (Manci et al. 1988), as mentioned above.

21
22 During operations, no major ground-vibrating equipment would be used. In addition,
23 no sensitive structures are located close enough to the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ to
24 experience physical damage. Therefore, during operation of any solar facility, potential vibration
25 impacts on surrounding communities and vibration-sensitive structures would be negligible.

26
27 Transformer-generated humming noise and switchyard impulsive noises would be
28 generated during the operation of solar facilities. These noise sources would be located near the
29 power block area, typically near the center of a solar facility. Noise from these sources would
30 generally be limited within the facility boundary and not be heard at the nearest residences,
31 assuming a 9.5-mi (15-km) distance (at least 0.5 mi [0.8 km] to the facility boundary and 9 mi
32 [14.5 km] to the nearest residences). Accordingly, potential impacts of these noise sources on the
33 nearest residences would be negligible.

34
35 For impacts from transmission line corona discharge noise during rainfall events
36 (Section 5.13.1.5), the noise level at 50 ft (15 m) and 300 ft (91 m) from the center of a 230-kV
37 transmission line tower would be about 39 dBA and 31 dBA (Lee et al. 1996), respectively,
38 typical of daytime and nighttime mean background noise levels in rural environments. The noise
39 levels at 65 ft (20 m) and 300 ft (91 m) from the center of 500-kV transmission line towers
40 would be about 49 dBA and 42 dBA, typical of high-end and mean, respectively, daytime
41 background noise levels in rural environments. Corona noise includes high-frequency
42 components, which may be judged to be more annoying than other environmental noises.
43 However, corona noise would not likely cause impacts, unless a residence were located close to
44 the source (e.g., within 500 ft [152 m] of a 230-kV transmission line and 0.5 mi [0.8 km] of a
45 500-kV transmission line). The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in an arid

1 desert environment, and incidents of corona discharge would be infrequent. Therefore, potential
2 impacts on nearby residents along the transmission line ROW would be negligible.
3
4

5 **11.5.15.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation**

6

7 Decommissioning/reclamation requires many of the same procedures and equipment
8 used in traditional construction. Decommissioning/reclamation would include dismantling of
9 solar facilities and support facilities such as buildings/structures and mechanical/electrical
10 installations, as well as disposal of debris, grading, and revegetation as needed. Activities for
11 decommissioning would be similar to those for construction, but more limited. Potential
12 noise impacts on surrounding communities would be correspondingly lower than those for
13 construction activities. Decommissioning activities would be of short duration, and their
14 potential impacts would be minimal and temporary in nature. The same mitigation measures
15 adopted during the construction phase could also be implemented during the decommissioning
16 phase.
17

18 Similarly, potential vibration impacts on surrounding communities and vibration-
19 sensitive structures during decommissioning of any solar facility would be lower than those
20 during construction and thus negligible.
21

22 **11.5.15.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

23

24 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
25 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for noise impacts from
26 development and operation of solar energy facilities. Due to the considerable separation
27 distances, activities within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ during construction and
28 operation would be anticipated to cause only minimal increases in noise levels at the nearest
29 residences and to have minor impacts on nearby specially designated areas. Accordingly, SEZ-
30 specific design features are not required.
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1 **11.5.16 Paleontological Resources**

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3
4 **11.5.16.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The surface geology of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is predominantly
7 thick alluvial deposits (more than 100 ft [30 m] thick), ranging in age from the Pliocene to
8 Holocene, with some discontinuous residual deposits developed in sedimentary rocks in the
9 eastern portion of the SEZ. The total acreage of the alluvial deposits include 8,736 acres
10 (35 km²), or more than 97% of the proposed SEZ, and the total acreage of the residual materials
11 is 228 acres (0.9 km²), or 2.5% of the SEZ. Minimal deposits of residual materials developed
12 in fine-grained sedimentary rocks and in igneous and metamorphic rocks occur in the northeast
13 and southwest corners of the SEZ, respectively. These deposits total no more than 2 acres
14 (0.008 km²) each. In the absence of a PFYC map for Nevada, a preliminary classification of
15 PFYC Class 2 is assumed for the young Quaternary alluvial deposits and the residual materials
16 in sedimentary rocks, similar to that assumed for the Amargosa Valley SEZ (Section 11.1.16;
17 see Section 4.14 for a discussion of the PFYC system). Class 2 indicates a low potential for the
18 occurrence of significant fossil material. Volcanic deposits are typically PFYC Class 1, which
19 indicates that the occurrence of significant fossil materials is nonexistent or extremely rare.
20

21
22 **11.5.16.2 Impacts**

23
24 Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely to occur in the
25 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological
26 deposits of the SEZ is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted. If
27 the geological deposits are determined to be as described above and are classified as PFYC
28 Class 2 or lower, further assessment of paleontological resources in the SEZ is not likely to
29 be necessary. Important resources could exist; if identified, they would need to be managed
30 on a case-by-case basis. Section 5.14 discusses the types of impacts that could occur on any
31 significant paleontological resources found to be present within the proposed East Mormon
32 Mountain SEZ. Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
33 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
34

35 Indirect impacts on paleontological resources outside of the SEZ, such as through looting
36 or vandalism, are unknown but unlikely, because any such resources would be below the surface
37 and not readily accessed. Programmatic design features for controlling water runoff and
38 sedimentation would prevent erosion-related impacts on buried deposits outside of the SEZ.
39

40 No new transmission lines are currently anticipated for the proposed East Mormon
41 Mountain SEZ, assuming an existing corridor would be used, but approximately 11 mi (18 km)
42 of a new access road corridor to connect to the nearest interstate is assessed in this PEIS.
43 Approximately 80 acres (0.3 km²) of disturbance is expected as a result of road construction. The
44 access road corridor would likely be in thick alluvial deposits similar to the SEZ, and would be
45 less likely to impact paleontological resources (preliminary classification of PFYC Class 2).
46 However, depending on the exact location of the access road, some deposits of residual materials

1 developed in carbonate rocks are possible within the corridor, and the potential for
2 paleontological deposits is unknown in these areas. A preliminary classification of PFYC
3 Class 3b is assumed for the residual deposits. A more detailed investigation of the residual
4 deposits is needed prior to project approval. A paleontological survey will likely be needed
5 following consultation with the BLM. The appropriate course of action would be determined as
6 established in BLM IM2008-009 and IM2009-011 (BLM 2007a, 2008b). Impacts on
7 paleontological resources related to the creation of new corridors not assessed in this PEIS would
8 be evaluated at the project-specific level if new road or transmission construction or line
9 upgrades are to occur.

11.5.16.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness

14 Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic
15 design features as described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.

17 The need for and the nature of any SEZ-specific design features would depend on the
18 results of future paleontological investigations, especially along a potential new access road
19 corridor; however, based on the current level of information, a need for mitigation of areas
20 potentially classified as PFYC Class 2 or lower is not anticipated.

1 **11.5.17 Cultural Resources**

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4 **11.5.17.1 Affected Environment**

5
6
7 ***11.5.17.1.1 Prehistory***

8
9 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in the northeastern portion of the
10 Mojave Desert, within the basin and range province in eastern Nevada. The earliest known
11 human use of the area was likely during the Paleoindian Period, sometime between 12,000 and
12 10,000 years B.P. Surface finds of Paleoindian fluted projectile points, the hallmark of the
13 Clovis culture, have been found in the area, but no sites with any stratigraphic context have been
14 excavated. The Clovis culture is characterized by the aforementioned fluted projectile point and
15 a hunting and gathering subsistence economy that followed migrating herds of Pleistocene mega
16 fauna. The Iola site, located on the western side of the Meadow Valley Mountains in the Kane
17 Spring Valley, about 26 mi (42 km) to the west, is one of the closest Paleoindian sites to the
18 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (BLM 2007c). The ephemeral nature of Paleoindian
19 occupation in the Great Basin has given rise to the idea that Paleoindians may have been inclined
20 to subsist off of the lake and marsh habitats provided by the ancient Pleistocene pluvial lakes that
21 occupied a large portion of the Great Basin; consequently, the sites are difficult to find, because
22 they have been buried by the ebb and flow of the pluvial lakes. This slightly later cultural
23 material associated with the pluvial lake habitations is referred to as the Western Pluvial Lakes
24 Tradition or Lake Mohave cultural complex. It is likely that people from this tradition did not
25 rely entirely on marsh habitats, but were nomadic hunters and gatherers who relied on both
26 wetland resources and those resources located in upland areas. The archaeological assemblage
27 associated with this cultural tradition is characterized by stemmed projectile points, leaf-shaped
28 bifaces, scrapers, crescents, and in some cases groundstone tools for milling plant material. Often
29 the projectile points and tools were made from locally procured obsidian, sources of which were
30 not far from the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ; two sources are in Kane Spring Valley
31 and another source is in the Meadow Valley Mountains, about 20 mi (32 km) to the west.
32 Collecting obsidian and other raw materials for tool manufacture, in addition to exploiting
33 different ecological niches for various subsistence resources, was a part of a larger resource
34 exploitation system, in which groups moved in seasonal rounds to take advantage of specific
35 resources in different localities (Jones et al. 2003; Haarklau et al. 2005; Fowler and
36 Madsen 1986).

37
38 The Archaic Period in the region began with the recession of most of the pluvial lakes in
39 the area, around 8,000 to 6,000 B.P. Archaic Period groups likely still congregated around the
40 marsh areas but also made use of the vast caves that can be found in the mountains of the Great
41 Basin. The settlement system in some areas was likely based around a central base camp, with
42 temporary camps located on the margins of the territory to exploit resources that were not in the
43 immediate vicinity of the base camp. Other groups may not have had a central base, but were
44 mobile “travelers” rather than “processors” (Jones et al. 2003). Some of the key Archaic sites
45 in the area near the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are Stuart Rockshelter in the lower
46 Meadow Valley Wash area, and Etna Cave, Conaway Shelter, and O’Malley Shelter in the upper

1 portion of the Meadow Valley Wash area. The Archaic archaeological assemblages from these
2 sites maintain some cultural continuity with the previous period; they consist of Pinto points,
3 leaf-shaped bifaces, scrapers, drills, graters, and manos and metates (Fowler and Madsen 1986).
4

5 The Middle Archaic Period, 4,000 to 1,500 B.P., saw the climatic shift known as the
6 Little Pluvial, a wetter and cooler climate that caused some of the pluvial lakes to fill back up.
7 The cultural material of this time period is similar to the Early Archaic, with an increased
8 concentration of milling stones, mortars, and pestles, and the appearance of normally perishable
9 items, such as wicker baskets, split-twig figurines, duck decoys, and woven sandals (Neusius and
10 Gross 2007).
11

12 In the vicinity of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, the Late Archaic Period
13 began around 1,500 B.P. and extended until contact with European explorers. This period saw
14 major technological shifts, evidenced by changes in subsistence techniques, particularly in the
15 use of horticulture, and by smaller projectile points that were more useful because groups began
16 using bow-and-arrow technology instead of the atlatl. During this time period in the Muddy and
17 Virgin River valleys, most groups were a part of the Virgin Anasazi cultural group, an extension
18 of the Puebloan groups from the southwest into the Great Basin region. These groups brought
19 with them the knowledge of horticulture, which they practiced on the floodplains of the river
20 valleys they inhabited. Pueblo Grande de Nevada, located near Overton, Nevada, 31 mi (50 km)
21 south of the SEZ, is a prime example of the Virgin Anasazi culture in the vicinity of the SEZ.
22 The South Fork and Toquop Wash areas in the SEZ may have provided a locale that would have
23 been attractive to Virgin Anasazi groups. Characteristic of this period are Anasazi grey-ware
24 ceramics (sometimes decorated), rock art and intaglios, bedrock milling features, and turquoise
25 mining. Several prehistoric rock alignments have been documented in the proposed East
26 Mormon Mountain SEZ, and there are 9 additional rock alignment sites within 5 mi (8 km) of
27 the SEZ. The Virgin Anasazi groups left the region around 1,000 B.P., at which time Numic-
28 speaking groups migrated into the region, but the exact timing of these events is a subject for
29 further research. These Numic-speaking people were the descendents of the Southern Paiute, and
30 the archaeological assemblage associated with this time period consists of Desert series projectile
31 points, brown-ware ceramics, unshaped manos and milling stones, incised stones, mortars,
32 pestles, and shell beads. The following section describes the cultural history of the time period in
33 greater detail.
34
35

36 ***11.5.17.1.2 Ethnohistory*** 37

38 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in the heart of the traditional use
39 area of the Southern Paiute. It falls within the territory of the *Paranayi*, or western subtribe, but
40 is close to the lands of the *Yanawant*, or eastern subtribe (Stoffle et al. 1997). It is situated along
41 the Toquop Wash about 13 mi (21 km) upstream from the Virgin River. The Virgin River and its
42 tributaries form the single most important ribbon oasis in Southern Paiute Territory (Stoffle and
43 Dobyns 1983). The proposed SEZ lies in the area where the traditional ranges of the Moapa and
44 the Panaca Bands meet and is close to the territory of the St. George Band (Kelly 1934; Kelly
45 and Fowler 1986). Southern Paiute groups tended to be wide ranging and often shared resources.
46 It is thus likely that neighboring bands were familiar with the area as well. The core settlement

1 and activity areas of the Moapa Band were along the Moapa or Muddy River and the Virgin
2 River. The Panaca Band was centered in Meadow Valley, about 14 mi (23 km) northeast of the
3 proposed SEZ. The St. George Band was centered farther up the Virgin River and on the lower
4 reaches of Santa Clara Creek, about 33 mi (54 km) east-northeast of the proposed SEZ
5 (Kelly 1934).

8 **Southern Paiute**

9
10 A general account of the Southern Paiutes is given in Section 11.1.17.1.2. This section
11 deals primarily with those Southern Paiutes associated with the Moapa and Virgin Rivers and
12 their neighbors. The Southern Paiute practiced a mixed subsistence economy. They established
13 home bases along the ribbon oases formed by the few streams in the area, maintaining both
14 floodplain and irrigated agricultural fields. They also husbanded wild plants through
15 transplanting, pruning, burning, and irrigation (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Seasonally, these
16 groups left their base camps to seek wild plant resources as they became available (Kelly and
17 Fowler 1986). The Southern Paiute supplemented their food supply by hunting and fishing
18 (Kelly and Fowler 1986). Although there are springs in the adjacent hills, the proposed East
19 Mormon Mountain SEZ is arid and Toquop Wash is intermittent. Scatters of lithic and ceramic
20 artifacts, along with stone circles, suggest that Native Americans made use of the area for
21 temporary foraging activities.

22
23 The sixteenth-century arrival of Europeans in the southwest initially had indirect,
24 although serious, effects on the Southern Paiutes. The Southern Paiute bands suffered from the
25 spread of Old World diseases and the depredations of the slave trade that supplied Spanish and
26 Mexican markets. The Southern Paiutes retreated from areas such as those along the Old Spanish
27 Trail, where there was an increased presence of Euro-American travelers. In the mid-nineteenth
28 century, the Southern Paiute in Nevada were further displaced by Euro-American settlers, who
29 sought the same limited water supplies the southern Paiutes used Mormon settlers established the
30 “Cotton Mission” on the Virgin River at St. George, Utah, in 1861. As Euro-American
31 settlements grew, the Southern Paiute were drawn into the new economy, often serving as
32 transient wage labor. Settlements or colonies of laborers grew up around Euro-American
33 settlements, farms, and mines, often including individuals from across the Southern Paiute
34 homeland (Kelly and Fowler 1986). A Southern Paiute group had formed around St. George by
35 1868 (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983).

36
37 In 1865, an initial attempt by the U.S. government to settle the Southern Paiutes in
38 northeastern Utah among their traditional enemies, the Utes, failed. The Moapa River
39 Reservation was established in 1875 with the intent of settling all Southern Paiutes there,
40 although the original reservation as authorized by President Ulysses S. Grant was severely
41 reduced by Congress to 1,000 acres (4 km²) of mostly unirrigable land. Nonetheless, limited
42 commercial farming was established. Though plagued by disease and poor water, the reservation
43 slowly became more prosperous, attracting Southern Paiutes from a variety of bands.
44 Capitalizing on its share of a judgment awarded by the Indian Claims Commission, and the
45 restoration in 1980 of part of the original reservation, Moapa River Reservation has continued
46 to develop into a center of Southern Paiute activity (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). In 1891, a small

1 reservation was established southwest of St. George for the Shivwits Band. Members of the
2 St. George Band made their way there, and by the end of the century Southern Paiutes no
3 longer farmed along the Santa Clara River. In the first decades of the twentieth century, small
4 reservations were created for the Indian Peak, Koosharem, Kanosh, and Kaibab Bands, and the
5 Southern Paiute colony at Cedar City, Utah, had acquired a small land base. Members of the
6 Panaca Band tended to join the Indian Peak reservation. Where feasible, the Southern Paiute
7 farmed or ranched on these reservations, but mostly the Paiutes served as wage laborers,
8 sometimes travelling great distances. This mobile lifestyle allowed the various bands to retain
9 social and ceremonial ties with one another. In 1954, the four Utah reservations were terminated
10 by the Federal Government and their lands distributed among Tribal members, resulting in the
11 loss of much of the land. The Southern Paiute successfully filed claims with the Indian Claims
12 Commission in the same decade. In 1980, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah was created from the
13 terminated Utah bands and the Cedar City colony and restored to federal trust status (Stoffle and
14 Dobyms 1983; Kelly and Fowler 1986).

15 16 17 ***11.5.17.1.3 History*** 18

19 The earliest documented European presence in the Great Basin region was the
20 Dominguez-Escalante Expedition that began in July of 1776.¹⁵ Two Catholic priests, Fathers
21 Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante, were looking for a route from
22 the Spanish capital city of Santa Fe to the Spanish settlement of Monterey on the California
23 coast. The group did not initially complete their goal of reaching California. They turned back to
24 Santa Fe when the weather got too bad; however, the maps and journals describing their travels
25 and encounters would prove valuable to later expeditions that traversed the area. These included
26 Spanish/New Mexican traders and Anglo-American fur trappers traveling the Old Spanish Trail
27 in the 1820s and 1830s (BLM 1976).

28
29 The Old Spanish National Historic Trail was an evolving trail system generally
30 established in the early nineteenth century. It tended to follow previously established paths
31 used by earlier explorers like Dominguez and Escalante, but also followed those established by
32 Native Americans. Due to a desire to avoid hostile Indian Tribes, as well as natural land
33 formations such as the Grand Canyon, the trail is not a direct route. Several forks and cutoffs
34 were established as more and more travelers made use of the trail system. The 2,700-mi
35 (4,345-km) trail network crosses through six states, and includes various paths between Santa Fe
36 and Los Angeles. It was used primarily between 1829 and 1848 by New Mexican traders
37 exchanging textiles for horses. In 1829, while following the Old Spanish Trail, Antonio Armijio
38 found an oasis that served as a crucial stopping point along the trail. This oasis was named
39 Las Vegas, Spanish for “The Meadows.” By utilizing this oasis, groups traveling on the trail
40 were able to significantly shorten their trip through the harsh desert (Fehner and Gosling 2000).
41 The Old Spanish National Historic Trail is a congressionally designated route; consequently, the
42 trail, trail resources, and setting must be managed in accordance with the National Trail System
43 Act. The closest section of the trail passes about 12 mi (19 km) to the south and east of the

¹⁵ Although it was technically illegal, traders from New Spain (New Mexico) would travel north to acquire Native American slaves for New Mexican settlers from at least the mid-1700s.

1 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ as it follows the Virgin River. A portion of the
2 congressionally designated trail about 15 mi (24 km) southwest of the SEZ near Littlefield, Utah,
3 has been designated a high-potential segment.
4

5 With the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 closing out the
6 Mexican-American War, the area came under American control. In 1847, the first American
7 settlers arrived in the Great Basin, among them Mormon immigrants under the leadership of
8 Brigham Young, who settled in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. They sought to bring
9 the entire Great Basin under their control, establishing an independent State of Deseret. From
10 its center in Salt Lake City, the church sent out colonizers to establish agricultural communities
11 in surrounding valleys and missions to acquire natural resources such as minerals and timber.
12 Relying on irrigation to support their farms, the Mormons often settled in the same places as the
13 Fremont and Virgin Anasazi centuries before. The result was a scattering of planned agricultural
14 communities from northern Arizona to southern Idaho and parts of Wyoming, Nevada, and
15 southern California. In 1855, Brigham Young sent 30 men, led by William Bringham, to the
16 Las Vegas valley, southwest of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, in an effort to
17 establish a mission in the southern portion of Nevada. They called their mission Las Vegas Fort,
18 but only stayed in the area for a few years before abandoning the mission because of the harsh
19 climate and the closing of the nearby Potosi mine that provided the majority of the income and
20 patronage at the mission. About 30 mi (48 km) north of the proposed East Mormon Mountains
21 SEZ was a small Mormon settlement, Clover Valley, where Mormons farmed and raised stock
22 beginning in the late 1860s. Neighboring Washington County in Utah was home to the Mormon
23 Cotton Mission, an area that was intensively cultivated for the procurement of cotton in the early
24 1860s in an effort to allow the Mormons to become more self-sufficient (Paher 1970; Fehner and
25 Gosling 2000).
26

27 Nevada's nickname is the "Silver State," so named for the Comstock Lode strike near
28 Virginia City in 1859, about 280 mi (451 km) northwest of the proposed East Mormon Mountain
29 SEZ. This was the first major silver discovery in the United States, and with the news of the
30 strike hopeful prospectors flocked to the area in an effort to capitalize on the possible wealth
31 under the surface of the earth. The discovery of the Comstock Lode led to the creation of
32 Virginia City and other nearby towns that served the burgeoning population. The population
33 increase due to mining was so dramatic that while in 1850 there were less than a dozen non-
34 native people in the State of Nevada, by 1860 there were 6,857, and by 1875 an estimated
35 75,000 people had settled in the state. The Comstock Lode strike is important to the history of
36 Nevada, not just because of the population growth and significant amount of money that was
37 consequently brought to the area, but also because of technological innovations that were
38 created and employed in the mines. The use of square-set timbering, which kept loose soil from
39 collapsing on miners, was one concept that was eventually employed in other mines around the
40 world (Paher 1970).
41

42 Mining for valuable deposits occurred in all regions of the state of Nevada, including in
43 the vicinity of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The most notorious mining district in
44 Lincoln County was Pioche, about 65 mi (105 km) north of the proposed East Mormon Mountain
45 SEZ. Pioche was a violent, Wild West town that was one of the most prosperous districts in the
46 county. The closest mining district to the proposed SEZ was the Gourd Spring Mining District.

1 Located on the eastern slopes of the East Mormon Mountains, this mine produced tungsten,
2 barite, gypsum, and magnesium. Other notable mines near the SEZ were the Whitmore mine in
3 the Mormon Mountains to the west, the Key West Mine, a copper mine near Glendale, Nevada,
4 the Viola and Vigo Mining Districts in the Clover Mountains to the north of the SEZ, and the
5 Delamar Mine about 45 mi (72 km) northwest of the SEZ, which accounted for over half of the
6 state's ore output during the down years at the turn of the nineteenth century. Mining today is
7 not a major concern in the area, and the mineral production was never sufficient to attract large
8 numbers of miners to the area or allow them to construct any permanent camps; most of the
9 camps in the vicinity of the SEZ were temporary and short lived. The construction of railroads
10 in Nevada was often directly related to the mining activities that occurred in the state; the
11 San Pedro–Los Angeles–Salt Lake Railroad acted as a stimulant to the depraved mining
12 economy with its construction in 1905. The still-used railroad runs through the Meadow Valley
13 Wash area, about 20 mi (32 km) to the west of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ
14 (Paher 1970; Tingley 1998; Rusco and Muñoz 1983).

15
16 Nevada's desert-mountain landscape has made it a prime region for use by the
17 U.S. government for several decades. In October of 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt
18 established the Las Vegas Bombing and Gunnery Range, a 3.5-million-acre (14,000-km²)
19 parcel of land northwest of Las Vegas, near Indian Springs, Nevada, 82 mi (132 km) southwest
20 of the SEZ. At the start of the Cold War in 1948, the range was renamed the Nellis Air Force
21 Base; three years later, the Nevada Test Site (NTS), a U.S. Department of Energy facility, was
22 established within Nellis Air Force Base. For the next 41 years, testing of nuclear weapons
23 occurred throughout regions of the NTS, in addition to regular Air Force training missions.
24 Although the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ does not fall within the specific boundaries
25 of these government installations, they are important contributors to the overall history and
26 context of the region.

27 28 29 ***11.5.17.1.4 Traditional Cultural Properties—Landscape***

30
31 The Southern Paiutes have traditionally taken a holistic view of the world, in which the
32 sacred and profane are inextricably intertwined. According to their traditions, they were created
33 in their traditional use territory and have a divine right to the land, along with a responsibility to
34 manage and protect it. Landscapes as a whole are often culturally important. An adverse effect
35 on one part diminishes the rest (Stoffle 2001). From a Southern Paiute perspective, landscapes
36 include places of power. Among the most important such places are sources of water; peaks,
37 mountains, and elevated features; caves; distinctive rock formations; and panels of rock art.
38 Places of power are important to the religious beliefs of the Southern Paiute. They may be
39 sought out for individual vision quests or healing and may also be associated with culturally
40 important plant and animal species. The view from such a point of power or the ability to see
41 from one important place to another can be an important element of its integrity (Stoffle and
42 Zedeño 2001b). Landscapes as a whole are tied together by a network of culturally important
43 trails (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983; Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a).

44
45 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in an arid area bisected by Toquop
46 Wash. Scattered archaeological remains of Native American activities within the SEZ suggest

1 that they foraged there. The area was in reach of Southern Paiute base camps, or rancherias,
2 located along the Virgin and Santa Clara Rivers and Meadow Valley Wash. Springs, rock
3 shelters, caves, petroglyphs, and pictographs have been found in the East Mormon Mountains to
4 the west of the proposed SEZ, forming a cultural landscape potentially important to the Southern
5 Paiute. The Salt Song Trail, ritually of great importance to the Southern Paiute, approaches this
6 part of Nevada (BLM 2009f). Consultation with affected Tribes will be necessary to determine
7 whether it will be affected by the development of solar facilities in the proposed SEZ.
8 Descendants of the Moapa, Panaca, and St. George Bands have placed high cultural importance
9 on springs, burial sites, religious sites, trails, shrines, and rock art (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983).

11.5.17.1.5 Cultural Surveys and Known Archaeological and Historical Resources

14 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ has had seven surveys conducted within its
15 boundaries, encompassing 78 acres (0.31 km²) and covering 0.9% of the SEZ. An additional
16 41 surveys have been conducted within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ. These surveys have resulted in
17 the recording of four sites within the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ and 45 sites within
18 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. The four sites located in the proposed East Mormon Mountain
19 SEZ are all prehistoric in nature; three of the sites are rock alignments and one is a lithic scatter;
20 the sites were determined not to be eligible for listing in the NRHP (de Dufour 2009).

22 Most of the sites (37 of 45) that have been documented within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ are
23 prehistoric, and the remaining eight sites are historic. At least 11 of these 45 sites are potentially
24 eligible for listing in the NRHP. Most of the prehistoric sites are rock shelters, roasting pits, or
25 rock alignments, and the historic sites are either trash scatters or road features (de Dufour 2009).

27 A portion of the congressionally designated Old Spanish National Historic Trail passes
28 about 12 mi (19 km) to the south of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, as the trail
29 follows the Virgin River. Some portions of this congressionally designated trail are high
30 potential segments; they are located approximately 15 mi (24 km) to the southeast of the
31 proposed SEZ.

33 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ has the potential to contain significant
34 cultural resources, in addition to the four previously mentioned sites. The areas near the South
35 Fork and Toquop Wash could have provided temporary sources of water. Petroglyphs have been
36 documented on the eastern portion of the East Mormon Mountains and in the Toquop Gap area,
37 indicating that the area was used by indigenous groups throughout the course of the history of
38 the region.

40 The BLM has designated an ACEC in the vicinity of the proposed East Mormon
41 Mountain SEZ to protect cultural resource values. This is the Virgin River ACEC 12 mi (19 km)
42 to the south of the SEZ, portions of which are also located in nearby Arizona and maintained by
43 the Arizona Strip Field Office. There are several other ACECs with important cultural resources
44 in the area, but they are more than 25 mi (40 km) from the SEZ.

1 ***National Register of Historic Places***
2

3 There are no sites listed in the NRHP in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, or
4 within 5 mi (8 km); however, the aforementioned 11 sites that are located within 5 mi (8 km) of
5 the SEZ are considered potentially eligible.
6

7 Several sites listed in the NRHP are located in the Mesquite and Bunkerville areas,
8 communities situated about 12 mi (19 km) to the south of the proposed East Mormon Mountain
9 SEZ, along the Virgin River in neighboring Clark County. These sites include the Desert Valley
10 Museum and the Mesquite High School Gymnasium, in Mesquite, and the Hunt, Parley House
11 and Levitt, Thomas House in Bunkerville, as well as the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.
12 Lincoln County maintains nine properties in the NRHP, all of which are farther than 25 mi
13 (40 km) away from the proposed SEZ. Three of the properties are archaeological sites between
14 45 and 75 mi (72 and 121 km) from the SEZ; the Black Canyon Petroglyph Site in the
15 Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge west of the SEZ, the Panaca Summit Archaeological
16 District north of the SEZ, and the White River Narrows Archaeological District northwest of
17 the SEZ. The other six properties are historic sites near the towns of Caliente and Pioche.
18
19

20 **11.5.17.2 Impacts**
21

22 Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed East Mormon
23 Mountain SEZ; however, further investigation is needed in a number of areas. A cultural
24 resources survey of the entire APE of a proposed project would first need to be conducted to
25 identify archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and traditional cultural properties,
26 and an evaluation would need to follow to determine whether any are eligible for listing in the
27 NRHP. The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ has a high potential for containing
28 archaeological sites in the South Fork and Toquop Wash areas. Possible impacts from solar
29 energy development on cultural resources that are encountered within the SEZ or along related
30 ROWs are described in more detail in Section 5.15. Impacts would be minimized through the
31 implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
32 Section A.2.2. Programmatic design features assume that the necessary surveys, evaluations, and
33 consultations will occur.
34

35 Programmatic design features to reduce water runoff and sedimentation would reduce the
36 likelihood of indirect impacts on cultural resources resulting from erosion outside of the SEZ
37 boundary (including along ROWs). No needs for new transmission lines have currently been
38 identified, assuming an existing line would be used. An access road would need to be
39 constructed to the SEZ, the closest road being I-15, about 11 mi (18 km) to the south. The
40 construction of this road would result in the disturbance of approximately 80 acres (0.32 km²).
41 Impacts on cultural resources are possible in areas related to the access road, since new areas of
42 potential cultural significance could be directly impacted by construction or opened to increased
43 access due to road construction and use. Indirect impacts are also possible from unauthorized
44 collection of artifacts or vandalism, depending on the proximity of the road to historic properties.
45 Impacts on cultural resources related to the creation of new corridors not assessed in this PEIS

1 would be evaluated at the project-specific level if new road or transmission construction or line
2 upgrades are to occur.

3
4 The congressionally designated Old Spanish National Historic Trail and aforementioned
5 NRHP sites in the Mesquite/Bunkerville area are located south of the proposed East Mormon
6 Mountain SEZ, and would likely not be physically affected by solar development in the SEZ.
7 However, these cultural resources could be affected from a visual standpoint, although the Flat
8 Top Mesa would probably screen or block the view of the solar development from the southeast
9 portion of the SEZ. The rock art sites that are located on the eastern portions of the East Mormon
10 Mountains and in the Toquop Gap area could potentially be affected. Depending on the
11 significance of these sites and whether they are considered sites of traditional cultural
12 importance, there is a potential for visual and auditory effects on these locations as a result of
13 solar energy development in the proposed SEZ.

14 15 16 **11.5.17.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

17
18 Programmatic design features to mitigate adverse effects on significant cultural
19 resources, such as avoidance of significant sites and features, cultural awareness training for the
20 workforce, and measures for addressing possible looting/vandalism issues through formalized
21 agreement documents, are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.

22
23 SEZ-specific design features would be determined in consultation with the Nevada SHPO
24 and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations.

- 25
26 • Avoidance of the South Fork and Toquop Wash areas is recommended
27 because these areas have a higher potential for containing significant sites.
- 28
29 • Coordination with the Trail Administration for the Old Spanish Trail and Old
30 Spanish Trail Association is recommended to identify potential mitigation
31 strategies for avoiding or minimizing potential impacts, if impacts are
32 identified in future studies, on the congressionally designated Old Spanish
33 National Historic Trail.

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1 **11.5.18 Native American Concerns**

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3 Native Americans share many environmental and socioeconomic concerns with other
4 ethnic groups. This section focuses on concerns that are specific to Native Americans or to which
5 Native Americans bring a distinct perspective. For a discussion of issues of possible Native
6 American concern shared with the population as a whole, several sections in this PEIS should be
7 consulted. Topics of general concern are addressed in Section 4.16. Specifically for the proposed
8 East Mormon Mountain SEZ, Section 11.5.17 discusses archaeological sites, structures,
9 landscapes, trails, and traditional cultural properties; Section 11.5.8 discusses mineral resources;
10 Section 11.5.9.1.3 discusses water rights and water use; Section 11.5.10 discusses plant species;
11 11.5.11 discusses wildlife species, including wildlife migration patterns; Section 11.5.13
12 discusses air quality; Section 11.5.14 discusses visual resources; Sections 11.5.19 and 11.5.20
13 discuss socioeconomics and environmental justice, respectively. Issues of human health and
14 safety are discussed in Section 5.21.

15
16
17 **11.5.18.1 Affected Environment**

18
19 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is within the Tribal traditional use area
20 generally attributed to the Southern Paiute (Kelly and Fowler 1986). All federally recognized
21 Tribes with Southern Paiute roots have been contacted and provided an opportunity to comment
22 or consult regarding this PEIS. They are listed in Table 11.5.18.1-1. Details of government-to-
23 government consultation efforts are presented in Chapter 14; a listing of all federally recognized
24 Tribes contacted for this PEIS is provided in Appendix K.

25
26
**TABLE 11.5.18.1-1 Federally Recognized Tribes with
Traditional Ties to the Proposed East Mormon
Mountain SEZ**

Tribe	Location	State
Chemehuevi Indian Tribe	Lake Havasu	California
Kaibab Paiute Tribe	Fredonia	Arizona
Las Vegas Paiute Tribe	Las Vegas	Nevada
Moapa Band of Paiutes	Moapa	Nevada
Pahrump Paiute Tribe	Pahrump	Nevada
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah	Cedar City	Utah
Cedar Band	Cedar City	Utah
Indian Peak Band	Cedar City	Utah
Kanosh Band	Kanosh	Utah
Koosharem Band	Cedar City	Utah
Shivwits Band	Ivins	Utah
San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe	Tuba City	Arizona

27
28
29

1 **11.5.18.1.1 Southern Paiute Territorial Boundaries**
2

3 The traditional territory of the Southern Paiute lies mainly in the Mojave Desert,
4 stretching from California to the Colorado Plateau. It generally follows the northern and western
5 banks of the Colorado River, including its tributary streams and canyons in southern Nevada and
6 Utah. It includes most of Clark and Lincoln Counties in Nevada and extends as far north as
7 Beaver County in Utah (Kelly and Fowler 1986). Most of their traditional range, including the
8 lands for the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, has been judicially recognized as the
9 traditional use area of the Southern Paiute by the Indian Claims Commission (Royster 2008).

10
11
12 **11.5.18.1.2 Plant Resources**
13

14 The Southern Paiutes continue to make use of a wide range of indigenous plants for food,
15 medicine, construction materials, and other uses. The vegetation present at the proposed East
16 Mormon Mountain SEZ is described in Section 11.5.10. The cover type present at the SEZ is
17 almost entirely Sonora–Mojave Creosotebush–White Bursage Desert Shrub, with small pockets
18 of North American Warm Desert Playa (USGS 2005a). The proposed SEZ is sparsely vegetated,
19 at least in part because much of it burned in 2005. The deeply cut Toquop Wash runs diagonally
20 from northwest to southeast across the proposed SEZ. Smaller tributary washes cross much of
21 the SEZ. Creosotebush and white bursage are the dominant species; of these, creosotebush
22 has Native American medicinal uses. As shown in Table 11.5.18.1-2, there are likely to be
23 some plants used by Native Americans for food in the SEZ (Stoffle et al. 1999; Stoffle and
24 Dobyns 1983). Project-specific analyses will be needed to determine the presence of these
25 plants at any proposed building site. Traditional plant knowledge is found most abundantly
26 among Tribal elders, especially female elders (Stoffle et al. 1999).

27
28
29 **11.5.18.1.3 Other Resources**
30

31 Members of the Moapa Band of the Southern Paiutes rate springs as the most important
32 cultural resource in their cultural landscape. Water is an essential prerequisite for life in the arid
33 areas of the Great Basin. As a result, water is a keystone of desert cultures’ religion. They
34 consider all water sacred and a purifying agent. Water sources are often associated with rock art.
35 Springs are often associated with powerful beings, and hot springs in particular figure in
36 Southern Paiute creation stories. Water sources are seen as connected, so damage to one damages
37 all (Fowler 1991; Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a). Tribes are also sensitive regarding the use of scarce
38 local water supplies for the benefit of far-distant communities and recommend determination of
39 adequate water supplies as a primary consideration in determining whether a site is suitable for
40 the development of a utility-scale solar energy facility (Moose 2009).

41
42 Wildlife likely to be found in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is described in
43 Section 11.5.11. Although now restricted, in the past, the hunting of sheep was an important part
44 of Southern Paiute culture and had religious significance, as reflected in the many panels of
45 sheep petroglyphs found throughout Southern Paiute territory. Bighorn sheep are present in the
46 East Mormon Mountains and Mormon Mountains of the SEZ and in the Tule Spring Hills to the

TABLE 11.5.18.1-2 Plant Species Important to Native Americans Observed or Likely To Be Present in the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Food		
Desert trumpet (buckwheat)	<i>Eriogonum inflatum</i>	Observed
Dropseed	<i>Sporobolus</i> spp.	Possible
Indian rice grass	<i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>	Observed
Iodine bush	<i>Allenrolfea occidentalis</i>	Possible
Joshua tree	<i>Yucca brevifolia</i>	Observed
Prickly pear cactus	<i>Opuntia</i> spp.	Possible
Saltbush	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	Observed
Seablite	<i>Suaeda diffusa</i>	Possible
Wolfberry	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	Possible
Medicine		
Creosotebush	<i>Larrea tridentata</i>	Observed
Mormon tea	<i>Ephedra nevadaensis</i>	Possible
Palmer's phacelia	<i>Phacelia palermi</i>	Possible

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005a); Fowler (1986); Stoffle and Dobyns (1983); Stoffle et al. (1999).

1
2
3 north. Mule deer habitat occurs in the Mormon Mountains about 5 mi (8 km) west (BLM 2009f).
4 The desert tortoise was once a food source for the Moapa Band, but it is now often mentioned by
5 the Moapa Band as a species that should be protected (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). The SEZ is
6 desert tortoise habitat and borders critical habitat to the south (BLM 2009f). Because of the
7 general aridity of the SEZ, few game species traditionally important to Native Americans occur
8 within the SEZ (see Table 11.5.18.1-3). Among the most important is the black-tailed jack rabbit
9 (*Lepus californicus*) (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983; Kelly and Fowler 1986). Other small game
10 species important to Native Americans that can be found in the SEZ include desert cottontails
11 (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) and woodrats (*Neotoma lepida*). Other animals traditionally important to
12 the Southern Paiute include lizards, which are likely to occur in the SEZ, and the golden eagle
13 (*Aquila chrysaetos*).
14

15 Other natural resources traditionally important to Native Americans include clay for
16 pottery, salt, naturally occurring mineral pigments for the decoration and protection of the skin,
17 and turquoise for ritual purposes (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983)
18

20 11.5.18.2 Impacts

21
22 The Southern Paiutes tend to take a holistic view of their traditional homeland. For them,
23 cultural and natural features are inextricably bound together. Effects on one part have ripple
24 effects on the whole. Western distinctions between the sacred and the secular have no meaning

TABLE 11.5.18.1-3 Animal Species Used by Native Americans as Food with Ranges That Include the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Mammals		
Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	All year
Black-tailed jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i> .	All year
Bobcat	<i>Lynx rufus</i>	All year
Desert cottontail	<i>Silvilagus audubonii</i>	All year
Desert woodrat	<i>Neotoma lepida</i>	All year
Kangaroo rats	<i>Dipodomys</i> spp.	All year
Kit fox	<i>Vulpes macotis</i>	All year
Mule deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	All year
Pocket gopher	<i>Thomomys bottae</i>	All year
Pocket mouse	<i>Perognathus</i> sp.	All year
Pocket mouse	<i>Chaetodipus</i> spp.	All year
Porcupine	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>	All year
Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	All year
Rock squirrel	<i>Spermophilus variegates</i>	All year
Birds		
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	All year
Greater roadrunner	<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>	All year
Mourning dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	All year
Reptiles		
Large lizards	Various species	All year

Sources USGS (2005b); Fowler (1986); Stoffle and Dobyns (1983).

1
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3 in their traditional worldview (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). While no comments specific to the
4 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ have been received from Native American Tribes to date,
5 the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah has asked to be kept informed of PEIS developments. Typically,
6 the Southern Paiute have concerns over adverse effects on a wide range of resources. They
7 consider springs and burial grounds of highest importance (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Other
8 sites and features are often seen as important because they are the location of or have ready
9 access to a range of plant, animal, and mineral resources (Stoffle et al. 1997). Resources
10 considered important include plants used for food, medicine, basketry, and in construction;
11 large and small game animals; birds; and sources of clay, salt, and pigments (Stoffle and
12 Dobyns 1983). Those resources likely to occur within the proposed East Mormon Mountain
13 SEZ are discussed in Section 11.5.18.1.2. Geophysical features and physical cultural remains
14 are discussed in Section 11.5.17.1.4.

15
16 The development and operation of utility-scale solar energy facilities in the proposed East
17 Mormon Mountain SEZ would require tapping into the water resources at Tule Spring just north

1 of the SEZ. Other springs are located in the Tule Springs Hills and East Mormon Mountains.
2 Significant drawdown from Tule Springs or groundwater could affect these culturally important
3 traditional resources. However, implementation of programmatic design features, as discussed in
4 Section A.2.2, should eliminate impacts on Tribes' reserved water rights and the potential for
5 groundwater contamination issues.
6

7 The most likely traditional use of the lands proposed for the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
8 is foraging. The development of a solar energy facility would result in the loss of some plants
9 traditionally used by Native Americans. However, vegetation is sparse in the proposed SEZ. The
10 state would require that the developer allow any Joshua trees that would be uprooted to be
11 transplanted prior to the start of development. The same vegetation cover types are wide-spread
12 in the surrounding area. It is therefore likely that effects on these resources would be minimal
13 (see Section 11.5.10). Similarly, although the habitat of traditionally important animal species,
14 such as the black-tailed jackrabbit, would be disturbed, there likewise is an abundance of similar
15 habitat in the area (see Section 11.5.11). This should be confirmed by consultation with affected
16 Native American Tribes when specific projects are proposed.
17

18 As consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it
19 is possible that Native Americans will express additional concerns over potential visual, acoustic
20 and other effects on specific resources and any culturally important landscapes within or adjacent
21 to the proposed SEZ.
22
23

24 **11.5.18.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

25

26 Programmatic design features that would address impacts of potential concern to Native
27 Americans, such as avoidance of sacred sites, water sources, and tribally important plant and
28 animal species, are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Mitigation of impacts on
29 archaeological sites and traditional cultural properties is discussed in Section 11.5.17.3, in
30 addition to the programmatic design features for historic properties presented in Section A.2.2 in
31 Appendix A.
32

33 The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features addressing issues of potential
34 concern would be determined during government-to-government consultation with affected
35 Tribes listed in Table 11.5.18.1-1.
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1 **11.5.19 Socioeconomics**

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4 **11.5.19.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section describes current socioeconomic conditions and local community services
7 within the ROI surrounding the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The ROI is a
8 three-county area comprising Clark and Lincoln Counties in Nevada and Washington County
9 in Utah. It encompasses the area in which workers are expected to spend most of their salaries
10 and in which a portion of site purchases and nonpayroll expenditures from the construction,
11 operation, and decommissioning phases of the proposed SEZ facility are expected to take place.
12

13
14 **11.5.19.1.1 ROI Employment**

15
16 In 2008, employment in the ROI stood at 984,248 (Table 11.5.19.1-1). Over the period
17 1999 to 2008, the annual average employment growth rate was higher in Lincoln County (5.1%)
18 than in Washington County (4.8%) and Clark County (3.2%). At 3.3%, the growth rate in the
19 ROI as a whole was higher than the average rate for Nevada (2.7%) and Utah (2.1%).
20

21 In the ROI in 2006, the services sector provided the highest percentage of employment
22 at 58.7%, followed by wholesale and retail trade at 15.1% and construction at 11.9%
23 (Table 11.5.19.1-2). Within the three counties in the ROI, the distribution of employment across
24
25

TABLE 11.5.19.1-1 ROI Employment in the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Location	1999	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999–2008 (%)
Clark County, Nevada	675,693	922,878	3.2
Lincoln County, Nevada	1,048	1,731	5.1
Washington County, Utah	37,351	59,639	4.8
ROI	714,362	984,248	3.3
Nevada	978,969	1,282,012	2.7
Utah	1,080,441	1,336,556	2.1

26 Sources: U.S Department of Labor (2009a,b).

TABLE 11.5.19.1-2 ROI Employment in the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ by Sector, 2006

Industry	Clark County, Nevada		Lincoln County, Nevada		Washington County, Utah		ROI	
	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total
Agriculture ^a	213	0.0	130	16.1	381	0.9	724	0.1
Mining	522	0.1	38	4.7	20	0.1	580	0.1
Construction	100,817	11.6	60	7.4	7,838	7.2	108,715	11.9
Manufacturing	25,268	2.9	0	0.0	3,202	3.0	28,470	3.1
Transportation and public utilities	38,529	4.4	70	8.7	2,832	20.6	41,131	4.5
Wholesale and retail trade	128,498	14.8	259	32.1	9,292	24.1	138,049	15.1
Finance, insurance, and real estate	56,347	6.5	51	6.3	2,139	8.3	58,537	6.4
Services	516,056	59.6	376	46.7	18,818	33.0	535,250	58.7
Other	105	0.0	0	0.0	10	0.0	115	0.0
Total	866,093		806		44,495		911,394	

^a Agricultural employment includes 2007 data for hired farmworkers.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a); USDA (2009a,b).

1 sectors is different from that of the ROI as a whole, with employment in services (59.6%) and
 2 construction (11.6%) higher in Clark County than in the other two counties in the ROI, while
 3 employment in transportation and public utilities (4.4%), and agriculture (0.0%) were lower than
 4 in the other counties in the ROI.

5
6
7 **11.5.19.1.2 ROI Unemployment**
8

9 The average rate in Lincoln County over the period over the period 1999 to 2008 was
 10 5.2%, slightly higher than the rate in Clark County (5.0%), and higher than the rate for
 11 Washington County (Table 11.5.19.1-3). The average rate in the ROI over this period was 5.0%,
 12 the same as the average rate for Nevada. Unemployment rates for the first 11 months of 2009
 13 contrast with rates for 2008 as a whole; in Clark County the unemployment rate increased to
 14 11.1%, while in Lincoln County the rate reached 8.0%, and in Washington County it increased
 15 to 7.1%. The average rates for the ROI (10.8%) and for Nevada (11.0%) and Utah (5.2%) as a
 16 whole were also higher during this period than the corresponding average rates for 2008.

17
18
19 **11.5.19.1.3 ROI Urban Population**
20

21 The population of the ROI in 2008 was 59% urban. The largest city, Las Vegas, had an
 22 estimated population of 562,849; other large cities in Clark County are Henderson (253,693) and
 23 North Las Vegas (217,975) (Table 11.5.19.1-4). In addition, there are two smaller cities in the
 24 county, Mesquite (16,528) and Boulder City (14,954). There are a number of unincorporated
 25 urban areas in Clark County that are not included in the urban population, meaning that the
 26 percentage of the county population not living in urban areas is overstated. The largest urban
 27 area in Washington County, St. George, had an estimated 2008 population of 71,702; other
 28
29

**TABLE 11.5.19.1-3 ROI Unemployment Rates for
the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ (%)**

Location	1999–2008	2008	2009 ^a
Clark County, Nevada	5.0	6.6	11.1
Lincoln County, Nevada	5.2	5.4	8.0
Washington County, Utah	4.1	4.6	7.1
ROI	5.0	6.5	10.8
Nevada	5.0	6.7	11.0
Utah	4.1	3.4	5.2

^a Rates for 2009 are the average for January through November.

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a–c).

TABLE 11.5.19.1-4 ROI Urban Population and Income for the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

City	Population			Median Household Income (\$ 2008)		
	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000–2008 (%)	1999	2006–2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999 and 2006–2008 (%) ^a
Apple Valley	NA ^b	460	NA	NA	NA	NA
Boulder City	14,966	14,954	0.0	65,049	NA	NA
Caliente	1,123	1,191	0.7	33,260	NA	NA
Enterprise	1,285	1,617	2.9	45,957	NA	NA
Henderson	175,381	253,693	4.7	72,035	67,886	-0.7
Hilldale	1,895	1,952	0.4	42,010	NA	NA
Hurricane	8,250	13,149	6.0	42,314	NA	NA
Ivins	4,450	7,729	7.1	53,171	NA	NA
La Verkin	3,392	4,448	3.4	46,285	NA	NA
Las Vegas	478,434	562,849	2.1	56,739	55,113	-0.3
Leeds	547	756	4.1	53,110	NA	NA
Mesquite	9,389	16,528	7.3	52,005	NA	NA
North Las Vegas	115,488	217,975	8.3	56,299	60,506	0.2
Rockville	247	261	0.7	48,819	NA	NA
Santa Clara	4,630	6,767	4.9	67,942	NA	NA
Springdale	457	573	2.9	53,570	NA	NA
St. George	49,663	71,702	4.7	47,001	47,308	0.1
Toquerville	910	1,351	5.1	43,824	NA	NA
Virgin	394	551	4.3	47,578	NA	NA
Washington	8,816	17,452	9.9	45,502	NA	NA

^a Data are averages for the period 2006 to 2008.

^b NA = data not available.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b–d).

1
2
3 urban areas in the county are Washington (17,452) and Hurricane (13,149) (Table 11.5.19.1-4).
4 In addition, there are 12 other urban areas in the county. Most of these cities are less than 100 mi
5 (160 km) from the site of the proposed SEZ.

6
7 Population growth rates in the ROI have varied over the period 2000 to 2008
8 (Table 11.5.19.1-4). Washington grew at an annual rate of 9.9% during this period, with higher-
9 than-average growth also experienced in North Las Vegas (8.3%), Mesquite (7.3%), Ivins (7.1%)
10 Hurricane (6.0%), and Henderson (4.7%). The cities of Las Vegas (2.1%), Caliente (0.7%), and
11 others experienced a lower growth rate, while Boulder City (0.0%) experienced a static growth
12 rate between 2000 and 2008.

13
14

1 **11.5.19.1.4 ROI Urban Income**

2
3 Median household incomes vary across urban areas in the ROI. Of the four cities for
4 which data are available for 2006 to 2008, Henderson (\$67,886) and North Las Vegas (\$60,506)
5 had median incomes higher than the average for Nevada (\$56,348), while median incomes in Las
6 Vegas (\$55,113) were slightly lower than the state average. Median incomes in St. George
7 (\$47,308) were also lower than the state average for Utah (\$56,484) (Table 11.5.19.1-4).
8

9 Growth rates between 1999 and 2006 to 2008 were small in North Las Vegas (0.2%), and
10 St. George (0.1%), and negative in Henderson (-0.7%), and Las Vegas (-0.3%). The average
11 median household income growth rate as a whole over this period was -0.2% for Nevada, and
12 -0.5% in Utah.
13

14
15 **11.5.19.1.5 ROI Population**

16
17 Table 11.5.19.1-5 presents recent and projected populations in the ROI and for the two
18 states as a whole. Population in the ROI stood at 2,019,414 in 2008, having grown at an average
19 annual rate of 4.0% since 2000. Growth rates for ROI were higher than those in Nevada (3.4%)
20 and Utah (2.5%) over the same period.
21

22 Each county in the ROI experienced growth in population between 2000 and 2008;
23 population in Clark County grew at an annual rate of 4.0%, while population in Washington
24 County grew by 5.2% and 1.4% in Lincoln County. The ROI population is expected to increase
25 to 2,977,752 by 2021 and to 3,079,077 by 2023.
26
27

TABLE 11.5.19.1-5 ROI Population for the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Location	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000–2008 (%)	2021	2023
Clark County, Nevada	1,375,765	1,879,093	4.0	2,710,303	2,791,161
Lincoln County, Nevada	4,165	4,643	1.4	5,350	5,412
Washington County, Utah	90,354	135,678	5.2	262,099	282,504
ROI	1,470,284	2,019,414	4.0	2,977,752	3,079,077
Nevada	1,998,257	2,615,772	3.4	3,675,890	3,779,745
Utah	2,233,169	2,727,343	2.5	3,546,228	3,666,248

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009e,f); Nevada State Demographers Office (2008).

1 **11.5.19.1.6 ROI Income**

2
3 Total personal income in the ROI stood at \$77.5 billion in 2007 and has grown at an
4 annual average rate of 5.0% over the period 1998 to 2007 (Table 11.5.19.1-6). Per-capita income
5 also rose over the same period at a rate of 0.7%, increasing from \$35,664 to \$38,327.
6

7 Per-capita incomes were higher in Clark County (\$40,307) than in Lincoln County
8 (\$24,121) and Washington County (\$23,499) in 2007. Growth rates in total personal income
9 have been higher in Clark County (5.0%) and Washington County (5.1%) than in Lincoln
10
11

**TABLE 11.5.19.1-6 ROI Personal Income for the
Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ**

Location	1998	2007	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1998–2007 (%)
Clark County, Nevada			
Total income ^a	45.7	74.1	5.0
Per-capita income	36,509	40,307	1.0
Lincoln County, Nevada			
Total income ^a	0.1	0.1	0.7
Per-capita income	24,711	24,121	-0.2
Washington County, Utah			
Total income ^a	2.0	3.3	5.1
Per-capita income	23,726	23,499	-0.1
ROI			
Total income ^a	47.8	77.5	5.0
Per-capita income	35,664	39,250	1.0
Nevada			
Total income ^a	68.9	105.3	4.3
Per-capita income	37,188	41,022	1.0
Utah			
Total income ^a	61.9	82.4	2.9
Per-capita income	28,567	31,003	0.8

^a Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ billion 2008.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce (2009); U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009e,f).

1 County (0.7%). Personal income growth rates were higher in the ROI (5.0%) than in Nevada
2 (4.3%) and Utah (2.9%), but per-capita income growth rate in Clark and Lincoln Counties were
3 the same, or slightly less than in Nevada (1.0%) and in Utah (0.8%). The per-capita income
4 growth rates for Lincoln County (-0.2%) and Washington County (-0.1%) were both negative.
5

6 Median household income in 2006 to 2008 varied from \$41,173 in Lincoln County, to
7 \$49,747 in Washington County, to \$56,954 in Clark County (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009d).
8

9 10 ***11.5.19.1.7 ROI Housing***

11
12 In 2007, more than 808,400 housing units were located in the three ROI counties; about
13 93% of these were in Clark County (Table 11.5.19.1-7). Owner-occupied units compose
14 approximately 60% of the occupied units in the three counties, with rental housing making up
15 40% of the total. Vacancy rates in 2007 were 29.3% in Lincoln County, 17.1% in Washington
16 County, and 12.2% in Clark County; with an overall vacancy rate of 12.6% in the ROI There
17 were 101,695 vacant housing units in the ROI in 2007, of which 40,476 are estimated to be rental
18 units that would be available to construction workers. There were 13,082 units in seasonal,
19 recreational, or occasional use in the ROI at the time of the 2000 Census, with 1.5% of vacant
20 housing units in Clark County, 12.0% in Washington County, and 14.0% in Lincoln County used
21 for seasonal or recreational purposes.
22

23 Housing stock in the ROI as a whole grew at an annual rate of 4.4% over the period 2000
24 to 2007, with 209,990 new units added to the existing housing stock (Table 11.5.19.1-7).
25

26 The median value of owner-occupied housing in 2006 to 2008 varied from \$80,300 in
27 Lincoln County, \$139,500 in Clark County to \$139,800 in Washington County (U.S. Bureau of
28 the Census 2009g).
29

30 31 ***11.5.19.1.8 ROI Local Government Organizations***

32
33 The various local and county government organizations in the ROI are listed in
34 Table 11.5.19.1-8. In addition, three Tribal governments are located in the ROI; members of
35 other Tribal groups are located in the county, but their Tribal governments are in adjacent
36 counties or states.
37

38 39 ***11.5.19.1.9 ROI Community and Social Services***

40
41 This section describes educational, health-care, law enforcement, and firefighting
42 resources in the ROI.
43
44

TABLE 11.5.19.1-7 ROI Housing Characteristics for the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Parameter	2000	2007
Clark County, Nevada		
Owner-occupied	302,834	393,453
Rental	209,419	268,572
Vacant units	47,546	92,144
Seasonal and recreational use	8,416	NA ^a
Total units	559,799	754,169
Lincoln County, Nevada		
Owner-occupied	1,156	1,204
Rental	384	400
Vacant units	638	664
Seasonal and recreational use	305	NA
Total units	2,178	2,268
Washington County, Utah		
Owner-occupied	22,128	30,795
Rental	7,811	12,326
Vacant units	6,539	8,887
Seasonal and recreational use	4,362	NA
Total units	36,478	52,008
ROI		
Owner-occupied	326,118	425,452
Rental	217,614	281,298
Vacant units	54,732	101,695
Seasonal and recreational use	13,082	NA
Total units	598,455	808,455

^a NA = data not available.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009h-j).

Schools

In 2007, the three-county ROI had a total of 375 public and private elementary, middle, and high schools (NCES 2009). Table 11.5.19.1-9 provides summary statistics for enrollment and educational staffing and two indices of educational quality—student-teacher ratios and levels of service (number of teachers per 1,000 population). The student-teacher ratio in Washington County schools (22.1) is higher than that in Clark County (19.0) and Lincoln County schools (13.3), while the level of service is much higher in Lincoln County (18.2) than elsewhere in the ROI, where there are fewer teachers per 1,000 population (Clark County, 8.7; Washington County, 7.8).

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TABLE 11.5.19.1-8 ROI Local Government Organizations and Social Institutions in the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Governments

City

Apple Valley, Utah	Mesquite, Nevada
Boulder City, Nevada	North Las Vegas, Nevada
Caliente, Nevada	Rockville, Utah
Enterprise, Utah	Santa Clara, Utah
Henderson, Nevada	Springdale, Utah
Hilldale, Utah	St. George, Utah
Hurricane, Utah	Toquerville, Utah
Ivins, Utah	Virgin, Utah
La Verkin, Utah	Washington, Utah
Las Vegas, Nevada	

County

Clark County, Nevada	Washington County, Utah
Lincoln County, Nevada	

Tribal

Las Vegas Tribe of Paiute Indians of the Las Vegas Indian Colony, Nevada
Moapa Band of Paiute Indians of the Moapa River Indian Reservation, Nevada
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b); U.S. Department of the Interior (2010).

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TABLE 11.5.19.1-9 ROI School District Data for the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, 2007

Location	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Student-Teacher Ratio	Level of Service ^a
Clark County, Nevada	303,448	15,930	19.0	8.7
Lincoln County, Nevada	1,074	81	13.3	18.2
Washington County, Utah	24,357	1,103	22.1	7.8
ROI	328,879	17,113	19.2	8.7

^a Number of teachers per 1,000 population.

Source: NCES (2009).

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1 **Health Care**

2
3 The total number of physicians and the number of physicians per 1,000 population is
4 higher in Clark County (4,220; 2.3) than in Washington County (277; 2.0) and in Lincoln County
5 (2; 0.4) (Table 11.5.19.1-10).

6
7
8 **Public Safety**

9
10 Several state, county, and local police departments provide law enforcement in the
11 ROI (Table 11.5.19.1-11). Lincoln County has 26 officers and would provide law enforcement
12 services to the SEZ; there are 3,214 officers in Clark County and 45 officers in Washington
13 County. Levels of service of police protection per 1,000 population are 5.8 in Lincoln County,
14 1.7 in Clark County, and 0.3 in Washington County. Currently, there are 1,002 professional
15 firefighters in the ROI (Table 11.5.19.1-11).

16
17
18 ***11.5.19.1.10 ROI Social Structure and Social Change***

19
20 Community social structures and other forms of social organization within the ROI are
21 related to various factors, including historical development, major economic activities and
22 sources of employment, income levels, race and ethnicity, and forms of local political
23 organization. Although an analysis of the character of community social structures is beyond the
24 scope of the current programmatic analysis, project-level NEPA analyses would include a
25 description of ROI social structures, contributing factors, their uniqueness, and consequently, the
26 susceptibility of local communities to various forms of social disruption and social change.

27
28 Various energy development studies have suggested that once the annual growth in
29 population is between 5 and 15% in smaller rural communities, alcoholism, depression, suicide,
30 social conflict, divorce, and delinquency would increase and levels of community satisfaction
31 would deteriorate (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996). Data on violent crime and property crime rates and
32 on alcoholism, illicit drug use, mental health, and divorce, which might be used as indicators of
33 social change, are presented in Tables 11.5.19.1-12 and 11.5.19.1-13, respectively.

34
35
36 There is some variation in the level of crime across the ROI, with higher rates of violent
37 crime in Clark County (8.3 per 1,000 population) than in Washington County (2.0) and Lincoln
38 County (1.3) (Table 11.5.19.1-12). Property-related crime rates are also higher in Clark County
39
40

TABLE 11.5.19.1-10 Physicians in the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ ROI, 2007

Location	Number of Primary Care Physicians	Level of Service ^a
Clark County, Nevada	4,220	2.3
Lincoln County, Nevada	2	0.4
Washington County, Utah	277	2.0
ROI	4,499	2.3

^a Number of physicians per 1,000 population.

Source: AMA (2009).

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TABLE 11.5.19.1-11 Public Safety Employment in the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ ROI

Location	Number of Police Officers ^a	Level of Service ^b	Number of Firefighters ^c	Level of Service
Clark County, Nevada	3,214	1.7	991	0.5
Lincoln County, Nevada	26	5.8	1	0.2
Washington County, Utah	45	0.3	10	0.1
ROI	3,285	1.7	1,002	0.5

^a 2007 data.

^b Number per 1,000 population.

^c 2008 data; number does not include volunteers.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2008); Fire Departments Network (2009).

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(34.5) than in Washington County (23.6) and Lincoln County (7.3); overall crime rates in Clark County (42.5) were higher than in Washington County (25.6) and Lincoln County (8.6).

Other measures of social change—alcoholism, illicit drug use, and mental health—are not available at the county level and thus are presented for the SAMHSA region in which the ROI is located. There is slight variation across the three regions in which the three counties are located; rates for alcoholism and mental health are slightly higher in the region in which Clark County is located (Table 11.5.19.1-13).

1 **11.5.19.1.11 ROI Recreation**

2
3 Various areas in the vicinity of the proposed SEZ are used for recreational purposes, with
4 natural, ecological, and cultural resources in the ROI attracting visitors for a range of activities,
5 including hunting, fishing, boating, canoeing, wildlife watching, camping, hiking, horseback
6 riding, mountain climbing, and sightseeing. These activities are discussed in Section 11.5.5.
7

8 Because the number of visitors using state and federal lands for recreational activities is
9 not available from the various administering agencies, basing the value of recreational resources
10 in these areas solely on the number of recorded visitors is likely to be an underestimation. In
11 addition to visitation rates, the economic valuation of certain natural resources can also be
12 assessed in terms of the potential recreational destination for current and future users, that is,
13 their nonmarket value (see Section 5.17.1.1.1).
14

15 Another method is to estimate the economic impact of the various recreational activities
16 supported by natural resources on public land in the vicinity of the proposed solar facilities, by
17
18

TABLE 11.5.19.1-12 County and ROI Crime Rates for the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ^a

	Violent Crime ^b		Property Crime ^c		All Crime	
	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate
Clark County, Nevada	15,505	8.3	66,905	34.5	82,410	42.5
Lincoln County, Nevada	6	1.3	34	7.3	40	8.6
Washington County, Utah	270	2.0	3,197	23.6	3,467	25.6
ROI	15,781	7.8	70,136	34.7	85,917	42.5

^a Rates are the number of crimes per 1,000 population.

^b Violent crime includes murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

^c Property crime includes burglary, larceny, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2009a,b).

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20

TABLE 11.5.19.1-13 Alcoholism, Drug Use, Mental Health, and Divorce in the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ ROI^a

Geographic Area	Alcoholism	Illicit Drug Use	Mental Health ^b	Divorce ^c
Clark County, Nevada	8.2	2.7	10.5	NA ^d
Nevada rural (includes Lincoln County)	8.0	2.7	9.5	NA
Utah southwest region (includes Washington County)	5.6	2.5	11.3	NA
Nevada				6.5
Utah				3.6

^a Data for alcoholism and drug use represent percentage of the population over 12 years of age with dependence or abuse of alcohol, illicit drugs. Data are averages for 2004 to 2006.

^b Data for mental health represent percentage of the population over 18 years of age suffering from serious psychological distress. Data are averages for 2002 to 2004.

^c Divorce rates are the number of divorces per 1,000 population. Data are for 2007.

^d NA = data not available.

Sources: SAMHSA (2009); CDC (2009).

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3 identifying sectors in the economy in which expenditures on recreational activities occur. Not
4 all activities in these sectors are directly related to recreation on state and federal lands; some
5 activity occurs on private land (e.g., dude ranches, golf courses, bowling alleys, and movie
6 theaters). Expenditures associated with recreational activities form an important part of the
7 economy of the ROI. In 2007, 248,507 people were employed in the ROI in the various sectors
8 identified as recreation, constituting 25.8% of total ROI employment (Table 11.5.19.1-14).
9 Recreation spending also produced more than \$9,552 million in income in the ROI in 2007. The
10 primary sources of recreation-related employment were hotels and lodging places and eating and
11 drinking places.

12
13
14 **11.5.19.2 Impacts**

15
16 The following analysis begins with a description of the common impacts of solar
17 development, including those on recreation and on social change. These impacts would occur
18 regardless of the solar technology developed in the SEZ. The impacts of facilities employing
19 various solar energy technologies are analyzed in detail in subsequent sections.

20
21
22 **11.5.19.2.1 Common Impacts**

23
24 Construction and operation of a solar energy facility at the proposed SEZ would produce
25 direct and indirect economic impacts. Direct impacts would occur as a result of expenditures on
26 wages and salaries, procurement of goods and services required for project construction and

TABLE 11.5.19.1-14 Recreation Sector Activity in the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ ROI, 2007

ROI	Employment	Income (\$ million)
Amusement and recreation services	4,933	151.1
Automotive rental	2,927	119.9
Eating and drinking places	111,946	3,291.2
Hotels and lodging places	117,616	5,640.1
Museums and historic sites	315	18.7
Recreational vehicle parks and campsites	398	11.1
Scenic tours	5,519	224.0
Sporting goods retailers	4,853	96.2
Total ROI	248,507	9,552.3

Source: MIG, Inc. (2010).

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operation, and the collection of state sales and income taxes. Indirect impacts would occur as project wages and salaries, procurement expenditures, and tax revenues subsequently circulate through the economy of each state, thereby creating additional employment, income, and tax revenues. Facility construction and operation would also require in-migration of workers and their families into the ROI surrounding the site, which would affect population, rental housing, health service employment, and public safety employment. Socioeconomic impacts common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in detail in Section 5.17. These impacts will be minimized through the implementation of programmatic design features described in Section A.2.2 of Appendix A.

Recreation Impacts

Estimating the impact of solar facilities on recreation is problematic, because it is not clear how solar development in the SEZ would affect recreational visitation and nonmarket values (i.e., the value of recreational resources for potential or future visits; see Section 5.17.1.2.3). While it is clear that some land in the ROI would no longer be accessible for recreation, the majority of popular recreational locations would be precluded from solar development. It is also possible that solar facilities in the ROI would be visible from popular recreation locations, and that construction workers residing temporarily in the ROI would occupy accommodation otherwise used for recreational visits, thus reducing visitation and consequently affecting the economy of the ROI.

1 **Social Change**
2

3 Although an extensive literature in sociology documents the most significant components
4 of social change in energy boomtowns, the nature and magnitude of the social impact of energy
5 developments in small rural communities are still unclear (see Section 5.17.1.1.4). While some
6 degree of social disruption is likely to accompany large scale in-migration during the boom
7 phase, there is insufficient evidence to predict the extent to which specific communities are
8 likely to be affected, which population groups within each community are likely to be most
9 affected, and the extent to which social disruption is likely to persist beyond the end of the boom
10 period (Smith et al. 2001). Accordingly, because of the lack of adequate social baseline data, it
11 has been suggested that social disruption is likely to occur once an arbitrary population growth
12 rate associated with solar energy projects has been reached, with an annual rate of between 5 and
13 10% growth in population assumed to result in a breakdown in social structures and a consequent
14 increase in alcoholism, depression, suicide, social conflict, divorce, and delinquency, and
15 deterioration in levels of community satisfaction (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996).
16

17 In overall terms, the in-migration of workers and their families into the ROI would
18 represent an increase of less than 0.1% in regional population during construction of the trough
19 technology, with smaller increases for the power tower, dish engine and PV technologies, and
20 during the operation of each technology. While it is possible that some construction and
21 operations workers will choose to locate in communities closer to the SEZ, because of the lack of
22 available housing to accommodate all in-migrating workers and families in smaller rural
23 communities in the ROI and insufficient range of housing choices to suit all solar occupations,
24 many workers are likely to commute to the SEZ from larger communities elsewhere in the ROI,
25 thereby reducing the potential impact of solar development on social change. Regardless of the
26 pace of population growth associated with the commercial development of solar resources and
27 the likely residential location of in-migrating workers and families in communities some distance
28 from the SEZ itself, the number of new residents from outside the ROI is likely to lead to some
29 demographic and social change in small rural communities in the ROI. Communities hosting
30 solar facilities are likely to be required to adapt to a different quality of life, with a transition
31 away from a more traditional lifestyle involving ranching and taking place in small, isolated,
32 close-knit, homogenous communities with a strong orientation toward personal and family
33 relationships, toward a more urban lifestyle, with increasing cultural and ethnic diversity and
34 increasing dependence on formal social relationships within the community.
35
36

37 **Livestock Grazing Impacts**
38

39 Cattle ranching and farming supported 202 jobs, and \$1.3 million in income in the ROI in
40 2007 (MIG, Inc. 2010). The construction and operation of solar facilities in the East Mormon
41 Mountain SEZ could result in a decline in the amount of land available for livestock grazing,
42 resulting in total (direct plus indirect) impacts of the loss of seven jobs and less than \$0.1 million
43 in income in the ROI. There would also be a decline in grazing fees payable to the BLM and to
44 the USFS by individual permittees based on the number of AUMs required to support livestock
45 on public land. Assuming the 2008 fee of \$1.35 per AUM, grazing fee losses would amount to
46 \$667 annually on land dedicated to solar facilities in the SEZ.
47

1 **Access Road Impacts**
2

3 The impacts of construction of an access road connecting the SEZ could include the
4 addition of 234 jobs in the ROI (including direct and indirect impacts) in the peak year of
5 construction (Table 11.5.19.2-1). Construction activities in the peak year would constitute less
6 than 1% of total ROI employment. Access road construction would also produce \$9.1 million in
7 ROI income. Direct sales taxes would be \$0.3 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be less
8 than \$0.1 million.
9

10 Total operations (maintenance) employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
11 indirect impacts) of an access road would be less than 1 job during the first year of operation
12 (Table 11.5.19.2-1) and would also produce less than \$0.1 million in income. Direct sales taxes
13 would be less than \$0.1 million in the first year; direct income taxes less than \$0.1 million.
14

15 Construction and operation of an access road would not require the in-migration of
16 workers and their families from outside the ROI; consequently, no impacts on housing markets
17 in the ROI would be expected, and no new community service employment would be required in
18 order to meet existing levels of service in the ROI.
19
20

21 **11.5.19.2.2 Technology-Specific Impacts**
22

23 The economic impacts of solar energy development in the proposed SEZ were measured
24 in terms of employment, income, state tax revenues (sales and income), BLM acreage rental and
25 capacity payments, population in-migration, housing, and community service employment
26 (education, health, and public safety). More information on the data and methods used in the
27 analysis can be found in Appendix M.
28

29 The assessment of the impact of the construction and operation of each technology was
30 based on SEZ acreage, assuming 80% of the area could be developed. To capture a range of
31 possible impacts, solar facility size was estimated on the basis of the land requirements of
32 various solar technologies, assuming that 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) would be required for
33 power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies and 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) would be
34 required for solar trough technologies. Impacts of multiple facilities employing a given
35 technology at each SEZ were assumed to be the same as impacts for a single facility with the
36 same total capacity. Construction impacts were assessed for a representative peak year of
37 construction, assumed to be 2021 for each technology. Construction impacts assumed that a
38 maximum of one project could be constructed within a given year, with a corresponding
39 maximum land disturbance of up to 3,000 acres (12 km²). For operations impacts, a
40 representative first year of operations was assumed to be 2023 for trough and power tower and
41 2022 for the minimum facility size and 2023 for the maximum facility size for dish engine and
42 PV. The years of construction and operations were selected as representative of the entire
43 20-year study period, because they are the approximate midpoint; construction and operations
44 could begin earlier.
45

TABLE 11.5.19.2-1 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts of an Access Road Connecting the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ^a

Parameter	Construction	Operations
Employment (no.)		
Direct	134	<1
Total	234	<1
Income ^b		
Total	9.1	<0.1
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.3	<0.1
Income	<0.1	<0.1
In-migrants (no.)	0	0
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	0	0
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	0	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	0	0

^a Construction impacts assume 11 mi (18 km) of access road is required for the East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Construction impacts are assessed for the peak year of construction. Although gravel surfacing might be used, the analysis assumes the access road will be paved.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside Utah.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

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1 **Solar Trough**
2
3

4 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
5 and indirect impacts) from the use of solar trough technologies would be up to 4,438 jobs
6 (Table 11.5.19.2-2). Construction activities would constitute 0.3% of total ROI employment.
7 A solar facility would also produce \$268.7 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
8 \$8.7 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be \$1.0 million.
9

10 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
11 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
12 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
13 743 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
14 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
15 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
16 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
17 with 371 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
18 0.6% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
19

20 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
21 community service employment (education, health, and public safety). An increase in such
22 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly, seven
23 new teachers, two physicians, and two public safety employees (career firefighters and
24 uniformed police officers) would be required in the ROI. These increases would represent less
25 than 0.1% of total ROI employment expected in these occupations.
26
27

28 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
29 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using solar trough technologies would be 496 jobs
30 (Table 11.5.19.2-2). Such a solar facility would also produce \$18.9 million in income.
31 Direct sales taxes would be \$0.2 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be \$0.1 million.
32 Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c),
33 acreage rental payments would be \$0.6 million, and solar generating capacity payments at least
34 \$9.4 million.
35

36 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
37 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
38 from outside the ROI would be required, with 40 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
39 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
40 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
41 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
42 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 36 owner-occupied units expected to be
43 occupied in the ROI.
44
45

TABLE 11.5.19.2-2 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ with Trough Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	1,744	313
Total	4,438	496
Income ^b		
Total	268.7	18.9
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	8.7	0.2
Income	1.0	0.1
BLM payments ^b		
Rental	NA ^d	0.6
Capacity ^e	NA	9.4
In-migrants (no.)	743	40
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	371	36
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	7	0
Physicians (no.)	2	0
Public safety (no.)	2	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 600 MW (corresponding to 3,000 acres [12 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 1,435 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside Utah.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d NA = data not available.

^e The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability and full build-out of the site. Projects with 3 or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
2 service in the ROI.

3
4
5 **Power Tower**

6
7
8 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
9 and indirect impacts) from the use of power tower technologies would be up to 1,768 jobs
10 (Table 11.5.19.2-3). Construction activities would constitute 0.1% of total ROI employment.
11 Such a solar facility would also produce \$107.0 million in income. Direct sales taxes would
12 be \$3.5 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be \$0.4 million.

13
14 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
15 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
16 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
17 296 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
18 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
19 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
20 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
21 with 148 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
22 0.2 % of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

23
24 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
25 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
26 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
27 three new teachers, one physician, and one public safety employee would be required in the
28 ROI. These increases would represent less than 0.1% of total ROI employment expected in
29 these occupations.

30
31
32 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
33 indirect impacts) of a build-out using power tower technologies would be 221 jobs
34 (Table 11.5.19.2-3). Such a solar facility would also produce \$7.6 million in income. Direct
35 sales taxes would be less than \$0.1 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be less than
36 \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy
37 (BLM 2010c), acreage rental payments would be \$0.6 million, and solar generating capacity
38 payments would total at least \$5.2 million.

39
40 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
41 operation of a solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their families from
42 outside the ROI would be required, with 21 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
43 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
44 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
45 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
46

TABLE 11.5.19.2-3 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ with Power Tower Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	695	161
Total	1,768	221
Income ^b		
Total	107.0	7.6
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	3.5	<0.1
Income	0.4	<0.1
BLM payments ^b		
Rental	NA ^d	0.6
Capacity ^e	NA	5.2
In-migrants (no.)	296	21
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	148	19
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	3	0
Physicians (no.)	1	0
Public safety (no.)	1	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 333 MW (corresponding to 3,000 acres [12 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 797 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside in Utah.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d NA = data not available.

^e The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability and full build-out of the site. Projects with 3 or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 19 owner-occupied units expected to be
2 required in the ROI.

3
4 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
5 service in the ROI.

6 7 8 **Dish Engine**

9
10
11 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
12 and indirect impacts) from the use of dish engine technologies would be up to 719 jobs
13 (Table 11.5.19.2-4). Construction activities would constitute less than 0.1% of total ROI
14 employment. Such a solar facility would also produce \$43.5 million in income. Direct sales
15 taxes would be \$1.4 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be \$0.2 million.

16
17 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
18 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
19 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
20 120 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
21 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
22 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
23 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
24 with 60 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
25 0.1% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

26
27 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
28 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
29 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly, one
30 new teacher would be required in the ROI. This increase would represent less than 0.1% of total
31 ROI employment expected in these occupations.

32
33
34 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
35 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using dish engine technologies would be 214 jobs
36 (Table 11.5.19.2-4). Such a solar facility would also produce \$7.4 million in income.
37 Direct sales taxes would be less than \$0.1 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be less
38 than \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental
39 Policy (BLM 2010c), acreage rental payments would be \$0.6 million, and solar generating
40 capacity payments would total at least \$5.2 million.

41
42 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
43 operation of a dish engine solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their
44 families from outside the ROI would be required, with 20 persons in-migrating into the ROI.
45 Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number
46

TABLE 11.5.19.2-4 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ with Dish Engine Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	282	157
Total	719	214
Income ^b		
Total	43.5	7.4
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	1.4	<0.1
Income	0.2	<0.1
BLM payments ^b		
Rental	NA ^d	0.6
Capacity ^e	NA	5.2
In-migrants (no.)	120	20
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	60	18
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	1	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	0	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 333 MW (corresponding to 3,000 acres [12 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 797 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside in Utah.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d NA = data not available.

^e The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability and full build-out of the site. Projects with 3 or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile
2 home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-
3 occupied housing units would not be expected to be large, with 18 owner-occupied units
4 expected to be required in the ROI.

5
6 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
7 service in the ROI.

8 9 10 **Photovoltaic**

11
12
13 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
14 indirect impacts) from the use of PV technologies would be up to 444 jobs (Table 11.5.19.2-5).
15 Construction activities would constitute less than 0.1% of total ROI employment. Such solar
16 development would also produce \$28.1 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
17 \$0.7 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be \$0.1 million.

18
19 Given the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker availability
20 in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean that some
21 in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required, with
22 101 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
23 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
24 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
25 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
26 with 50 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
27 0.1% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

28
29 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
30 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
31 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
32 one new teacher would be required in the ROI. This increase would represent less than 0.1%
33 of total ROI employment expected in this occupation.

34
35
36 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
37 indirect impacts) of a build-out using PV technologies would be 21 jobs (Table 11.5.19.2-5).
38 Such a solar facility would also produce \$0.7 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be
39 less than \$0.1 million; direct income taxes in Utah would be less than \$0.1 million. Based on
40 fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), acreage
41 rental payments would be \$0.6 million, and solar generating capacity payments would total at
42 least \$4.2 million.

43
44 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
45 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
46 from outside the ROI would be required, with two persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although

TABLE 11.5.19.2-5 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ with PV Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	237	16
Total	444	21
Income ^b		
Total	28.1	0.7
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.7	<0.1
Income	0.1	<0.1
BLM payments ^b		
Rental	NA ^d	0.6
Capacity ^e	NA	4.2
In-migrants (no.)	101	2
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	50	2
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	1	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	0	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 333 MW (corresponding to 3,000 acres [12 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 797 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada; data provided are for workers who would reside in Utah.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect owner-occupied housing.

^d NA = data not available.

^e The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$5,256 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), assuming full build-out of the site.

1 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
2 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
3 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
4 housing units would not be expected to be large, with two owner-occupied units expected to be
5 required in the ROI.

6
7 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
8 service in the ROI.

9
10
11 **11.5.19.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

12
13 No SEZ-specific design features addressing socioeconomic impacts have been identified
14 for the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features
15 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would
16 reduce the potential for socioeconomic impacts during all project phases.

1 **11.5.20 Environmental Justice**

2
3
4 **11.5.20.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 On February 11, 1994, the President signed Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to
7 Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” which
8 formally requires federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice as part of their missions
9 (*Federal Register*, Volume 59, page 76297, Feb. 11, 1994). Specifically, it directs them to
10 address, as appropriate, any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental
11 effects of their actions, programs, or policies on minority and low-income populations.
12

13 The analysis of the impacts of solar energy projects on environmental justice issues
14 follows guidelines described in the CEQ’s *Environmental Justice Guidance under the National*
15 *Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997). The analysis method has three parts: (1) a description
16 of the geographic distribution of low-income and minority populations in the affected area is
17 undertaken; (2) an assessment is conducted to determine whether construction and operation
18 would produce impacts that are high and adverse; and (3) if impacts are high and adverse, a
19 determination is made as to whether these impacts disproportionately affect minority and
20 low-income populations.
21

22 Construction and operation of solar energy projects in the proposed SEZ could affect
23 environmental justice if any adverse health and environmental impacts resulting from either
24 phase of development are significantly high and if these impacts disproportionately affect
25 minority and low-income populations. If the analysis determines that health and environmental
26 impacts are not significant, there can be no disproportionate impacts on minority and low-income
27 populations. In the event impacts are significant, disproportionality would be determined by
28 comparing the proximity of any high and adverse impacts with the location of low-income and
29 minority populations.
30

31 The analysis of environmental justice issues associated with the development of solar
32 facilities considered impacts within the SEZ and an associated 50-mi (80-km) radius around the
33 boundary of the SEZ. A description of the geographic distribution of minority and low-income
34 groups in the affected area was based on demographic data from the 2000 Census (U.S. Bureau
35 of the Census 2009k,1). The following definitions were used to define minority and low-income
36 population groups:
37

- 38 • **Minority.** Persons who identify themselves as belonging to any of the
39 following racial groups: (1) Hispanic, (2) Black (not of Hispanic origin) or
40 African American, (3) American Indian or Alaska Native, (4) Asian, or
41 (5) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.
42

43 Beginning with the 2000 Census, where appropriate, the census form allows
44 individuals to designate multiple population group categories to reflect their
45 ethnic or racial origin. In addition, persons who classify themselves as being
46 of multiple racial origins may choose up to six racial groups as the basis of

1 their racial origins. The term minority includes all persons, including those
2 classifying themselves in multiple racial categories, except those who classify
3 themselves as not of Hispanic origin and as White or “Other Race”
4 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009k).

5
6 The CEQ guidance proposed that minority populations should be identified
7 where either (1) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50% or
8 (2) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully
9 greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or
10 other appropriate unit of geographic analysis.

11
12 This PEIS applies both criteria in using the Census data for census block
13 groups, wherein consideration is given to the minority population that is both
14 greater than 50% and 20 percentage points higher than in the state (the
15 reference geographic unit).

- 16
17 • **Low-Income.** Individuals who fall below the poverty line. The poverty line
18 takes into account family size and age of individuals in the family. In 1999,
19 for example, the poverty line for a family of five with three children below
20 the age of 18 was \$19,882. For any given family below the poverty line, all
21 family members are considered as being below the poverty line for the
22 purposes of analysis (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009l).

23
24 The data in Table 11.5.20.1-1 show the minority and low-income composition of the
25 total population located in the proposed SEZ based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines.
26 Individuals identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino are included in the table as a separate
27 entry. However, because Hispanics can be of any race, this number also includes individuals
28 identifying themselves as being part of one or more of the population groups listed in the table.

29
30 Minority and low-income individuals are located in the 50-mi (80-km) area around the
31 boundary of the SEZ. Within the 50-mi (80-km) radius in Nevada, 26.4% of the population is
32 classified as minority, while 12.0% is classified as low-income. However, the number of
33 minority individuals does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area, and the number of
34 minority individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more; thus, in
35 aggregate, there is no minority population in the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ
36 guidelines. The number of low-income individuals does not exceed the state average by
37 20 percentage points or more and does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus,
38 in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the SEZ.

39
40 In the Utah portion of the 50-mi (80-km) radius, 21.8% of the population is classified as
41 minority, while 10.2% is classified as low-income. The number of minority individuals does not
42 exceed 50% of the total population in the area and the number of minority individuals does not
43 exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more; thus, in aggregate, there is no minority
44 population in the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines. The number of low-
45 income individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more and does
46

TABLE 11.5.20.1-1 Minority and Low-Income Populations within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius Surrounding the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

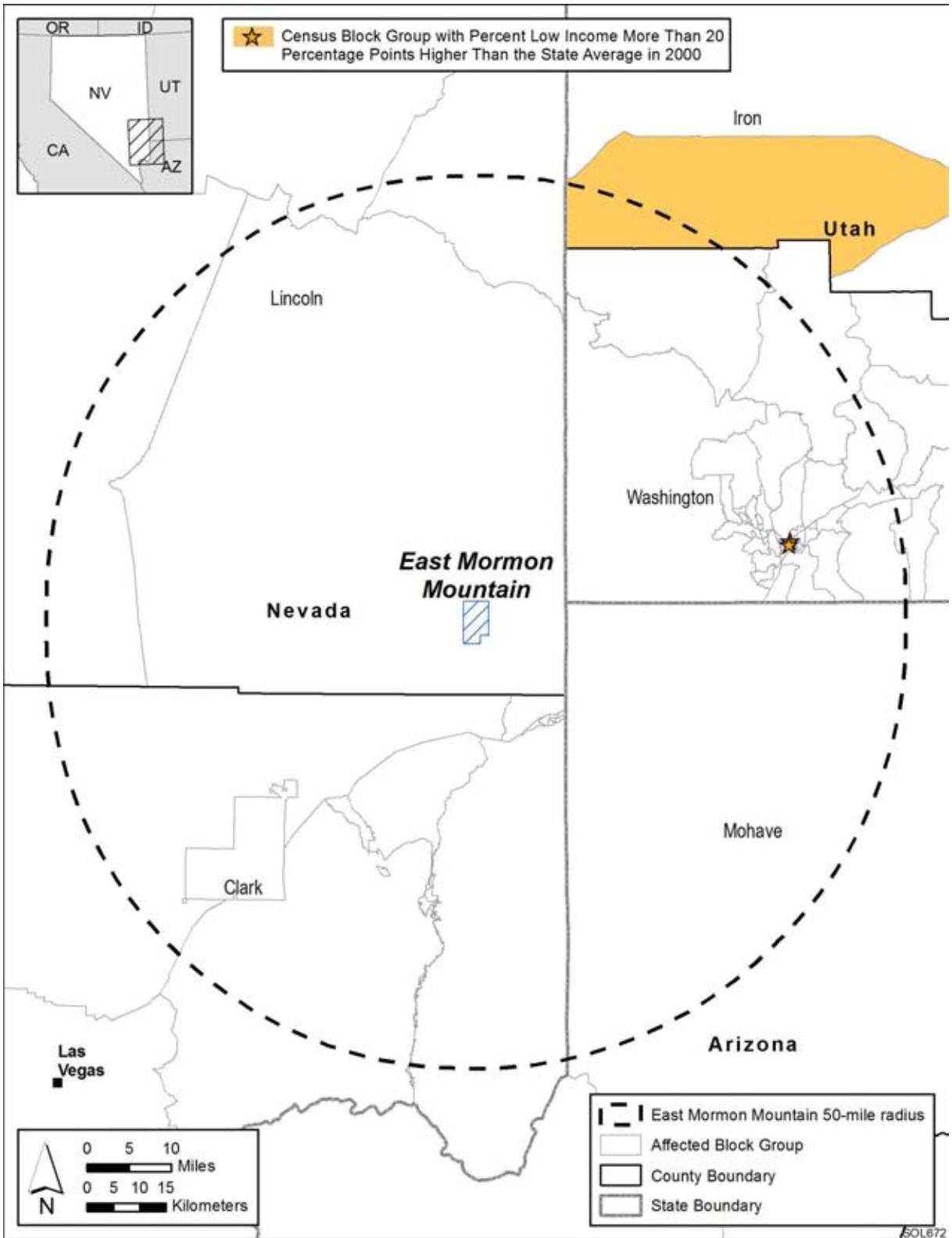
Parameter	Arizona	Nevada	Utah
Total population	1,588	22,739	81,757
White, non-Hispanic	1,169	17,780	74,222
Hispanic or Latino	376	3,930	4,454
Non-Hispanic or Latino minorities	43	1,029	3,081
One race	22	747	2,128
Black or African American	0	159	168
American Indian or Alaskan Native	15	320	1,183
Asian	2	185	357
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	42	348
Some other race	4	41	72
Two or more races	21	282	953
Total minority	419	4,959	7,535
Low-income	190	2,314	8,675
Percentage minority	26.4	21.8	9.2
State percentage minority	36.2	34.8	14.0
Percentage low-income	12.0	10.2	10.6
State percentage low-income	13.9	10.5	9.4

Source: U.S Bureau of the Census (2009k,l).

not exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the SEZ.

In the Arizona portion of the 50-mi (80-km) radius, 9.2% of the population is classified as minority, while 10.6% is classified as low-income. The number of minority individuals does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area and the number of minority individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more; thus, in aggregate, there is no minority population in the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines. The number of low-income individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more and does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the SEZ.

Figures 11.5.20.1-1 and 11.5.20.1-2 show the locations of the low-income and minority population groups, respectively, within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ.



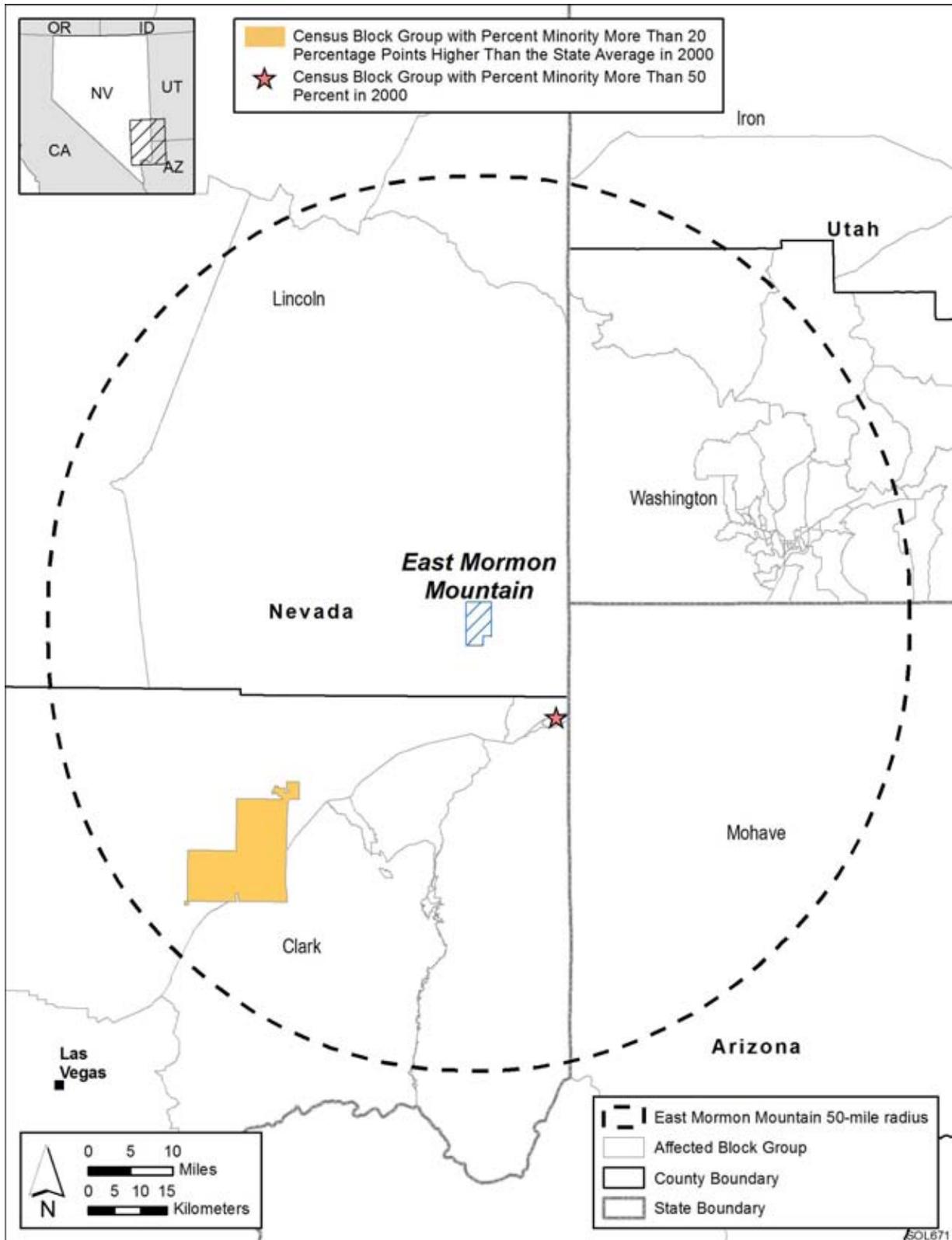
1

2

3

4

FIGURE 11.5.20.1-1 Low-Income Population Groups within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius Surrounding the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ



1
2
3
4

FIGURE 11.5.20.1-2 Minority Population Groups within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius Surrounding the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

1 **11.5.20.2 Impacts**
2

3 Environmental justice concerns common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities are
4 described in detail in Section 5.18. These impacts will be minimized through the implementation
5 of the programmatic design features described in Section A.2.2 of Appendix A, which address
6 the underlying environmental impacts contributing to the concerns. The potentially relevant
7 environmental impacts associated with solar facilities within the proposed SEZ include noise and
8 dust during the construction; noise and EMF effects associated with operations; visual impacts of
9 solar generation and auxiliary facilities, including transmission lines; access to land used for
10 economic, cultural, or religious purposes; and effects on property values as areas of concern that
11 might potentially affect minority and low-income populations.
12

13 Potential impacts on low-income and minority populations could be incurred as a result
14 of the construction and operation of solar facilities involving each of the four technologies.
15 Although impacts are likely to be small, there are minority populations defined by CEQ
16 guidelines (Section 11.5.20.1) within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ;
17 this means that any adverse impacts of solar projects could disproportionately affect minority
18 populations. Because there are low-income populations within the 50-mi (80-km) radius, there
19 could also be impacts on low-income populations.
20

21
22 **11.5.20.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
23

24 No SEZ-specific design features addressing environmental justice impacts have been
25 identified for the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design
26 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM’s Solar Energy
27 Program, would reduce the potential for environmental justice impacts during all project phases.
28
29

1 **11.5.21 Transportation**
2

3 Although the region of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ contains interstate
4 highways, major railroads, and a major airport, these features are not readily accessible from the
5 SEZ. The interstate highway is 11 mi (18 km) to the south of the SEZ. The nearest rail access
6 is approximately 25 mi (40 km) southwest of the SEZ, and the nearest major airport is about
7 70 mi (113 km) to the southwest, although several smaller airports are located closer to the SEZ.
8 General transportation considerations and impacts are discussed in Sections 3.4 and 5.19,
9 respectively.
10

11
12 **11.5.21.1 Affected Environment**
13

14 I-15 runs southwest–northeast approximately 11 mi (18 km) to the southeast of the SEZ,
15 as shown in Figure 11.5.21-1. The closest existing exits to the SEZ on I-15 are Exits 112 and
16 120, with Exit 120 serving the western edge of Mesquite. The Las Vegas metropolitan area is
17 approximately 62 mi (100 km) southwest of the SEZ along I-15. In the opposite direction,
18 Salt Lake City is approximately 340 mi (547 km) away along I-15. There are several local
19 unimproved dirt roads in the vicinity of the SEZ. OHV use in the SEZ and surrounding area has
20 been designated as “Limited to travel on designated roads and trails” (BLM 2008a). As listed in
21 Table 11.5.21-1, I-15 carries an average traffic volume of about 17,000 vehicles per day in the
22 vicinity of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ (NV DOT 2010).
23

24 The UP Railroad serves the region. The main line passes through Las Vegas on its way
25 between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City; the railroad passes about 20 mi (32 km) west of the
26 East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The nearest rail access is in Moapa, approximately 25 mi (40 km)
27 southwest of the SEZ.
28

29 There are seven public use airports within a driving range of about 80 mi (129 km) of
30 the East Mormon Mountain SEZ, as listed in Table 11.5.21-2. Five of these airports do not
31 have scheduled passenger service; the nearest of these is the Mesquite Airport, a small airport
32 near I-15. North Las Vegas Airport, 70 mi (113 km) to the southwest, does not have scheduled
33 commercial passenger service, but caters to smaller private and business aircraft (Clark County
34 Department of Aviation 2010). In 2008, 22,643 and 23,950 passengers arrived at and departed
35 from North Las Vegas Airport, respectively (BTS 2009).
36

37 The nearest airport with scheduled passenger service is the St. George Municipal
38 Airport, 43 mi (69 km) to the northeast in St. George, Utah. Passenger service is provided by
39 Delta Airlines and its partners (City of St. George Airport 2010). In 2008, 47,086 and 46,613
40 passengers arrived at and departed from this airport, respectively (BTS 2009). In the same year,
41 485,000 lb (220,000 kg) and 506,000 lb (229,000 kg) of freight arrived at and departed from St.
42 George Airport, respectively (BTS 2009). Farther away in the opposite direction, McCarran
43 International Airport in Las Vegas is served by all major U.S. airlines. In 2008, 20.43 million
44 and 20.48 million passengers arrived at and departed from McCarran International Airport,
45 respectively (BTS 2009). About 83.2 million lb (37.7 million kg) of freight departed and
46 117 million lb (53.2 million kg) arrived at McCarran in 2008 (BTS 2009).

TABLE 11.5.21-1 AADT on Major Roads Near the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ for 2009

Road	General Direction	Location	AADT
I-15	Southwest–northeast	Between Valley of Fire Highway (exit 75) and Ute interchange (exit 80)	18,000
		Between the Ute and Glendale interchanges (exits 80 and 91)	19,000
		Between the W. Mesa Rest Area (northeast of exit 93) and the West Mesquite interchange (exit 120)	17,000
		Section of I-15 in Arizona	19,000 ^a
U.S. 93	North–south	North of I-15 junction (I-15 exit 64)	1,900
Valley of Fire Highway	East–west	5 mi east of I-15 junction (I-15 exit 75)	530
State Route 144 (Mesquite Blvd.)	East–west	0.4 mi west of State Route 170 junction	11,000
State Route 168	Northwest–southeast	At I-15 Glendale interchange (exit 91)	940
State Route 169	North–south	South of I-15 exit 93	4,500
State Route 170 (Bunkerville Road)	North–south	South of I-15 exit 112	240
		0.8 mi south of State Route 144 (southern approach to Mesquite)	4,000

^a Data for 2008, taken from AZ DOT (2009).

Source: NV DOT (2010).

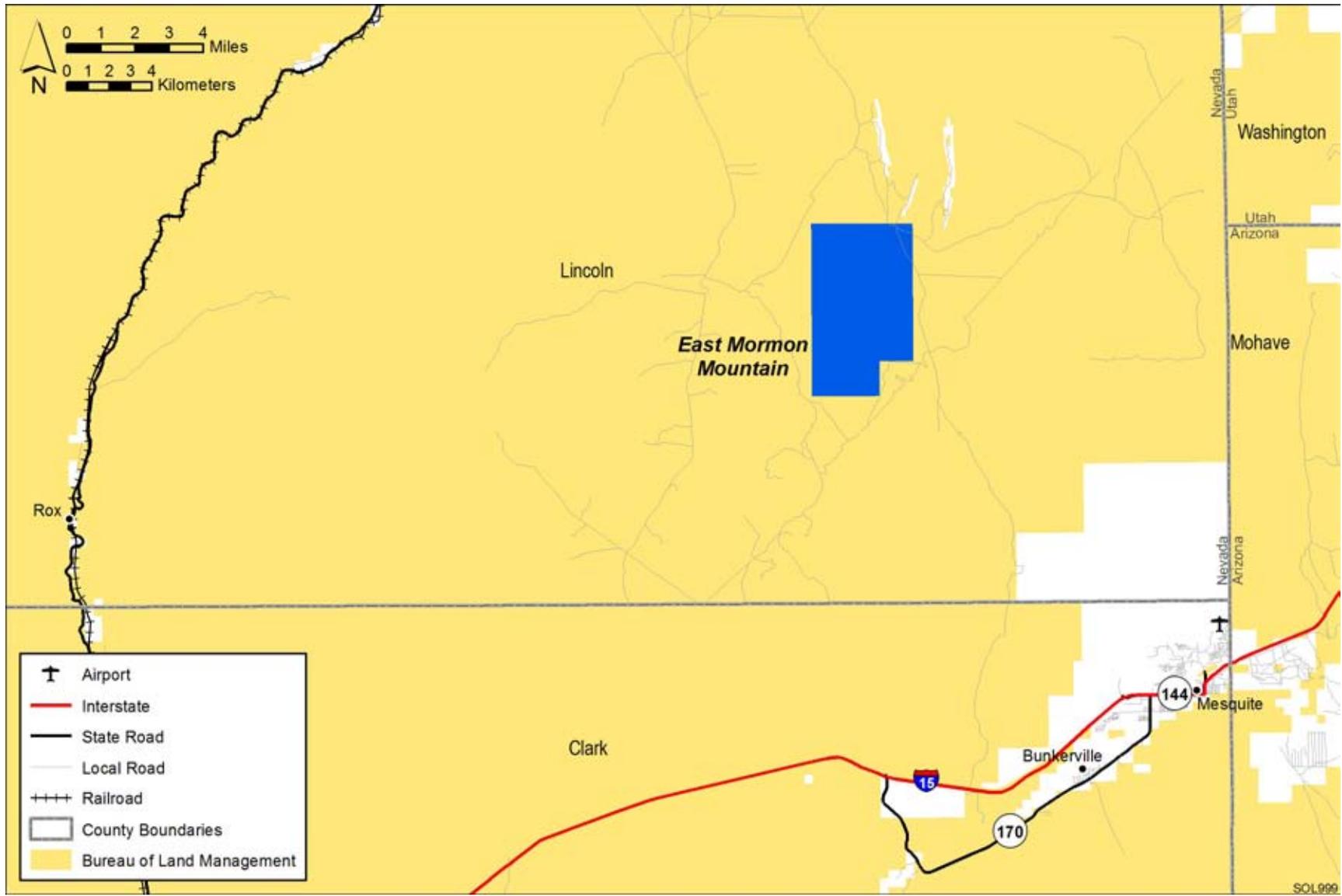


FIGURE 11.5.21.1-1 Local Transportation Network Serving the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

TABLE 11.5.21-2 Airports Open to the Public in the Vicinity of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Airport	Location	Owner/Operator	Runway 1 ^a			Runway 2 ^a		
			Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition	Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition
Mesquite	Near I-15, within several miles of any site access road off I-15	City of Mesquite	5,121 (1,561)	Asphalt	Good	– ^b	–	–
Perkins Field	I-15 southwest to State Route 169, south on State Route 169, 31 mi (50 km)	Clark County	4,800 (1,463)	Asphalt	Good	–	–	–
St. George Municipal	To the northeast, 43 mi (69 km) up I-15	City of St. George, Utah	6,606 (2,014)	Asphalt/ Grooved	Good	–	–	–
Echo Bay	South-southwest of the SEZ by Lake Mead, a 52-mi (84-km) drive on State Route 167	Lake Mead National Recreational Area	3,400 (1,036)	Asphalt	Good	–	–	–
General Dick Stout Field	Northeast of the SEZ in Hurricane, Utah; 60 mi (97 km)	City of Hurricane, Utah	3,410 (1,039)	Asphalt	Poor	–	–	–
North Las Vegas	Near I-15 in North Las Vegas, a 70-mi (113-km) drive from the SEZ	Clark County	4,202 (1,281)	Asphalt	Good	5,000 (1,524)	Asphalt	Good
			5,004 (1,525)	Asphalt	Good	–	–	–
McCarran International	Off I-15 in Las Vegas, about 78 mi (126 km)	Clark County	8,985 (2,739)	Concrete	Good	9,775 (2,979)	Concrete	Good
			10,526 (3,208)	Asphalt	Good	14,510 (4,423)	Asphalt	Good
			6,196 (1,889)	Asphalt	Good	7,161 (2,183)	Asphalt	Good

^a Source: FAA (2010).

^b A dash indicates not applicable.

1 **11.5.21.2 Impacts**
2

3 As discussed in Section 5.19, the primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be
4 from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day,
5 with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum). The volume of traffic on I-15 would
6 represent an increase in traffic of about 12% in the area of the SEZ for one solar project. Because
7 higher traffic volumes would be experienced during shift changes, traffic on I-15 could
8 experience minor slowdowns during these time periods in the area of exits in the vicinity of the
9 SEZ where a project is located. Local road improvements would be necessary in the vicinity of
10 exits from I-15 so as not to overwhelm the local access roads near any site access point(s).
11

12 Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes
13 designated open and available for public use. If there are any designated as open within the
14 proposed SEZ, such open routes crossing areas issued ROWs for solar facilities would be
15 re-designated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for more details on how routes coinciding with
16 proposed solar facilities would be treated).
17

18
19 **11.5.21.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
20

21 No SEZ-specific design features have been identified related to impacts on transportation
22 systems around the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The programmatic design features
23 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, including local road improvements, multiple site access
24 locations, staggered work schedules, and ride-sharing, would all provide some relief to traffic
25 congestion on local roads leading to the site. Depending on the location of solar facilities within
26 the SEZ, more specific access locations and local road improvements could be implemented.
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1 **11.5.22 Cumulative Impacts**
2

3 The analysis presented in this section addresses the potential cumulative impacts in the
4 vicinity of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ in Lincoln County, Nevada. The CEQ
5 guidelines for implementing NEPA define cumulative impacts as environmental impacts
6 resulting from the incremental effects of an action when added to other past, present, and
7 reasonably foreseeable future actions (40 CFR 1508.7). The impacts of other actions are
8 considered without regard to the agency (federal or nonfederal), organization, or person that
9 undertakes them. The time frame of this cumulative impacts assessment could appropriately
10 include activities that would occur up to 20 years in the future (the general time frame for PEIS
11 analyses), but little or no information is available for projects that could occur further than 5 to
12 10 years in the future.
13

14 The land surrounding the East Mormon Mountain SEZ is undeveloped with few
15 permanent residents living in the area. The nearest population centers are the small communities
16 of Mesquite (population 21,253) and Bunkerville (population 1,330), approximately 12 mi
17 (19 km) southeast of the southern boundary of the SEZ. The Moab Valley National Wildlife
18 Refuge is 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ; the Desert National Wildlife Range is 40 mi
19 (64 km) west of the SEZ; the Lake Mead National Recreation Area is about 30 mi (48 km) south
20 of the SEZ; Valley of Fire State Park is 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ; and Grand Canyon-
21 Parashant National Monument in Arizona is 25 mi (40 km) southeast of the SEZ. The Mormon
22 Mountains WA is a few miles west of the SEZ. Three other WAs are within 50 mi (80 km) of the
23 SEZ. The BLM administers approximately 82% of the lands in the Ely District, which contains
24 the East Mormon Mountain SEZ. In addition, the Delamar Valley SEZ is located about 40 mi
25 (64 km) to the northwest of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ and the proposed Dry Lake SEZ is
26 located about 40 mi (64 km) to the southwest, and for some resources, the geographic extents of
27 impacts from multiple SEZs overlap.
28

29 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
30 resources near the East Mormon Mountain SEZ is identified in Section 11.5.22.1. An overview
31 of ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions is presented in Section 11.5.22.2. General
32 trends in population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate change are discussed
33 in Section 11.5.22.3. Cumulative impacts for each resource area are discussed in
34 Section 11.5.22.4.
35
36

37 **11.5.22.1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis**
38

39 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
40 resources evaluated near the East Mormon Mountain SEZ is provided in Table 11.5.22.1-1.
41 These geographic areas define the boundaries encompassing potentially affected resources. Their
42 extent may vary based on the nature of the resource being evaluated and the distance at which an
43 impact may occur (e.g., the evaluation of air quality may have a greater regional extent of impact
44 than visual resources). Most of the lands around the SEZ are administered by the BLM, the
45 USFWS, or the NPS; there are also some Tribal Lands nearby: the Moapa River Indian
46 Reservation, about 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ, and the Paiute Shivwits Reservation,

TABLE 11.5.22.1-1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis by Resource Area: Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

Resource Area	Geographic Extent
Land Use	Southeast Lincoln County
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
Rangeland Resources	
Grazing	Grazing allotments within 5 mi (8 km) of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
Wild Horses and Burros	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the Center of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
Recreation	Southeast Lincoln County
Military and Civilian Aviation	Southeast Lincoln County
Soil Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
Minerals	Southeast Lincoln County
Water Resources	
Surface Water	Toquop Wash, South Fork Toquop Wash, and the Virgin River Valley basin
Groundwater	Lower Virgin River Valley and Tule Desert groundwater basins
Air Quality and Climate	A 31-mi (50-km) radius from the center of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
Vegetation, Wildlife and Aquatic Biota, Special Status Species	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ, including portions of Lincoln and Clark in Nevada, Washington County in Utah, and Mohave County in Arizona
Visual Resources	Viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
Acoustic Environment (noise)	Areas adjacent to the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
Paleontological Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
Cultural Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the East Mormon Mountain SEZ for archaeological sites; viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ for other properties, such as traditional cultural properties
Native American Concerns	Areas within and adjacent to the East Mormon Mountain SEZ; viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
Socioeconomics	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
Environmental Justice	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
Transportation	I-15

1 22 mi (35 km) northeast of the SEZ in Utah. The BLM administers approximately 78.3% of the
2 lands within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ.
3
4

5 **11.5.22.2 Overview of Ongoing and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions**

6

7 The future actions described below are those that are “reasonably foreseeable”; that is,
8 they have already occurred, are ongoing, are funded for future implementation, or are included in
9 firm near-term plans. Types of proposals with firm near-term plans are as follows:
10

- 11 • Proposals for which NEPA documents are in preparation or finalized;
- 12
- 13 • Proposals in a detailed design phase;
- 14
- 15 • Proposals listed in formal NOIs published in the *Federal Register* or state
16 publications;
- 17
- 18 • Proposals for which enabling legislations has been passed; and
- 19
- 20 • Proposals that have been submitted to federal, state, or county regulators to
21 begin a permitting process.
22

23 Projects that are in the bidding or research phase or that have been put on hold were not included
24 in the cumulative impact analysis.
25

26 The ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions described below are grouped into
27 two categories: (1) actions that relate to renewable energy and energy distribution, including
28 potential solar energy projects under the proposed action (Section 11.5.22.2.1); and (2) other
29 ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions, including those related to fossil energy production,
30 mining and mineral processing, pipelines, water management systems, communication systems,
31 and residential developments (Section 11.5.22.2.2). Together, these actions and trends have the
32 potential to affect human and environmental receptors within the geographic range of potential
33 impacts over the next 20 years.
34
35

36 **11.5.22.2.1 Energy Production and Distribution**

37

38 On February 16, 2007, Governor Gibbons signed an Executive Order to encourage the
39 development of renewable energy resources in Nevada (Gibbons 2007a). The Executive Order
40 requires all relevant state agencies to review their permitting processes to ensure the timely and
41 expeditious permitting of renewable energy projects. On May 9, 2007, and June 12, 2008, the
42 Governor signed Executive Orders creating the Nevada Renewable Energy Transmission Access
43 Advisory Committee Phase I and Phase II, which will propose recommendations for improved
44 access to the grid system for renewable energy industries (Gibbons 2007b, 2008). On May 28,
45 2009, the Nevada Legislature passed Senate Bill 358 modifying the Renewable Energy Portfolio

1 Standards. The bill requires that 25% of the electricity sold to be produced by renewable energy
2 sources by 2025.

3
4 Reasonably foreseeable future actions related to renewable energy production and energy
5 distribution within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are identified in
6 Table 11.5.22.2-1 and described in the following sections. Three foreseeable solar energy
7 projects on private land were identified, but no solar, wind, or geothermal projects on public land
8 were identified. Four proposed transmission line projects are also discussed.

10 11 **Renewable Energy Development**

12
13 Renewable energy applications are considered in two categories, fast-track and regular-
14 track applications. Fast-track applications, which apply principally to solar and wind energy
15 facilities, are those applications on public lands for which the environmental review and public
16 participation process is under way and the applications could be approved by December 2010.
17 A fast-track project would be considered foreseeable, because the permitting and environmental
18 review processes would be under way. Regular-track proposals are considered potential future
19 projects but not necessarily foreseeable projects, since not all applications would be expected to
20 be carried to completion. These pending proposals are considered together as a general level of
21 interest in development of renewable energy in the region.

22
23 No fast-track solar, wind, or geothermal projects on public land were identified.
24 However, three reasonably foreseeable solar projects on private land within 50 mi (80 km) of the
25 proposed SEZ were identified, as listed in Table 11.5.22.2-1 and described in the following
26 sections.

27
28
29 ***BrightSource Energy Coyote Springs Project.*** BrightSource Energy is planning to build
30 a 960-MW, solar, thermal-power facility on private land at the Coyote Springs Investment
31 Planned Development Project at the junction of U.S. 93 and State Route 168. The facility would
32 utilize the Luz Power Tower, which consists of thousands of mirrors that reflect sunlight onto a
33 boiler filled with water sitting on top of a tower. The high-temperature steam produced would be
34 piped to a conventional turbine that generates electricity. The station would utilize a dry-cooling
35 system. The site, approximately 7,680 acres (31 km²), would be 38 mi (61 km) southwest of the
36 SEZ (BrightSource Energy 2009).

37
38
39 ***BrightSource Energy Overton Project.*** BrightSource Energy is planning to build three
40 400-MW solar thermal power facilities on private land east of the airport at Overton, Nevada.
41 The facility would utilize the Luz Power Tower, which consists of thousands of mirrors that
42 reflect sunlight onto a boiler filled with water sitting on top of a tower. The high-temperature
43 steam produced would be piped to a conventional turbine that generates electricity. The station
44 would utilize a dry-cooling system. The site would be 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ. The
45 plan is for initial operation in 2012 (Cleantech 2008).

TABLE 11.5.22.2-1 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions Related to Energy Development and Distribution near the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ^a

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
<i>Renewable Energy Projects on Private Lands</i>			
BrightSource Coyote Springs Project, 960 MW, solar tower, 7,680 acres	Planning stage	Terrestrial habitats, vegetation, wildlife, soil, water, visual, cultural	38 mi (60 km) southwest of the SEZ
BrightSource Overton Project 1,200 MW, solar tower	Planning stage	Terrestrial habitats, vegetation, wildlife, soil, water, visual, cultural	30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ
Sithe Global Flat Top Mesa Solar, 50 MW, PV, 450 acres	Proposed	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, cultural, visual	10 mi (16 km) northeast of the SEZ
<i>Transmission and Distribution Systems</i>			
One Nevada Transmission Line Project	Draft Supplemental EIS Nov. 30, 2009	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes 40 mi (64 km) west of the SEZ
Southwest Intertie Project	FONSI issued July 30, 2008; in-service in 2010	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes 40 mi (64 km) west of the SEZ
TransWest Transmission Project	Permit Application Nov. 2009	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes southern boundary of SEZ
Zephyr and Chinook Transmission Line Project	Permit Applications in 2011/2012	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes about 40 mi (64 km) west of the SEZ

^a Projects in later stages of agency environmental review and project development.

1
2
3

1 **Sithe Global Flat Top Mesa Solar.** Sithe Global is planning to build a 50-MW solar PV
2 power plant. The 450-acre (1.8-km²) site would be located on private land 5 mi (8 km) west of
3 Mesquite Nevada and 10 mi (16 km) southeast of the SEZ. Approximately 200 workers would be
4 required during the 15-month construction period (Sithe Global 2010a).

5
6
7 ***Pending Solar and Wind ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Lands.***

8 Applications for ROW-way grants that have been submitted to the BLM include eight pending
9 solar projects, three pending authorizations for wind site testing, and two authorized projects for
10 wind testing that would be located within 50 mi (80 km) of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ
11 (BLM 2010a). No applications for geothermal projects have been submitted. Table 11.5.22.2-2
12 lists these applications and Figure 11.5.22.2-1 shows their locations.

13
14 The likelihood of any of the regular-track application projects actually being developed
15 is uncertain, but it is generally assumed to be less than that for fast-track applications. The
16 projects, listed in Table 11.5.22.2-2 for completeness, are an indication of the level of interest in
17 development of renewable energy in the region. Some number of these applications would be
18 expected to result in actual projects. Thus, the cumulative impacts of these potential projects are
19 analyzed in their aggregate effects.

20
21 Wind testing would involve some relatively minor activities that could have some
22 environmental effects, mainly, the erection of meteorological towers and monitoring of wind
23 conditions. These towers may or may not employ guy wires and may be 200 ft (60 m) high.

24
25
26 **Transmission and Distribution Systems**

27
28 Table 11.5.22.2-1 identifies four major new transmission projects, which are described
29 below.

30
31
32 ***One Nevada Transmission Line Project.*** NV Energy proposes to construct and operate a
33 236-mi (382-km) 500-kV transmission line with fiber optic telecommunication and appurtenant
34 facilities in White Pine, Nye, Lincoln, and Clark counties. It will consist of self-supporting, steel-
35 lattice and steel-pose H-frame structures, placed 900 to 1,600 ft (274 to 488 m) apart. The width
36 of the ROW is 200 ft (61 m). The proposed action includes new substations outside the ROI of
37 the East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The transmission line would be within the SWIP utility
38 corridor 40 mi (64 km) west of the SEZ. Construction could have potential impacts on the
39 Mojave Desert Tortoise (BLM 2009a).

40
41
42 ***Southwest Intertie Project (SWIP).*** The SWIP is a 520-mi (830-km) single-circuit,
43 overhead, 500-kV transmission line project. The first phase, the Southern Portion, is a 264-mi
44 (422-km) long transmission line that begins at the existing Harry Allen Substation in Dry Lake,
45 Nevada, and runs north to a proposed substation approximately 18 mi (29 km) northwest of Ely,
46 Nevada. The transmission line will pass 40 mi (64 km) west of the SEZ. It will consist of

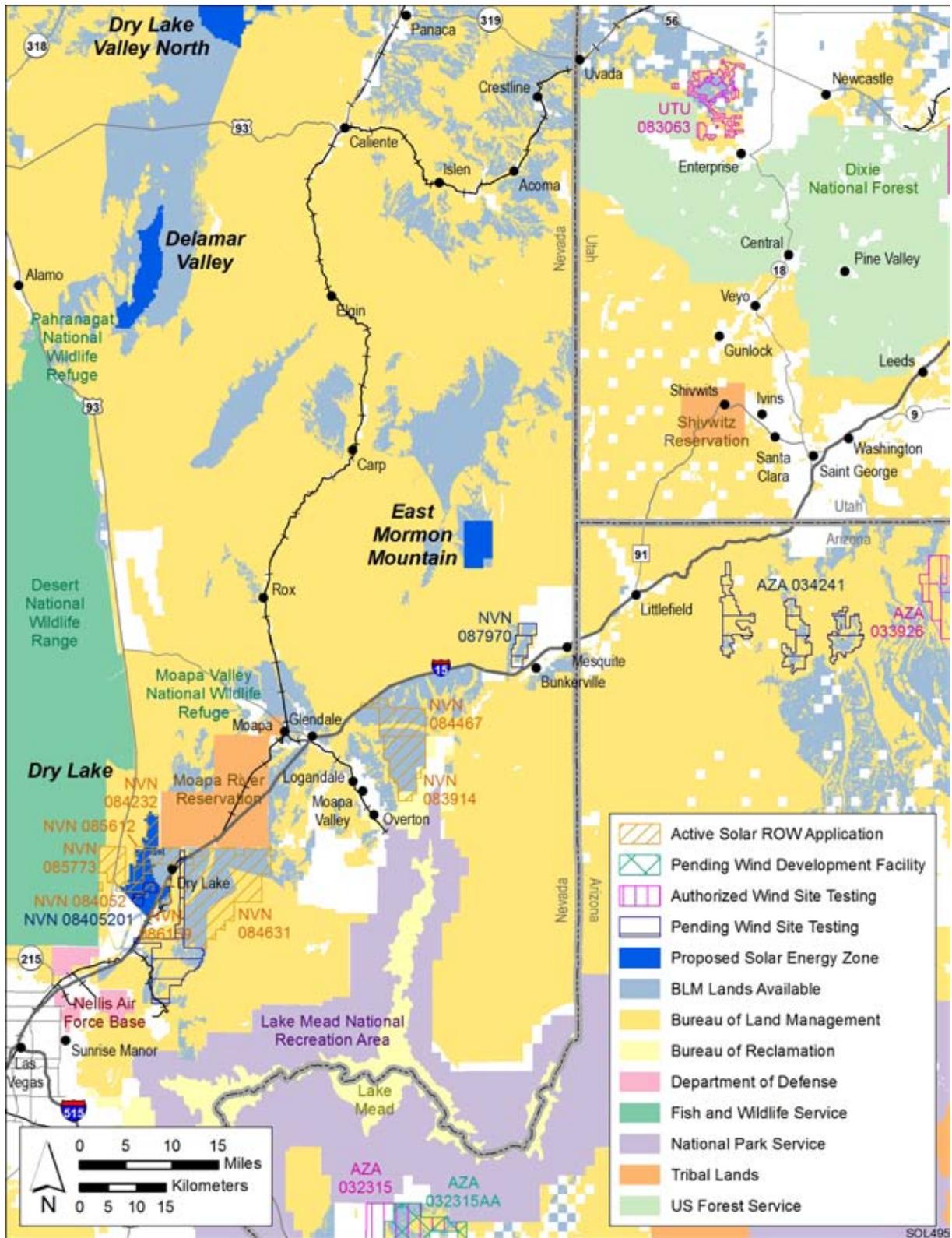


FIGURE 11.5.22.2-1 Locations of Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on Public Land within a 50-mi (80-km) Radius of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ

TABLE 11.5.22.2-2 Pending Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Land within 50 mi (80 km) of the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ^{a,b}

Serial Number	Applicant	Application Received	Size (acres) ^c	MW	Technology	Status	Field Office
Solar Applications							
NVN 83914	BrightSource Energy Solar	Oct. 6, 2008	10,000	500	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 84232	First Solar	Oct. 22, 2007	5,500	400	PV	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 84467	Pacific Solar Investments Inc	Dec. 7, 2007	11,000	1,000	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 84631	BrightSource Energy Solar	Jan. 28, 2008	2,000	1,200	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 85612	Cogentrix Solar Services, LLC	July, 11, 2008	2,012	240	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 85773	Cogentrix Solar Services, LLC	July, 11, 2008	11,584	1,000	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 84052	Nevada Power	Aug. 14, 2007	1,775	120	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
NVN 86159	Power Partners Southwest, LLC	Sept. 19, 2008	1,751	250	CSP	Pending	Las Vegas
Wind Applications							
NVN 87970	Pacific Wind Development	Sept. 29, 2009	5,089	– ^d	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Las Vegas
NVN 8405201	NV Power	Nov. 7, 2008	1,000	–	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Las Vegas
AZA 34241	Foresight Wind	–	29,022	–	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Arizona Strip
AZA 33926	Gamesa Energy USA	Apr. 2, 2007	17,027	–	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Arizona Strip
UTU 83063	Energy Unlimited Inc.	–	10,013	–	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Cedar City

^a BLM (2010a).

^b Information for pending solar (BLM and USFS 2010c) and pending wind (BLM and USFS 2010d) energy projects downloaded from GeoCommunicator.

^c To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d A dash indicates data not available.

1 self-supporting, steel-lattice and steel-pole H-frame structures, placed 1,200 to 1,500 ft (366 to
2 457 m) apart. The SWIP is expected to be completed in 2010. Construction could have potential
3 impacts on the Mojave Desert Tortoise (BLM 2007b).

4
5
6 ***TransWest Transmission Project.*** TransWest Express proposes to construct a high-
7 voltage electric utility transmission line. The 600-kV direct current transmission line would
8 extend from south central Wyoming to southern Nevada. A terminal/converter station would be
9 located near Boulder, Nevada. A communication system for command and control will require a
10 fiber optic network and periodic regenerative sites. The proposed routes have been sited to
11 parallel existing facilities and occupy designated utility corridors to the extent practicable, and
12 will pass the southern boundary of the SEZ (TransWest Express 2009).

13
14
15 ***Zephyr and Chinook Transmission Line Project.*** TransCanada is proposing to construct
16 two 500-kV, high-voltage, direct current transmission lines. The Zephyr project would originate
17 in southeastern Wyoming. The Chinook project would originate in south central Montana. Both
18 would travel along the same corridor from northern Nevada, passing about 40 mi (64 km) west
19 of the SEZ, and terminate in the El Dorado Valley south of Las Vegas. Construction is expected
20 to be complete in 2015 or 2016 (TransCanada 2010).

21 22 23 ***11.5.22.2.2 Other Actions***

24
25 There are a number of energy production facilities within a 50-mi (80-km) radius from
26 the center of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ, which includes portions of Clark and Lincoln
27 Counties in Nevada, Washington County in Utah, and Mohave County in Arizona. Other major
28 ongoing and foreseeable actions within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed East Mormon Mountain
29 SEZ are listed in Table 11.5.22.2-3 and described in the following sections.

30 31 32 ***Other Ongoing and Foreseeable Energy Projects***

33
34
35 ***Apex Generating Station.*** The Apex Generating Station is a 600-MW, combined-cycle,
36 natural gas-fired power plant, consisting of two combustion turbine generators, two heat
37 recovery steam generators, and one steam turbine generator. The plant is located within the
38 Apex Industrial Park near the intersection of I-15 and U.S. 93. The site is about 50 mi (80 km)
39 southwest of the SEZ (Mirant Las Vegas, LLC 2007).

40
41
42 ***Chuck Lenzie Generating Station.*** The Chuck Lenzie Generating Station is an
43 1,160-MW, combined-cycle, natural gas-fired electric generation facility, located approximately
44 50 mi (80 km) southwest of the SEZ; it consists of four combustion turbines, four heat recovery
45 steam generators and two steam turbines. The plant, owned by NV Energy, has been operating at
46 full power since 2006. The station utilizes a dry-cooling system (NV Energy 2010a).

TABLE 11.5.22.2-3 Other Major Actions near the Proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ^a

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
<i>Energy Projects</i>			
Apex Generating Station	Operating since 2003	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	50 mi (80 km) southwest of the SEZ
Chuck Lenzie Generating Station	Operating since 2006	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	50 mi (80 km) southwest of the SEZ
Harry Allen Generating Station	Operating since early 1980s	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	50 mi (80 km) southwest of the SEZ
Harry Allen Generating Station Expansion	Under construction	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	50 mi (80 km) southwest of the SEZ
Reid Gardner Generating Station	Operating since 1965	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ
Reid Gardner Expansion	EA and FONSI March 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, soil, air, water	30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ
Silverhawk Generating Station	Operating since 2004	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, air, cultural, visual	50 mi (80 km) southwest of the SEZ
Toquop Energy Project	Coal-fired plant FEIS 2009, changed to natural gas in 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, soil, water, air, cultural, visual	Adjacent to SEZ
<i>Distribution Systems</i>			
Kern River Gas Transmission System	Operating since 1992	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along pipeline ROW	Corridor passes just south of SEZ
UNEV Pipeline Project	FEIS April 2010	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along pipeline ROW	Corridor passes just south of SEZ

TABLE 11.5.22.2-3 (Cont.)

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
Other Projects			
Clark, Lincoln and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project	DEIS expected in 2011	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, groundwater	43 mi (69 km) northwest of the SEZ
Coyote Springs Investment Planned Development Project	FEIS issued Sept. 2008, ROD issued Oct. 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, water, socioeconomics	35 mi (56 km) west of the SEZ
East Mormon Mountain Groundwater Testing/Monitoring Wells	EA and FONSI issued Sept. 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources	Within the SEZ
Lincoln County Land Act Groundwater Development and Utility ROW	FEIS issued May 2009 ROD Jan. 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, groundwater	Passes through the SEZ
Caliente Rail Realignment	FEIS June 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources	Closest approach 44 mi (70 km) northwest of the SEZ
Meadow Valley Industrial Park	FEIS issued Jan. 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, socioeconomics	44 mi (70 km) northwest of the SEZ
Ash Canyon Sagebrush Restoration and Fuels Reduction Project	Preliminary EA issued May 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	38 mi (61 km) northwest of the SEZ
Meadow Valley Gypsum Project	EA and FONSI issued 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, soils, socioeconomics	10 mi (16 km) west of the SEZ
Mesquite Nevada General Aviation Replacement Airport	DEIS April 2008		10 mi (16 km) southeast of SEZ
NV Energy Microwave and Mobile Radio Project	Preliminary EA March 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources	Two of the sites 40 mi (64 km) west of SEZ; one site 50 mi (80 km) northwest of SEZ

^a Projects ongoing or in later stages of agency environmental review and project development.

1 **Harry Allen Generating Station.** The Harry Allen Generating Station is a 144-MW,
2 gas-fired power plant. The plant is located north of the intersection of I-15 and U.S. 93. The
3 site is about 50 mi (80 km) southwest of the SEZ (NV Energy 2010b).

4
5
6 **Harry Allen Generating Station Expansion.** The Harry Allen Generating Station
7 Expansion is a 484-MW, combined-cycle, natural gas-fired power plant, consisting of two
8 combustion turbine generators, two heat recovery steam generators, and one steam turbine
9 generator. The heat rejection system will utilize a cooling system composed of natural-draft
10 dry-cooling towers. The plant is located on the site of the existing 144-MW plant. The site is
11 about 50 mi (80 km) southwest of the SEZ (NV Energy 2010b).

12
13
14 **Reid Gardner Generating Station.** The Reid Gardner Generating Station is a four-unit,
15 557-MW coal-fired electric generating facility owned by NV Energy. The first unit went online
16 in 1965. All four units have been operating since 1983. The 480-acre (1.9-km²) site is located
17 near the town of Moapa, about 30 mi (48 km) southwest of the SEZ. The facility includes
18 evaporation ponds and fly ash, bottom ash, and solids landfills. Pollution control includes wet
19 scrubbers. The heat rejection system consists of wet-cooling towers. Coal is delivered by rail
20 (BLM 2008d).

21
22
23 **Reid Gardner Expansion Project.** The Reid Gardner Expansion Project will consist of
24 the construction of a 240-acre (0.97-km²) fly ash landfill and a 315-acre (1.27-km²) evaporation
25 pond to support the existing Reid Gardner Power Plant. The proposed expansion is located
26 adjacent to the southern boundary of the existing site near the town of Moapa, about 30 mi
27 (48 km) southwest of the SEZ (BLM 2008d).

28
29
30 **Silverhawk Generating Station.** The Silverhawk Generating Station is a 580-MW,
31 combined-cycle, natural gas-fired power plant, consisting of two combustion turbine generators,
32 two heat recovery steam generators, and one steam turbine generator. The plant is located within
33 the Apex Industrial Park near the intersection of I-15 and U.S. 93. The site is about 50 mi
34 (80 km) southwest of the SEZ. The station utilizes a dry-cooling system (NV Energy 2009b).

35
36
37 **Toquop Energy Project.** The Toquop Energy Project, originally proposed as a 750-MW,
38 coal-fired electric generation facility, is now planned as a 1,100-MW natural gas-fired combined-
39 cycle power plant, located on a 640-acre (2.59-km²) site 12 mi (19 km) northwest of the town of
40 Mesquite, Nevada, and adjacent to the SEZ. The project will be built in phases. Phase 1 will be a
41 nominal 550 to 600 MW combined-cycle plant. A water supply system, a gas pipeline
42 connecting the power plant to the Kern River pipeline, connection to the existing Navajo-
43 McCullogh transmission line, and road access to I-15 would be required. The heat rejection
44 system will utilize a hybrid cooling system composed of natural draft dry-cooling towers with
45 ability to apply water overspray on the heating surfaces to provide additional cooling at ambient
46 air temperatures greater than about 80°F (27°C). The proposed project would require 600

1 workers during construction, scheduled to begin in 2012 with commercial operation in 2015
2 (BLM 2009b; Sithe Global 2010b).

3 4 5 **Ongoing and Foreseeable Distribution Systems**

6
7
8 ***Kern River Gas Transmission System.*** The Kern River Gas Transmission system
9 transports 1.7 billion ft³ per day (48 million m³) of natural gas from Wyoming to the Las Vegas
10 area and then southwest as far as San Bernardino, California. The 1,680-mi (2,690-km) pipeline
11 has been in operation since 1992. A two-pipeline delivery system exists along most of the
12 pipeline route. The pipeline passes to the south of the SEZ (Kern River Gas Transmission
13 Company 2010).

14
15
16 ***UNEV Pipeline Project.*** Holly Energy Partners proposes to construct and operate a
17 399-mi (640-km), 12-in. (30.5-cm) petroleum products pipeline that will originate at the Holly
18 Corporation's Woods Cross, Utah, refinery near Salt Lake City and terminate near the Apex
19 Industrial Park near the intersection of I-15 and U.S. 93. The pipeline would generally follow
20 the Kern River ROW within Nevada and pass just south of the SEZ (BLM 2010b).

21 22 23 **Other Ongoing and Foreseeable Projects**

24
25
26 ***Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project.*** The
27 Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) proposes to construct a groundwater development
28 project that would transport approximately 122,755 ac-ft/yr (151 million m³/yr) of groundwater
29 under existing water rights and applications from several hydrographic basins in eastern Nevada
30 and western Utah. The proposed facilities include production wells, 306 mi (490 km) of buried
31 water pipelines, five pumping stations, six regulating tanks, three pressure reducing stations, a
32 buried storage reservoir, a water treatment facility, and about 323 mi (517 km) of 230-kV
33 overhead power lines, as well as two primary and five secondary substations. The project would
34 develop groundwater in the following amounts in two hydraulically connected valleys that are
35 about 35 mi (56 km) west of the East Mormon Mountain SEZ and in a separate hydrographic
36 basin: Dry Lake Valley (11,584 ac-ft/yr [14.3 million m³/yr]) and Delamar Valley (2,493 ac-ft/yr
37 [3.1 million m³/yr]). In addition, an undetermined amount of water could be developed and
38 transferred from Coyote Spring Valley, which is down-gradient of the other two basins (SNWA
39 2010).

40
41
42 ***Coyote Springs Investment (CSI) Development Project.*** CSI intends to develop a new
43 town in southern Lincoln County at the junction of U.S. 93 and State Route 168. The town would
44 be a master-planned community on 21,454 acres (86.8 km²), and would include residential,
45 commercial, and industrial land uses. Plans call for more than 111,000 residential dwelling units
46 at a density of 5 units per acre (0.004047 km²). Also included in the community would be public

1 buildings, hotels, resorts, casinos, commercial and light industrial areas, roads, bridges, and a
2 heliport. Utilities and other infrastructure would be developed to serve the town, including power
3 facilities, sanitary sewer and wastewater treatment facilities, stormwater facilities, solid waste
4 disposal transfer stations, and telecommunications facilities. Water supply treatment facilities,
5 monitoring wells, production wells, storage facilities, and transmission and distribution facilities
6 would also be built. Approximately 70,000 ac-ft/yr (86 million m³/yr) of water would be needed
7 for the community at full build-out, which may occur over a period of about 40 years. Currently,
8 CSI and its affiliates hold approximately 36,000 ac-ft/yr (44.0 million m³/yr) in certificated
9 groundwater rights in various basins within Lincoln County. CSI currently owns the 21,454-acre
10 (86.82-km²) development area and holds leases on an additional 7,548 acres (30.6 km²) of BLM
11 land in Lincoln County and 6,219 acres (25.2 km²) of BLM land in Clark County within or next
12 to the privately held land. These adjacent areas would be managed by BLM for the protection of
13 federally listed threatened or endangered species; activities would be limited to non-motorized
14 recreation or scientific research. The development is 35 mi (56 km) west of the SEZ
15 (USFWS 2008).

16
17
18 **East Mormon Mountain Groundwater Testing/Monitoring Wells.** The SNWA
19 intends to construct two to four groundwater wells within two 2.5-acre (0.010-km²) (1.0-acre
20 [0.004-km²] long term and 1.5-acre [0.006-km²] short term) site locations in the East Mormon
21 Mountain SEZ. The dimensions for the long-term ROW would be 168 ft × 260 ft (51 m × 79 m),
22 and the dimensions for the short-term ROW would be 330 ft × 330 ft (100 m × 100 m). Two
23 12-in. (30.5-cm) and two 20-in. (50.8-cm) wells would be drilled to between 2,200 and 2,400 ft
24 (670 and 730 m) in depth. Access to the well sites would be from both existing roads and a new
25 809-ft (247-m) long access road. Water generated during the tests would be discharged into the
26 natural drainage network around the sites. At the completion of hydraulic testing, SNWA would
27 continue to record data to establish baseline ranges of the groundwater levels in the area.

28
29
30 **Lincoln County Land Act Groundwater Development and Utility ROW.** This project
31 involves the construction of the infrastructure required to pump and convey groundwater
32 resources in the Clover Valley and Tule Desert Hydrographic Areas. The construction includes
33 75 mi (122 km) of collection and transmission pipeline, 30 wells, 5 storage tanks, water pipeline
34 booster stations, transmission lines and substations, and a natural gas pipeline. A total of
35 240 acres (0.97 km²) will be permanently disturbed, and 1,878 acres (7.6 km²) temporarily
36 disturbed. The pipeline will pass through the SEZ (BLM 2009e).

37
38
39 **Caliente Rail Alignment.** The DOE proposes to construct and operate a railroad for the
40 shipment of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste to the geologic repository at
41 Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The rail line would begin near Caliente, Nevada, and extend north,
42 then turn in a westerly direction, passing through the SEZ, to a location near the northwest corner
43 of the Nevada Test and Training Range, and then continue south-southwest to Yucca Mountain.
44 The rail line would range in length from approximately 328 mi (528 km) to 336 mi (541 km),
45 depending upon the exact location of the alignment. The rail line would be restricted to DOE
46 shipments. Over a 50-year period, 9500 casks containing spent nuclear fuel and high-level

1 radioactive waste, and approximately 29,000 rail cars of other materials, including construction
2 materials, would be shipped to the repository. An average of 17 one-way trains per week would
3 travel along the rail line. Construction of support facilities, interchange yard, staging yard,
4 maintenance-of-way facility, rail equipment maintenance yard, cask maintenance facility, and
5 Nevada Rail Control Center and National Transportation Operation Center would also be
6 required. Construction would take 4 to 10 years and cost \$2.57 billion. Construction activities
7 would occur inside a 1000 ft (300 m) wide ROW for a total footprint of 40,600 acres (164 km²)
8 (DOE 2008).

9
10
11 ***Meadow Valley Industrial Park.*** The BLM is planning to transfer a 103-acre (0.42-km²)
12 parcel to the City of Caliente, Nevada, for the construction of the Meadow Valley Industrial
13 Park. The site is located on a previously disturbed area used for agriculture and recreation at the
14 intersection of U.S. 93 and State Route 317, about 20 mi (32 km) northeast of the SEZ.
15 Improvements to the site would include construction of a rail spur, access roads, and water and
16 sewer extensions (USFWS 2010b).

17
18
19 ***Ash Canyon Sagebrush Restoration and Fuels Reduction Project.*** The BLM Caliente
20 Field Office is proposing to conduct a sagebrush improvement and fuels reduction project
21 adjacent to Ash Canyon, about 5 mi (8 km) southeast of Caliente, Nevada, and about 38 mi
22 (61 km) northwest of the SEZ. The size of the project area is 870 acres (3.5 km²). The goal is to
23 reduce pinyon and juniper in order to achieve a desired state where sagebrush is present along
24 with an understory of perennial species; to reduce risk of wild fires by reducing fuel loading; to
25 restore the historic disturbance regime; and to improve the available habitat for resident wildlife
26 (BLM 2010d).

27
28
29 ***Meadow Valley Gypsum Project.*** Meadow Valley Gypsum was issued a Finding of No
30 Significant Impact (BLM 2008c) following an Environmental Assessment of proposed mining,
31 processing, and transporting of gypsum on public lands. The project would be located 50 mi
32 (80 km) south of Caliente in Lincoln County, Nevada. The project would disturb 46.7 acres
33 (0.2 km²) and would consist of an open pit, processing plant, and a 1.5-mi (2.4-km) access road.

34
35
36 ***Mesquite Nevada General Aviation Replacement Airport.*** The City of Mesquite,
37 Nevada, is proposing to replace its existing airport with a new airport on Mormon Mesa, adjacent
38 to I-15 near Riverside, Nevada, and about 10 mi (16 km) south of the SEZ. The airport would
39 require BLM to release 2,560 acres (10.4 km²) of BLM land for acquisition by the City of
40 Mesquite. The airport would include a new runway with associated parallel taxiway and general
41 aviation support and maintenance facilities. The existing airport would be decommissioned, and
42 the site would be released for nonaeronautical uses (FAA 2008).

1 ***NV Energy Microwave and Mobile Radio Project.*** NV Energy is proposing to install a
2 new microwave and radio communications network at 13 sites. Two sites are located 40 mi
3 (64 km) west of the SEZ, and one is located 50 mi (80 km) northwest of the SEZ. The two
4 closest sites are small, about 0.1 acres (0.0004 km²). The further site is 0.6 acres (0.0024 km²)
5 but requires 57 acres (0.23 km²) of land disturbance for access and power line ROWs. Each site
6 would include a communication shelter, two propane tanks, and a generator. Two of the sites
7 have a 160-ft (50-m) self-supporting lattice tower and one, an 80-ft (25-m) tower (BLM 2010a).
8
9

10 **Grazing**

11
12 There are numerous grazing allotments within the BLM Ely District. Restrictions on
13 Season of Use have been placed upon the desert tortoise critical habitat portions of the Gourd
14 Springs and Summit Spring allotments in the Programmatic Biological Opinion for the Bureau of
15 Land Management’s Ely District Resource Management Plan.
16
17

18 **Mining**

19
20 The Meadow Valley Gypsum Project is proposing to mine gypsum on public land
21 approximately 10 mi (16 km) west of the SEZ, as noted above. A total of 46.7 acres (0.19 km²)
22 would be disturbed during the 10-year lifetime of the project. A 1.5-mi (2.5-km) access road and
23 a 1.8-acre (0.0073-km²) railroad siding would be constructed.
24
25

26 **11.5.22.3 General Trends**

27
28 General trends of population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate
29 change for the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are presented in this section.
30 Table 11.5.22.3-1 lists the relevant impacting factors for the trends.
31
32

33 **11.5.22.3.1 Population Growth**

34
35 Over the period 2000 to 2008, the population in Lincoln County grew annually by 1.4%,
36 in Clark County, 4.0%, and in Washington County, Utah, 5.2%, portions of which make up the
37 ROI for the East Mormon Mountain SEZ (see Section 11.5.19.1.5). The annual growth rate for
38 Nevada as a whole was 3.4% and for Utah, 2.5%. The population of the ROI in 2008 was
39 2,019,414 and is projected to increase to 2,977,752 by 2021 and to 3,079,077 by 2023.
40
41

TABLE 11.5.22.3-1 General Trends Relevant to the Proposed SEZs in Nevada

General Trend	Impacting Factors
Population growth	Urbanization Increased use of roads and traffic Land use modification Employment Education and training Increased resource use (e.g., water and energy) Tax revenue
Energy demand	Increased resource use Energy development (including alternative energy sources) Energy transmission and distribution
Water availability	Drought conditions and water loss Conservation practices Changes in water distribution
Climate change	Water cycle changes Increased wildland fires Habitat changes Changes in farming production and costs

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11.5.22.3.2 Energy Demand

The growth in energy demand is related to population growth through increases in housing, commercial floorspace, transportation, manufacturing, and services. Given that population growth is expected in seven SEZ areas in Nevada between 2006 and 2016, an increase in energy demand is also expected. However, the EIA projects a decline in per-capita energy use through 2030, mainly because of improvements in energy efficiency and the high cost of oil throughout the projection period. Primary energy consumption in the United States between 2007 and 2030 is expected to grow by about 0.5% each year, with the fastest growth projected for the commercial sector (at 1.1% each year). Transportation, residential, and industrial energy consumption are expected to grow by about 0.5, 0.4, and 0.1% each year, respectively (EIA 2009).

11.5.22.3.3 Water Availability

As described in Section 11.5.9.1.2, the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located within the Lower Virgin River Valley groundwater basin. Groundwater recharge from precipitation is estimated to be between 9,500 and 55,000 ac-ft/yr (12 million and 68 million m³/yr); evaporation from groundwater is estimated to be 30,000 to 70,000 ac-ft/yr (37 million to 86 million m³/yr); and outflow into Lake Mead is estimated at 29,000 to

1 40,000 ac-ft/yr (36 million to 49 million m³/yr). The estimated sustainable yield of the
2 groundwater basin in the three-state region near the SEZ is between 12,600 and 40,000 ac-ft/yr
3 (16 million and 49 million m³/yr), but is currently set by the NDWR as 3,600 ac-ft/yr
4 (4.4 million m³/yr) in the Nevada portion of the basin.
5

6 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Lincoln County were
7 57,100 ac-ft/yr (70 million m³/yr), of which 11% came from surface waters and 89% from
8 groundwater. The largest water use category was irrigation at 55,100 ac-ft/yr (68 million m³/yr),
9 while public supply/domestic water uses accounted for 1,300 ac-ft/yr (1.6 million m³/yr). It is
10 estimated that a total of 12,000 ac-ft/yr (15 million m³/yr) are withdrawn from the Lower Virgin
11 Valley Groundwater basin.
12

13 The Lincoln County Water District has proposed a groundwater development and utility
14 ROW project (Lincoln County Land Act project described above) to pump and convey water
15 that is permitted or may be permitted for use by the Nevada State Engineer from the Clover
16 Valley and Tule Desert hydrographic areas for use by Lincoln County customers. The project
17 could pump up to 14,480 ac-ft/yr (17.9 million m³/yr) from 15 wells in Clover Valley and
18 9,340 ac-ft/yr (11.5 million m³/yr) from Tule Desert. A pipeline ROW on public land would
19 convey water to multiple storage tanks for use (BLM 2009e).
20

21 ***11.5.22.3.4 Climate Change***

22
23
24 Governor Jim Gibbons' Nevada Climate Change Advisory committee (NCCAC)
25 conducted a study of climate change and its effects on Utah (NCCAC 2008). The report
26 summarized the present scientific understanding of climate change and its potential impacts on
27 Nevada. A report on global climate change in the United States prepared by the U.S. Global
28 Research Program (GCRP 2009) documents current temperature and precipitation conditions and
29 historic trends. Excerpts of the conclusions from these reports indicate the following:
30

- 31 • Precipitation will decrease, and a greater percentage of that precipitation will
32 come from rain, resulting in a greater likelihood of winter and spring flooding
33 and decreased stream flow in the summer.
34
- 35 • The average temperature in the Southwest has already increased by about
36 1.5°F compared to a 1960 to 1979 baseline, and by the end of the century, the
37 average annual temperature is projected to rise 4°F to 10°F.
38
- 39 • A warming climate and the related reduction in spring snowpack and soil
40 moisture have increased the length of the wildfire season and intensity of
41 forest fires.
42
- 43 • Later snow and less snow coverage in ski resort areas could force ski areas to
44 shut down before the season would otherwise end.
45

- 1 • Much of the Southwest has experienced drought conditions since 1999. This
2 represents the most severe drought in the last 110 years. Projections indicate
3 an increasing probability of drought in the region.
4
- 5 • As temperatures rise, landscape will be altered as species shift their ranges
6 northward and upward to cooler climates.
7
- 8 • Temperature increases, when combined with urban heat island effects for
9 major cities such as Las Vegas, present significant stress to health, electricity,
10 and water supply.
11
- 12 • Increased minimum temperatures and warmer springs extend the range and
13 lifetime of many pests that stress trees and crops, and lead to northward
14 migration of weed species.
15

16 **11.5.22.4 Cumulative Impacts on Resources**

17 This section addresses potential cumulative impacts in the proposed East Mormon
18 Mountain SEZ on the basis of the following assumptions: (1) because of the small size of the
19 proposed SEZ (<10,000 acres [$<40.5 \text{ km}^2$]), only one project could be constructed at a time, and
20 (2) maximum total disturbance over 20 years would be about 7,174 acres (29 km^2) (80% of the
21 entire proposed SEZ). For purposes of analysis, it is also assumed that no more than 3,000 acres
22 (12.1 km^2) would be disturbed per project annually and 250 acres (1.01 km^2) monthly on the
23 basis of construction schedules planned in current applications. Since an existing 500-kV
24 transmission line runs by the southeast corner of the SEZ, no analysis of impacts has been
25 conducted for the construction of new transmission line outside of the SEZ that might be needed
26 to connect solar facilities to the regional grid (see Section 11.5.1.2). The nearest major road is I-
27 15, which lies 11 mi (18 km) south of the SEZ. It is assumed that a new access road disturbing an
28 additional 80 acres (0.3 km^2) would be constructed to support solar development in the SEZ.
29
30

31
32 Cumulative impacts that would result from the construction, operation, and
33 decommissioning of solar energy development projects within the proposed SEZ when added
34 to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions described in the previous
35 section in each resource area are discussed below. At this stage of development, because of the
36 uncertain nature of the future projects in terms of size, number, location within the proposed
37 SEZ, and the types of technology that would be employed, the impacts are discussed
38 qualitatively or semi-quantitatively, with ranges given as appropriate. More detailed analyses
39 of cumulative impacts would be performed in the environmental reviews for the specific
40 projects in relation to all other existing and proposed projects in the geographic areas.
41
42

43 **11.5.22.4.1 Lands and Realty**

44
45 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is very isolated and is accessible only by dirt
46 roads. There are no existing rights of way within the SEZ, but two designated 368b transmission

1 corridors pass adjacent to the SEZ and contain three major transmission lines and a natural gas
2 pipeline (Section 11.5.2.1).

3
4 Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish a
5 large industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps
6 in perpetuity. Access to such areas by both the general public and much wildlife would be
7 eliminated. Traditional uses of public lands would no longer be allowed. Solar energy facilities
8 would become a dominating visual presence in the area due to their large size.

9
10 As presented in Section 11.5.22.2, foreseeable actions within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of
11 the proposed SEZ include the Toquop power plant, three solar facilities, four transmission lines,
12 two groundwater development projects, a petroleum pipeline project, the proposed 21,454-acre
13 (86.8-km²) Coyote Springs Investment residential development, and a proposed new community
14 airport. In addition, eight potential solar facilities with pending applications covering over
15 40,000 acres (160 km²) and five pending wind applications lie within this distance. Existing
16 facilities include several large gas-fired power plants located 30 to 50 mi (49 to 80 km) to the
17 southwest near the proposed Dry Lake SEZ. The proposed Dry Lake SEZ, located about 40 mi
18 (64 km) to the southwest, and the proposed Delamar Valley SEZ, located about 40 mi (64 km) to
19 the northwest, each lie within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The
20 number of solar applications, along with the two foreseeable solar energy projects within this
21 distance, indicates a fairly strong interest in solar energy development in the region.

22
23 The development of utility-scale solar projects in the proposed East Mormon Mountain
24 SEZ in combination with other ongoing, foreseeable, and potential actions within the 50-mi
25 (80-km) geographic extent of effects could have cumulative effects on land use in the vicinity of
26 the proposed SEZ. Cumulative impacts on accessibility of land for other purposes and on
27 groundwater and visual resources could result, among other resource impacts, depending in part
28 on where and how many potential solar and wind projects are actually built.

31 ***11.5.22.4.2 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics***

32
33 There are 20 specially designated areas within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed East
34 Mormon Mountain SEZ in Nevada, Utah, and Arizona (Section 11.5.3.1). Potential exists for
35 cumulative visual impacts on these areas from the construction of utility-scale solar energy
36 facilities within the SEZ and other projects outside the SEZ. The exact nature of cumulative
37 visual impacts on the users of these areas would depend on the specific solar technologies
38 employed and the locations selected within the SEZ for solar facilities. Currently proposed
39 projects and potential solar and wind projects within the geographic extent of effects could
40 cumulatively affect sensitive areas through visual impacts and effects on wilderness
41 characteristics. In addition, projects would produce fugitive dust emissions, and could strain
42 water resources and reduce access to specially designated areas.

1 **11.5.22.4.3 Rangeland Resources**
2

3 Portions of two grazing allotments overlap the proposed SEZ; they would be reduced by
4 less than 10% in size by solar energy development within the SEZ. One allotment has already
5 been reduced by other factors, so SEZ impacts would result in a small cumulative impact on
6 livestock grazing in this allotment, and the proposed adjacent Toquop power plant could further
7 affect one or both of these allotments. However, the loss of approximately 315 AUMs within the
8 proposed SEZ would be a negligible reduction in the over 54,199 AUMs authorized within the
9 BLM Caliente Field Office (Section 11.5.4.1.2.1).
10

11 Because the East Mormon Mountain SEZ is 32 mi (51.5 km) or more from any wild
12 horse and burro HMA managed by the BLM and more than 50 mi (80 km) from any wild horse
13 and burro territory administered by the USFS, solar energy development within the SEZ would
14 not directly or indirectly affect wild horses and burros that are managed by these agencies
15 and would not contribute to cumulative impacts on these species (Section 11.5.4.2.2).
16
17

18 **11.5.22.4.4 Recreation**
19

20 Limited outdoor recreation (e.g., backcountry driving, OHV use, and some camping and
21 hunting) occurs on or in the immediate vicinity of the SEZ. Construction of utility-scale solar
22 projects on the SEZ would preclude recreational use of the affected lands for the duration of the
23 projects. Road closures and access restrictions within the proposed SEZ would affect OHV use
24 and access to undeveloped areas. Foreseeable and potential future actions would similarly affect
25 areas of low recreational use and would have minimal effects on recreation. Thus, cumulative
26 impacts on recreation within the geographic extent of effects are not expected.
27
28

29 **11.5.22.4.5 Military and Civilian Aviation**
30

31 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located under two MTRs and 5 mi (8 km)
32 east of a large MOA that extends across southern Nevada just north of Las Vegas. The area is
33 also located within a mandatory DoD Consultation Area. The military has indicated that solar
34 facility structures higher than 200 ft (61 m) would intrude into military airspace and would
35 present safety concerns for military aircraft (Section 11.5.6.2). Foreseeable and potential solar
36 facilities, communication towers, and transmission lines, and the proposed Toquop power plant
37 adjacent to the SEZ, could present additional concerns for military aviation and could result in
38 cumulative impacts on military aviation. The Mesquite and St. George Airports are located far
39 enough away from the facility that there would be no effect on their operations.
40
41
42

1 **11.5.22.4.6 Soil Resources**

2
3 Ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling) during the
4 construction phase of a solar project, including the construction of any associated transmission
5 line connections and new roads, would contribute to soil loss due to wind erosion. Road use
6 during construction, operations, and decommissioning of the solar facilities would further
7 contribute to soil loss. Programmatic design features would be employed to minimize erosion
8 and loss. Residual soil losses with mitigations in place would be in addition to losses from
9 construction of the proposed Toquop power plant and nearby transmission lines and pipelines,
10 and from recreational uses. Overall, small cumulative impacts on soil resources near the
11 proposed SEZ could result with mitigations in place.

12
13 In addition to soil loss from erosion, landscaping of solar energy facilities and other
14 future projects within and outside the SEZ could alter drainage patterns and lead to increased
15 siltation of surface water streambeds. However, programmatic design features would be in place
16 to minimize impacts from erosion.

17
18
19 **11.5.22.4.7 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)**

20
21 As discussed in Section 11.5.8, there are currently no active oil and gas leases within the
22 proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, and there are no pending mining claims or proposals for
23 geothermal energy development in the SEZ. Because of the generally low level of mineral
24 production in the area and the expected low impact of other foreseeable actions on mineral
25 accessibility within the geographic extent of effects, no cumulative impacts on mineral resources
26 are expected.

27
28
29 **11.5.22.4.8 Water Resources**

30
31 Section 11.5.9.2 describes the water requirements for various technologies if they were to
32 be employed on the proposed SEZ to develop utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount of
33 water needed during the peak construction year for all evaluated solar technologies would be
34 1,039 to 1,492 ac-ft (1.3 million to 1.8 million m³). During operations, with full development of
35 the SEZ over 80% of its available land area, the amount of water needed for all evaluated solar
36 technologies would range from 41 to 21,543 ac-ft/yr (51 thousand to 27 million m³). The amount
37 of water needed during decommissioning would be similar to or less than the amount used
38 during construction. As discussed in Section 11.5.22.2.3, water withdrawals in 2005 in Lincoln
39 County were 57,100 ac-ft/yr (70 million m³/yr), of which 11% came from surface waters and
40 89% came from groundwater. The largest water use categories were irrigation at 55,100 ac-ft/yr
41 (68 million m³/yr) and public supply/domestic supply at 1,300 ac-ft/yr (1.6 million m³/yr).
42 Cumulatively, the additional water resources needed for solar facilities in the SEZ during
43 operations would constitute from a very small (0.07%) to a large (38%) increment (the ratio of
44 the annual operations water requirement to the annual amount withdrawn in Lincoln County)
45 depending on the solar technology used (PV technology at the low end and wet-cooled parabolic
46 trough technology at the high end).

1 Near the SEZ, the Lower Virgin River Valley groundwater basin has an estimated
2 sustainable yield of between 12,600 and 40,000 ac-ft/yr (16 and 49 million m³/yr) in the three-
3 state region near the SEZ (Section 11.5.9.1.2). Thus, solar developments on the SEZ would have
4 the capacity to use about half of the sustainable groundwater yield in the local basin using wet
5 cooling. Full development with dry-cooled solar trough technologies would require up to
6 2,172 ac-ft/yr (2.7 million m³/yr), or about 5% of this level (Section 11.5.9.2.2).

7
8 While solar development of the proposed SEZ with water-intensive technologies would
9 likely be infeasible due to impacts on groundwater supplies and existing demands on water
10 rights, excessive groundwater withdrawals could disrupt the existing groundwater supplies in the
11 Lower Virgin River Valley and in hydraulically connected basins. In addition, land disturbance
12 for solar facility construction could cause localized soil erosion and sedimentation of ephemeral
13 washes, degrade associated habitats, and alter groundwater recharge and discharge processes.
14 Thus, a significant increase in withdrawals from solar development within the proposed SEZ
15 could result in a major impact on groundwater, and further cumulative impacts could occur when
16 combined with other current and future uses in the region. These could include the foreseeable
17 Toquop power plant, which would be adjacent to the SEZ and tap the same groundwater
18 resources of the Tule Desert basin, which is adjacent to the Virgin River Valley basin to the
19 northwest and hydraulically connected. This plant was originally configured to produce 750 MW
20 from coal and use hybrid cooling as analyzed in the 2009 Final EIS (BLM 2009e), requiring an
21 estimated 2,500 ac-ft/yr (3.1 million m³/yr) of water. The Nevada State Engineer has already
22 permitted 2,100 ac-ft/yr for a power plant at this location; the remaining 400 ac-ft/yr
23 (494,000 m³/yr) is pending approval. In March 2010, however, project proponents announced
24 revised plans for a 1,100-MW gas-fired plant (Phase 1, 550 to 600 MW) supplemented by 50 to
25 100 MW of PV solar, which would use 60% less water than the coal-fired version
26 (Sithe Global 2010b). In addition, the proposed Lincoln County Land Act Groundwater
27 Development and Utility ROW project would pump and store groundwater from the Clover
28 Valley and Tule Desert hydrographic areas for use in Lincoln County, including potentially for
29 Toquop power plant. Other foreseeable and potential solar projects are more than 15 mi (24 km)
30 from the SEZ and would not likely affect the same groundwater resources (Section 11.5.22.2).

31
32 Small quantities of sanitary wastewater would be generated during the construction and
33 operation of the potential utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount generated from solar
34 facilities would be in the range of 9 to 74 ac-ft (11,000 to 91,000 m³) during the peak
35 construction year and would range from less than 1 up to 20 ac-ft/yr (up to 25,000 m³/yr) during
36 operations. Because of the small quantity, the sanitary wastewater generated by the solar energy
37 facilities would not be expected to put undue strain on available sanitary wastewater treatment
38 facilities in the general area of the SEZ. For technologies that rely on conventional wet-cooling
39 systems, there would also be from 226 to 408 ac-ft/yr (0.28 to 0.50 million m³) of blowdown
40 water from cooling towers. Blowdown water would need to be either treated on-site or sent to an
41 off-site facility. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure that treatment ponds
42 are effectively lined in order to prevent any groundwater contamination. Thus, blowdown water
43 would not contribute to cumulative effects on treatment systems or on groundwater.

1 **11.5.22.4.9 Vegetation**

2
3 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located within the Creosotebush–
4 Dominated Basins ecoregion, which is characterized by sparse creosotebush, white bursage, and
5 big galleta grass, with cacti, yucca, ephedra, and Indian ricegrass also common. Sonora–Mojave
6 Creosote–White Bursage Desert Scrub is the predominant cover type within the proposed SEZ.
7 Sensitive habitats on the SEZ include desert dry wash, riparian, and playa habitats. Areas
8 surrounding the SEZ include the Creosotebush–Dominated Basins and Arid Footslopes
9 ecoregions. The dominant cover type in the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect effects is Sonora–
10 Mojave Creosote–White Bursage Desert Scrub. If utility-scale solar energy projects were to
11 be constructed within the SEZ, all vegetation within the footprints of the facilities would likely
12 be removed during land-clearing and land-grading operations. Full development of the SEZ
13 over 80% of its area would result in small impacts on all cover types in the affected area
14 (Section 11.5.10.2.1). Playa habitats, riparian habitats, or other intermittently flooded areas
15 within or downgradient from solar projects, including riparian plant communities along Toquop
16 Wash and the Virgin River, could be affected by ground-disturbing activities, and increased
17 runoff from facilities could affect the hydrology of these areas. In addition, groundwater
18 drawdown by solar facilities could affect wetland communities associated with springs, including
19 Tule Spring, Abe Spring, Gourd Spring, and Peach Spring. A further concern in disturbed areas
20 is the establishment and spread of noxious weeds and invasive species. An increase in invasive
21 species such as red brome could increase fire frequency within native plant communities.
22

23 The fugitive dust generated during the construction of the solar facilities could increase
24 the dust loading in habitats outside a solar project area, in combination with that from other
25 construction, agriculture, recreation, and transportation. The cumulative dust loading could result
26 in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition. Similarly, surface runoff
27 from project areas after heavy rains could increase sedimentation and siltation in areas
28 downstream. Programmatic design features would be used to reduce the impacts from solar
29 energy projects and thus reduce the overall cumulative impacts on plant communities and
30 habitats.
31

32 Solar facilities within the SEZ in combination with other ongoing and reasonably
33 foreseeable future actions would have a cumulative effect on both common and uncommon
34 cover types within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects. Sensitive habitats,
35 including wetlands, would be of particular concern. The proposed Toquop power plant would
36 draw on groundwater from the Tule Desert region, which would also serve facilities within the
37 SEZ. Many other large-acreage developments exist or are proposed within this distance,
38 including several large power plants, transmission line and pipeline projects, the 21,454-acre
39 (86.8-km²) Coyote Springs Investment residential development, and a community airport
40 (Section 11.5.22.2). However, many of these projects lie 30 to 50 mi (48 to 80 km) southwest
41 of the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ, near the proposed Dry Lake SEZ, although some
42 proposed transmission line and pipeline projects pass near the SEZ. Taken together, current and
43 future projects could have small to moderate cumulative effects on vegetation in the region. The
44 degree of such impacts would depend to some extent on the level of actual solar and wind
45 development in the region. Eight pending solar and five pending wind project applications lie
46 on public land within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ; most solar applications lie on or near the East

1 Mormon Mountain SEZ. The East Mormon Mountain SEZ would make a relatively small
2 contribution to cumulative effects, however, given its modest size in comparison to other
3 developments.
4

6 ***11.5.22.4.10 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota***

7

8 Wildlife species that could potentially be affected by the development of utility-scale
9 solar energy facilities in the proposed SEZ include amphibians, reptiles, birds, and
10 mammals. The construction of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ and any associated
11 transmission lines and roads in or near the SEZ would have an impact on wildlife through habitat
12 disturbance (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration), wildlife disturbance, and
13 wildlife injury or mortality. In general, impacted species with broad distributions and a variety of
14 habitats would be less affected than species with a narrowly defined habitat within a restricted
15 area. The use of programmatic design features would reduce the severity of impacts on wildlife.
16 These design features may include pre-disturbance biological surveys to identify key habitat
17 areas used by wildlife, followed by avoidance or minimization of disturbance to those habitats.
18

19 As noted in Section 11.5.22.2, other ongoing, reasonably foreseeable, and potential future
20 actions within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ include three foreseeable large solar facilities
21 on private land, four foreseeable transmission line projects, eight potential solar facilities with
22 pending applications covering over 40,000 acres (160 km²) on public land, five pending wind
23 applications, several existing large power plants, two pipeline projects, the proposed 21,454-acre
24 (86.8-km²) Coyote Springs Investment residential development, and a proposed new community
25 airport (Section 11.5.22.2). While impacts from full build-out over 80% of the proposed SEZ
26 would result in small impacts on amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species (Section 11.5.11),
27 impacts from foreseeable development within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects
28 could be moderate. However, many of the wildlife species present within the proposed SEZ that
29 could be affected by other actions would still have extensive available habitat within the region,
30 while contributions to cumulative impacts from solar facilities within the proposed SEZ would
31 be relatively small due to its modest size.
32

33 There are no permanent streams or water bodies within the proposed East Mormon SEZ
34 or within the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect effects. Toquop Wash is an intermittent stream located
35 within the SEZ, along with several large, unnamed ephemeral washes. Streams and washes
36 typically contain water only after substantial rainfall and carry water to the southeast and
37 eventually drain into the Virgin River. Ephemeral streams and washes in the SEZ may contain a
38 diverse seasonal community of invertebrates adapted to dry conditions, but are not expected to
39 contain permanent aquatic habitat or communities. No NWI-mapped wetlands are present within
40 the SEZ or within area of indirect effects (Section 11.5.11.4.1). Within the 50-mi (80-km)
41 geographic extent of effects, there are 7,372 acres (30 km²) of dry lakes, 19,963 acres (81 km²)
42 of perennial lakes, 319 mi (513 km) of perennial streams, and 402 mi (647 km) of intermittent
43 streams. The Virgin River is the nearest perennial surface stream and is located approximately
44 10 mi (16 km) south of the SEZ (Section 11.5.11.2). Soil disturbance from construction of solar
45 facilities in the SEZ could result in soil transport to surface streams via water and airborne
46 routes, but is expected to be low with mitigations in place. Groundwater drawdown by operating

1 solar facilities within the SEZ could affect aquatic habitats in springs supported by groundwater.
2 Cumulative impacts on aquatic biota from all ongoing and foreseeable development within the
3 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects could be accrued, given the level of foreseen
4 development. However, most such impacts would occur away from the proposed East Mormon
5 Mountain SEZ, while any contributions to cumulative impacts on aquatic biota from solar
6 development within the proposed SEZ would be small. The proposed Toquop power plant would
7 combine with impacts from the SEZ.
8
9

10 ***11.5.22.4.11 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive,*** 11 ***and Rare Species)*** 12

13 On the basis of recorded occurrences or suitable habitat, as many as 32 special status
14 species could occur within the East Mormon Mountain SEZ. The following three special status
15 species are known to occur within the affected area of the SEZ: Las Vegas buckwheat, desert
16 tortoise, and Nelson's bighorn sheep. No groundwater-dependent special status species have
17 been identified in the affected area. Occurrences of the desert tortoise have been recorded near
18 the SEZ, while critical habitat for the desert tortoise lies with the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect
19 affects outside the SEZ, adjacent to the eastern and southern boundaries. Numerous species that
20 occur on or in the vicinity of the SEZ are listed as threatened or endangered by the State of
21 Nevada or listed as a sensitive species by the BLM (Section 11.5.12.1). Avoidance of habitat and
22 minimization of erosion, sedimentation, and dust deposition are some of the programmatic
23 design features to be used to reduce or eliminate the potential for effects on these species from
24 the construction and operation of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZs and related
25 developments (e.g., access roads and transmission line connections) outside the SEZ. Special-
26 status species are also affected by ongoing actions within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of
27 effects, including from residential areas, roads, transmission lines, and power plants within this
28 distance. Future developments, including the proposed Toquop power plant, two foreseeable
29 large solar facilities on private land, four foreseeable transmission line projects, eight potential
30 solar facilities with pending applications covering over 40,000 acres (160 km²) on public land,
31 five pending wind applications, the proposed 21,454-acre (86.8-km²) Coyote Springs Investment
32 residential development, and a proposed new community airport (Section 11.5.22.2), will add
33 further effects. Potential developments cover large areas and long linear distances and are likely
34 to affect special status species. Moderate total cumulative impacts on some species, such as the
35 desert tortoise, within the geographic extent of effects could result. However, contributions to
36 cumulative impacts from solar development with the proposed SEZ would be small. Future
37 projects would employ mitigation measures to limit effects.
38
39

40 ***11.5.22.4.12 Air Quality and Climate*** 41

42 While solar energy generates minimal emissions compared with fossil fuels, the site
43 preparation and construction activities associated with solar energy facilities would be
44 responsible for some amount of air pollutants. Most of the emissions would be particulate matter
45 (fugitive dust) and emissions from vehicles and construction equipment. When these emissions
46 are combined with those from other nearby projects outside the proposed SEZ, or when they are

1 added to natural dust generation from winds and windstorms, the air quality in the general
2 vicinity of the projects could be temporarily degraded. For example, the maximum 24-hour
3 PM₁₀ concentration at or near the SEZ boundaries could at times exceed the applicable standard
4 of 150 µg/m³. Dust generation from construction activities can be controlled by implementing
5 aggressive dust control measures, such as increased watering frequency, or road paving or
6 treatment.

7
8 Because operation of solar facilities within the SEZ would produce minimal contributions
9 of air emissions to those from operation of existing and future industrial sources in the area,
10 mainly gas-fired power plants, the only type of air pollutant of concern is dust generated during
11 construction of new facilities in addition to that produced by winds. Because there are relatively
12 few other foreseeable and potential actions that could produce fugitive dust emissions near the
13 SEZ, it is unlikely but possible that construction of two or more projects could overlap in both
14 time and affected area and produce small cumulative air quality effects due to dust emissions.

15
16 Over the long term and across the region, the development of solar energy may have
17 beneficial cumulative impacts on the air quality and atmospheric values by offsetting the need
18 for energy production that results in higher levels of emissions, such as methods using coal, oil,
19 and natural gas. As discussed in Section 11.5.13.2.2, air emissions from operating solar energy
20 facilities are relatively minor, while the displacement of criteria air pollutants, VOCs, TAPs, and
21 GHG emissions currently produced from fossil fuels could be significant. For example, if the
22 East Mormon Mountain SEZ were fully developed (80% of its acreage) with solar facilities, the
23 quantity of pollutants avoided could be as large as 6.6% of all emissions from the current electric
24 power systems in Nevada.

25 26 27 ***11.5.22.4.13 Visual Resources***

28
29 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ is located in a valley east of the East Mormon
30 Mountains and south of the Tule Hills. The area is rural with little cultural disturbance, mainly
31 roads and a 500-kV transmission line (Section 11.5.14.1). Construction of utility-scale solar
32 facilities in the SEZ would substantially alter the natural scenic quality of the area. Other
33 foreseeable actions near the proposed SEZ would cumulatively affect the visual resources in the
34 area. Because of the large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat, open
35 nature of the proposed SEZ, some lands outside the SEZ would also be subjected to visual
36 impacts related to the construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy
37 facilities. Potential impacts would include night sky pollution, including increased skyglow, light
38 spillage, and glare.

39
40 Visual impacts resulting from solar energy development within the SEZ would be in
41 addition to impacts caused by other potential projects in the area. There are currently two
42 potential solar projects and one wind project with pending applications on public land lie within
43 the 25-mi (40 km) geographic extent for visual impacts, all near I-15 (Figure 11.5.22.2-1). In
44 addition, the proposed Toquop power plant would lie adjacent to the SEZ, while at least one
45 proposed transmission project and several pipeline projects would pass through or near the
46 proposed SEZ (Section 11.5.22.2). While the contribution to cumulative visual impacts of these

1 foreseeable and potential projects would depend on the location of facilities that are actually
2 built, it may be concluded that the general visual character of the landscape within this distance
3 would be significantly altered by the presence of these developments. Because of the topography
4 of the region, such developments, located in basin flats, would be visible at great distances from
5 surrounding mountains, which include sensitive viewsheds, such as the Mormon Mountains WA.
6 Given the proximity of some current proposals, it is possible that two or more facilities would be
7 viewable from a single location. In addition, some facilities would be located near major roads
8 and thus would be viewable by motorists, who would also be viewing transmission lines, towns,
9 and other infrastructure, as well as the road system itself.

10
11 As additional facilities are added, several projects might become visible from one
12 location, or in succession, as viewers move through the landscape, as by driving on local roads.
13 In general, the new developments would not be expected to be consistent in terms of their
14 appearance and, depending on the number and type of facilities, the resulting visual disharmony
15 could exceed the visual absorption capability of the landscape and add significantly to the
16 cumulative visual impact. Considering the above, small to moderate cumulative visual impacts
17 could occur within the geographic extent of effects from future solar, wind, and other existing
18 and future developments.

21 ***11.5.22.4.14 Acoustic Environment***

22
23 The areas around the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ are relatively quiet. The
24 existing noise sources around the SEZ include infrequent road traffic, aircraft flyover, and cattle
25 grazing, and possibly hunting. The construction of solar energy facilities could increase the noise
26 levels periodically for up to 3 years per facility, and there would be increased noise during
27 operation of solar facilities, notably from solar dish engine facilities and from parabolic trough or
28 power tower facilities using TES. However, these noises would minimally affect nearby
29 residences due to considerable separation distance.

30
31 Other ongoing and reasonably foreseeable and potential future activities in the general
32 vicinity of the SEZs are described in Section 11.5.22.2. Because the nearest residents are
33 relatively far from the SEZ and from other foreseeable projects with respect to noise impacts,
34 cumulative noise effects during the construction or operation of solar facilities are unlikely.

37 ***11.5.22.4.15 Paleontological Resources***

38
39 The proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ has low potential for the occurrence of
40 significant fossil material in nearly 100% of its area, which contains mainly alluvial deposits
41 (Section 11.5.16.1). While impacts on significant paleontological resources are unlikely to occur
42 in the SEZ, a review of the geological deposits in the specific sites selected for future projects
43 would be needed to determine whether a paleontological survey was warranted. Any
44 paleontological resources encountered would be mitigated to the extent possible. No significant
45 contributions to cumulative impacts on paleontological resources are expected.

1 **11.5.22.4.16 Cultural Resources**
2

3 The area around East Mormon Mountain is rich in cultural history, with settlements
4 dating as far back as 12,000 years. The area covered by the proposed East Mormon Mountain
5 SEZ has the potential to contain significant cultural resources. Seven surveys have been
6 conducted within the SEZ boundaries, covering 0.9% of the SEZ, while 41 surveys have been
7 conducted within the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect effects, recording four sites and 45 sites,
8 respectively (Section 11.5.17.1). Areas with high potential for containing archaeological sites
9 include the South Fork and Toquop Wash areas. It is possible that the development of utility-
10 scale solar energy projects in the SEZ would contribute to cumulative impacts on cultural
11 resources in the region. Such contributions would be small and overall cumulative effects within
12 the 25-mi (40-km) geographic extent of effects would also be small, given relatively little
13 ongoing and foreseeable development within this distance, except for the proposed adjacent
14 Toquop power plant (Section 11.5.22.2). While any future solar projects would disturb large
15 areas, the specific sites selected for future projects would be surveyed; historic properties
16 encountered would be avoided or mitigated to the extent possible. Through ongoing consultation
17 with the Nevada SHPO and appropriate Native American governments, it is likely that most
18 adverse effects on significant resources in the region could be mitigated to some degree. It is
19 unlikely that any sites recorded in the SEZ would be of such individual significance that, if
20 properly mitigated, development would cumulatively cause an irretrievable loss of information
21 about a significant resource type, but this would depend on the results of the future surveys and
22 evaluations.
23

24
25 **11.5.22.4.17 Native American Concerns**
26

27 To date, no specific concerns have been raised to the BLM regarding the proposed East
28 Mormon Mountain SEZ. However, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah has asked to be kept
29 informed of PEIS developments (Section 11.5.18.2). It is possible that the development of
30 utility-scale solar energy projects in the proposed SEZ would contribute to cumulative impacts
31 on resources important to Native Americans. Significant drawdown of groundwater supporting
32 Tule Springs by solar facilities in the SEZ and by the proposed Toquop power plant could affect
33 culturally important traditional resources. In addition, the Moapa River Valley 25 mi (40 km) to
34 the southeast is a core area of Southern Paiute population and culture and is the location of
35 several proposed solar projects within the geographic extent of visual impacts of the SEZ
36 (Figure 11.5.22.2-1). Continued discussions with the area Tribes through government-to-
37 government consultation are necessary to effectively consider and address the Tribes' concerns
38 about solar energy development in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ.
39

40
41 **11.5.22.4.18 Socioeconomics**
42

43 Solar energy development projects in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ could
44 cumulatively contribute to socioeconomic effects in the immediate vicinity of the SEZs and in
45 the surrounding ROI. The effects could be positive (e.g., creation of jobs and generation of extra
46 income, increased revenues to local governmental organizations through additional taxes paid by

1 the developers and workers) or negative (e.g., added strain on social institutions such as schools,
2 police protection, and health care facilities). Impacts from solar development would be most
3 intense during facility construction, but of greatest duration during operations. Construction, in
4 combination with temporary workers involved in other new developments in the area, including
5 other renewable energy development, would temporarily increase the number of workers in the
6 area needing housing and services. The number of workers involved in the construction of solar
7 projects in the peak construction year (including the transmission lines) could range from about
8 240 to 1,700 depending on the technology being employed, with solar PV facilities at the low
9 end and solar trough facilities at the high end. The total number of jobs created in the area could
10 range from approximately 440 (solar PV) to as high as 4,400 (solar trough). Cumulative
11 socioeconomic effects in the ROI from construction of solar facilities would occur to the extent
12 that multiple construction projects of any type were ongoing at the same time. It is a reasonable
13 expectation that this condition would occur within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ
14 occasionally over the 20-year or more solar development period.

15
16 Annual impacts during the operation of solar facilities would be less, but of 20- to
17 30-year duration, and could combine with those from other new developments in the area,
18 including several foreseeable and potential solar and wind energy projects, several proposed
19 transmission line and pipeline projects, and the proposed Toquop power plant project
20 (Section 11.5.22.2). The number of workers needed at the SEZ solar facilities would be in the
21 range of 16 to 310, with approximately 20 to 500 total jobs created in the region, assuming full
22 build-out of the SEZ (Section 11.5.19.2.2). Population increases would contribute to general
23 upward trends in the region in recent years. The socioeconomic impacts overall would be
24 positive, through the creation of additional jobs and income. The negative impacts, including
25 some short-term disruption of rural community quality of life, would not likely be considered
26 large enough to require specific mitigation measures.

27 28 29 ***11.5.22.4.19 Environmental Justice***

30
31 Any impacts from solar development could have cumulative impacts on minority and
32 low-income populations within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ in combination with other
33 development in the area. Such impacts could be both positive, such as from increased economic
34 activity, and negative, such as from visual impacts, noise, and exposure to fugitive dust. Actual
35 impacts would depend on the geographic range of effects and on the location of low-income
36 populations relative to solar and other proposed facilities. Overall, effects from facilities within
37 the SEZ are expected to be small, while other foreseeable and potential actions could contribute
38 additional small effects on minority and low-income populations. However, except for the
39 proposed Toquop project, most foreseeable actions are more than 30 mi (48 km) from the
40 proposed SEZ, and no minority or low-income populations are currently present within the 50-mi
41 (80-km) ROI (Section 11.5.20.1). While future minority and low-income populations, if present,
42 could experience small cumulative effects of some types, such as effects on visual resources or
43 from fugitive dust from all actions within the geographic extent of effects, contributions from
44 solar development in the proposed East Mormon Mountain SEZ would be small. If needed,
45 mitigation measures could be employed to reduce the impacts on these populations in the vicinity
46 of the SEZ.

1 **11.5.22.4.20 Transportation**
2

3 I-15 is the nearest major road and lies about 11 mi (18 km) southeast of the proposed East
4 Mormon Mountain SEZ. The Las Vegas metropolitan area lies approximately 62 mi (100 km) to
5 the southwest of the SEZ along I-15. The nearest airport with scheduled passenger service is the
6 St. George Municipal Airport, 43 mi (69 km) to the northeast in St. George, Utah. The closest
7 railroad access is in Moapa, about 25 mi (40 km) southwest of the SEZ. During construction of
8 utility-scale solar energy facilities, there could be up to 1,000 workers commuting to the
9 construction site at the SEZ, which could increase the AADT on these roads by 2,000 vehicle
10 trips for each facility under construction. With a single solar facility assumed to be under
11 construction at a given time, traffic on I-15 could experience minor slowdowns in the area near
12 access to the SEZ (Section 11.5.21.2). This increase in highway traffic from construction
13 workers could likewise have minor cumulative impacts on traffic flow in combination with
14 existing traffic levels and increases from additional future developments in the area, including
15 construction of the proposed Toquop power plant and facilities for the proposed Lincoln County
16 Land Act Groundwater Development and Utility ROW project in the vicinity of the proposed
17 SEZ, should project schedules overlap. Local road improvements may be necessary on portions
18 of I-15 near access to the SEZ. Any impacts during construction activities would be temporary.
19 The impacts can also be mitigated to some degree by staggered work schedules and ride-sharing
20 programs. Traffic increases during operation would be relatively small because of the low
21 number of workers needed to operate the solar facilities and would have little contribution to
22 cumulative impacts.
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1 **11.5.23 References**

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3 *Note to Reader:* This list of references identifies Web pages and associated URLs where
4 reference data were obtained for the analyses presented in this PEIS. It is likely that at the time
5 of publication of this PEIS, some of these Web pages may no longer be available or their URL
6 addresses may have changed. The original information has been retained and is available through
7 the Public Information Docket for this PEIS.

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18

1 **11.6 GOLD POINT**

2
3
4 **11.6.1 Background and Summary of Impacts**

5
6
7 **11.6.1.1 General Information**

8
9 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in Esmeralda County in southwestern Nevada
10 (Figure 11.6.1.1-1). The SEZ has a total area of 4,810 acres (19 km²). In 2008, the county
11 population was 664, while adjacent Nye County to the east had a population of 44,175. There
12 are no incorporated towns in close proximity to the SEZ. The town of Tonopah is approximately
13 50 mi (80 km) to the north, and the Las Vegas metropolitan area is approximately 180 mi
14 (290 km) to the southeast of the SEZ.

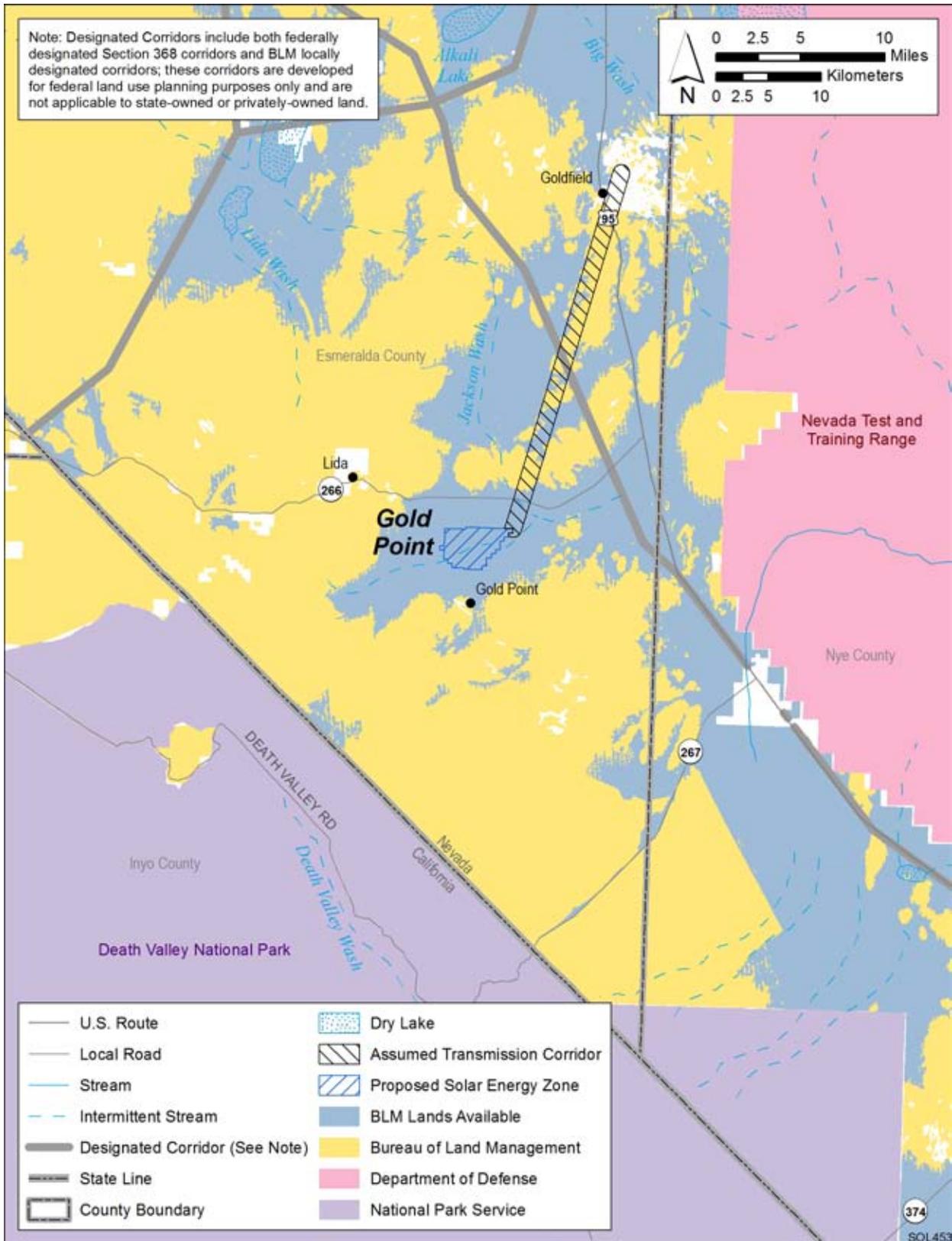
15
16 The nearest major road access to the proposed Gold Point SEZ is State Route 774, which
17 parallels the eastern edge of the SEZ; U.S. 95 runs north–south as it passes within 9 mi (14 km)
18 to the east of the SEZ. The UP Railroad serves the region; the closest stop is in Thorne, 160 mi
19 (257 km) northwest of the SEZ. The nearest public airport is Lida Junction Airport, a small BLM
20 airport about 10 mi (16 km) from the SEZ. There are three additional airports in the vicinity,
21 none of which have scheduled commercial passenger service. The nearest airport with scheduled
22 passenger service is in Las Vegas, Nevada.

23
24 A 120-kV transmission line passes 22 mi (35 km) west of the SEZ. It is assumed that a
25 new transmission line would be needed to provide access from the SEZ to the transmission grid
26 (see Section 11.6.1.2).

27
28 Applications for ROWs that have been submitted to the BLM include one pending solar
29 project, one pending authorization for wind site testing, two authorized projects for wind site
30 testing, and one authorized geothermal project that would be located within 50 mi (80 km) of the
31 Gold Point SEZ. These applications are discussed in Section 11.6.22.2.1.

32
33 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is in an undeveloped rural area. The SEZ is located in the
34 Lida Valley, which lies between the Mount Jackson Ridge and Cuprite Hills to the north and
35 Slate Ridge to the south. It is bounded on the west by the Palmetto Mountains and on the east by
36 the Stonewell Mountains.

37
38 The proposed Gold Point SEZ and other relevant information are shown in
39 Figure 11.6.1.1-1. The criteria used to identify the SEZ as an appropriate location for solar
40 energy development included proximity to existing transmission lines or designated corridors,
41 proximity to existing roads, a slope of generally less than 2%, and an area of more than
42 2,500 acres (10 km²). In addition, the area was identified as being relatively free of other types
43 of conflicts, such as USFWS-designated critical habitat for threatened and endangered species,
44 ACECs, SRMAs, and NLCS lands (see Section 2.2.2.2 for the complete list of exclusions).
45 Although these classes of restricted lands were excluded from the proposed Gold Point SEZ,
46 other restrictions might be appropriate. The analyses in the following sections address the



1

2 **FIGURE 11.6.1.1-1 Proposed Gold Point SEZ**

1 affected environment and potential impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy
2 development in the proposed SEZ for important environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic
3 resources.
4

5 As initially announced in the *Federal Register* on June 30, 2009, the proposed Gold
6 Point SEZ encompassed 5,830 acres (24 km²). Subsequent to the study area scoping period, the
7 boundaries of the proposed Gold Point SEZ were altered somewhat to facilitate the BLM's
8 administration of the SEZ area. Borders with irregularly shaped boundaries were adjusted to
9 match the section boundaries of the Public Lands Survey System (PLSS) (BLM and USFS
10 2010c). The revised SEZ is approximately 1,020 acres (4 km²) smaller than the original SEZ
11 area as published in June 2009.
12
13

14 **11.6.1.2 Development Assumptions for the Impact Analysis**

15
16 Maximum solar development of the Gold Point SEZ is assumed to be 80% of the SEZ
17 area over a period of 20 years, a maximum of 3,848 acres (16 km²). These values are shown in
18 Table 11.6.1.2-1, along with other development assumptions. Full development of the Gold Point
19 SEZ would allow development of facilities with an estimated total of 428 MW of electrical
20 power capacity if power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies were used, assuming
21 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required, and an estimated 770 MW of power if solar
22 trough technologies were used, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.
23

24 Availability of transmission from SEZs to load centers will be an important consideration
25 for future development in SEZs. The nearest existing transmission line is a 120-kV line 22 mi
26 (35 km) west of the SEZ. It is possible that a new transmission line could be constructed from
27 the SEZ to this existing line, but the 120-kV capacity of that line would be inadequate for 428 to
28 770 MW of new capacity (note that a 500 kV line can accommodate approximately the load of
29 one 700-MW facility). At full build-out capacity, new transmission and/or upgrades of existing
30 transmission lines (in addition to or instead of construction of a connection to the nearest existing
31 line) might be required to bring electricity from the proposed Gold Point SEZ to load centers;
32 however, at this time the location and size of such new transmission facilities are unknown.
33 Generic impacts of transmission and associated infrastructure construction and of line upgrades
34 for various resources are discussed in Chapter 5. Project-specific analyses would need to identify
35 the specific impacts of new transmission construction and line upgrades for any projects
36 proposed within the SEZ.
37

38 For purposes of as complete an analysis of impacts of development in the SEZ as
39 possible, it was assumed that, at a minimum, a transmission line segment would be constructed
40 from the proposed Gold Point SEZ to the nearest existing transmission line to connect the SEZ to
41 the transmission grid. This assumption was made without additional information on whether the
42 nearest existing transmission line would actually be available for connection of future solar
43
44

TABLE 11.6.1.2-1 Proposed Gold Point SEZ—Assumed Development Acreages, Solar MW Output, Access Roads, and Transmission Line ROWs

Total Acreage and Assumed Developed Acreage (80% of Total)	Assumed Maximum SEZ Output for Various Solar Technologies	Distance to Nearest State, U.S., or Interstate Highway	Distance and Capacity of Nearest Existing Transmission Line	Assumed Area of Transmission Line and Road ROWs	Distance to Nearest Designated Corridor ^e
4,810 acres and 3,848 acres ^a	428 MW ^b and 770 MW ^c	State Route 774 0 mi	22 mi ^d and 120 kV	667 acres and 0 acres	6 mi

- ^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.
- ^b Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies, assuming 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required.
- ^c Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using solar trough technologies, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.
- ^d To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.
- ^e BLM-designated corridors are developed for federal land use planning purposes only and are not applicable to state-owned or privately owned land.

1
2
3 facilities, and without assumptions about upgrades of the line. Establishing a connection to the
4 line closest to the SEZ would involve the construction of about 22 mi (35 km) of new
5 transmission line outside of the SEZ. The ROW for this transmission line would occupy
6 approximately 667 acres (2.7 km²) of land, assuming a 250-ft (76-m) wide ROW, a typical width
7 for such a ROW. If a connecting transmission line were constructed to a different offsite grid
8 location in the future, site developers would need to determine the impacts from construction and
9 operation of that line. In addition, developers would need to determine the impacts of line
10 upgrades if they were needed.

11
12 Existing road access to the proposed Gold Point SEZ should be adequate to support
13 construction and operation of solar facilities, because State Route 774 runs along the eastern
14 border of the SEZ. Thus, no additional road construction outside of the SEZ is assumed to be
15 required to support solar development, as summarized in Table 11.6.1.2-1.

16
17
18 **11.6.1.3 Summary of Major Impacts and SEZ-Specific Design Features**

19
20 In this section, the impacts and SEZ-specific design features assessed in Sections 11.6.2
21 through 11.6.21 for the proposed Gold Point SEZ are summarized in tabular form.
22 Table 11.6.1.3-1 is a comprehensive list of impacts discussed in these sections; the reader may
23 reference the applicable sections for detailed support of the impact assessment. Section 11.6.22
24 discusses potential cumulative impacts from solar energy development in the proposed SEZ.
25

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 Summary of Impacts of Solar Energy Development within the Proposed Gold Point SEZ and SEZ-Specific Design Features

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Gold Point SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Lands and Realty	Full development of the proposed Gold Point SEZ could disturb up to 3,848 acres (15.6 km ²). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish an isolated industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity.	None.
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Light from solar facilities could adversely affect night sky viewing in some specially designated areas. New transmission lines could cause visual impacts on specially designated areas.	None. Transmission line construction should be routed and constructed in such a way as to minimize visual impacts on specially designated areas.
Rangeland Resources: Livestock Grazing	None.	None.
Rangeland Resources: Wild Horses and Burros	Wild horses and burros in the Gold Mountain HMA could incur indirect impacts from solar energy development. Wild horses and burros would incur direct and indirect impacts from construction of the assumed transmission line in the Goldfield HMA. Direct impacts would be small as only 0.07% of the HMA would be impacted by construction. Following construction, wild horses and burros would be able to make use of the rangelands within the transmission line ROW.	None.
Recreation	Recreational use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ that would be developed for solar energy production; the loss of use, however, is anticipated to be minimal. There are no anticipated adverse effects on recreation use of specially designated areas within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ.	None.

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Gold Point SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Military and Civilian Aviation	<i>Military:</i> The military has expressed serious concern over solar energy facilities being constructed within the SEZ. Nellis Air Force Base has indicated that solar technologies could interfere with flight operations on MTRs that cross the SEZ. The NTTR has indicated that structures higher than 50 ft (15 m) above ground level may present unacceptable electromagnetic compatibility concerns for the NTTR test mission.	None.
	<i>Civilian:</i> There would be no effect on civilian aviation.	None.
Geologic Setting and Soil Resources	Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase. Impacts would include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind, soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. These impacts may be impacting factors for other resources (e.g., air quality, water quality, and vegetation).	None.
Minerals (fluids, solids, and geothermal resources)	None.	None.
Water Resources	Ground-disturbance activities (affecting 62% of the total area in the peak construction year) could affect surface water quality due to surface runoff, sediment erosion, and contaminant spills.	Water resource analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be feasible; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures.
	Construction activities may require up to 1,707 ac-ft (2.1 million m ³) of water during the peak construction year.	Land disturbance activities should minimize impacts to the unnamed intermittent stream, the playa area in the northeast corner, and ephemeral washes on site.
	Construction activities would generate as high as 74 ac-ft (91,300 m ³) of sanitary wastewater.	

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Gold Point SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Water Resources (Cont.)	<p>Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would use the following amounts of water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For parabolic trough facilities (770-MW capacity), 550 to 1,166 ac-ft/yr (678,400 to 1.4 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; water requirements for wet-cooled systems are more than 10 times the perennial yield of the basin. • For power tower facilities (428-MW capacity), 305 to 647 ac-ft/yr (376,200 to 798,000 m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; water requirements for wet-cooled systems are more than 6 times the perennial yield of the basin. • For dish engine facilities (428-MW capacity), 219 ac-ft/yr (270,100 m³/yr). • For PV facilities (428-MW capacity), 22 ac-ft/yr (27,100 m³/yr). <p>Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would generate up to 11 ac-ft/yr (13,600 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater and up to 219 ac-ft/yr (270,100 m³/yr) of blowdown water.</p>	<p>Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid any areas identified as within a 100-year floodplain or jurisdictional waters.</p> <p>Groundwater supplies during the construction and operations phases would need to be secured through coordination of the NDWR in terms of obtaining groundwater rights with in the Lida Valley groundwater basin, and potentially from off-site sources and adjacent groundwater basins for the construction phase.</p> <p>Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.</p> <p>Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in accordance with state standards.</p> <p>Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water quality standards in accordance with the <i>Nevada Administrative Code</i>.</p>

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Gold Point SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation ^b	<p>Up to 80% of the SEZ (3,848 acres [15.6 km²]) would be cleared of vegetation; re-establishment of desert scrub communities in temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult because of the arid conditions and might require extended periods of time.</p> <p>Noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in widespread habitat degradation.</p> <p>The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition.</p> <p>Vegetation communities associated with playa habitats, greasewood flats, riparian habitats, desert dry washes, or other intermittently flooded areas within or downgradient from solar projects could be affected by ground-disturbing activities.</p> <p>The use of groundwater within the proposed Gold Point SEZ for technologies with high water requirements, such as wet-cooling systems, could disrupt the groundwater flow pattern and adversely affect habitats associated with springs in the vicinity of the SEZ.</p>	<p>An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan, addressing habitat restoration, should be approved and implemented to increase the potential for successful restoration of desert scrub, greasewood flat, and other affected habitats, and to minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species. Invasive species control should focus on biological and mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use of herbicides.</p> <p>All riparian, dry wash, and playa communities within the SEZ and transmission line corridor should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated. Any Joshua tree or other <i>Yucca</i> species, cacti, or succulent plant species that cannot be avoided should be salvaged. A buffer area should be maintained around dry wash, riparian, and playa habitats to reduce the potential for impacts.</p> <p>Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on dry wash, playa, wetland, greasewood flat, and riparian habitats, including downstream occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition to these habitats. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be determined through agency consultation.</p>

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Gold Point SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation (Cont.)		Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect impacts on habitats associated with springs. Potential impacts on springs should be determined through hydrological studies.
Wildlife: Amphibians and Reptiles ^b	Direct impacts on all representative amphibian and reptile species would be small (i.e., loss of 0.1% or less of potentially suitable habitats within the SEZ region). With the implementation of design features, indirect impacts would be expected to be negligible.	Development in wash and playa habitats should be avoided.
Wildlife: Birds ^b	<p>Direct impacts on all representative bird species would be small (i.e., loss of 0.2% or less of potentially suitable habitats within the SEZ region).</p> <p>Other impacts on birds could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., buildings and fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment.</p>	<p>The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds will be followed.</p> <p>Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.</p> <p>Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.</p>
Wildlife: Mammals ^b	<p>Direct impacts on all representative mammal species would be small (i.e., loss of 0.1% or less of potentially suitable habitats within the SEZ region).</p> <p>Other impacts on mammals could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment. These impacts are expected to be negligible with the implementation of design features.</p>	<p>The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free movement of mammals, particularly big game species.</p> <p>Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.</p>

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Gold Point SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Aquatic Biota ^b	<p>There are no permanent water bodies, streams, or wetlands present within the area of direct or indirect effects of either the proposed Gold Point SEZ or the presumed new transmission line corridor. Intermittent and ephemeral streams are present in the area of direct and indirect effects, and ground disturbance could increase the transport of soil into these streams via waterborne and airborne pathways. In addition, contaminants such as fuels, lubricants, or pesticides/herbicides could enter intermittent streams near construction activities. However, these streams are not expected to contain aquatic habitat or biota and do not connect to perennial surface waters. Therefore, no impacts on aquatic habitat or biota are expected.</p>	None.
Special Status Species ^b	<p>Potentially suitable habitat for 21 special status species occurs in the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ. For most special status species, less than 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region occurs in the area of direct effects.</p>	<p>Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the area of direct effects to determine the presence and abundance of special status species. Disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing impacts on occupied habitats is not possible for some species, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy for special status species that uses one or more of these options to offset the impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the appropriate federal and state agencies.</p> <p>Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash, playa, and sagebrush habitats could reduce or eliminate impacts on two special status species.</p>

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Gold Point SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Special Status Species ^b (Cont.)		<p>Coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW should be conducted for the greater sage-grouse—a candidate species for listing under the ESA. Coordination would identify an appropriate survey protocol and mitigation requirements, which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or compensation.</p> <p>Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the affected area should be avoided or minimized. This can be accomplished by identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.</p>
Air Quality and Climate	<p><i>Construction:</i> Temporary exceedances of AAQS for 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ and 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentration levels at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding areas during the construction of solar facilities. These concentrations would decrease quickly with distance. Modeling indicates that emissions from construction activities are not anticipated to exceed Class I PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearest federal Class I area (John Muir WA, California). In addition, construction emissions from the engine exhaust of heavy equipment and vehicles could affect AQRVs (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at nearby federal Class I areas.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> Positive impact due to avoided emissions of air pollutants from combustion-related power generation: 2.0 to 3.6% of total emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ from electric power systems in the state of Nevada (up to 1,902 tons/yr SO₂, 1,632 tons/yr NO_x, 0.011 ton/yr Hg, and 1,047,000 tons/yr CO₂).</p>	None.

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Gold Point SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Visual Resources	<p>The SEZ is in an area of low scenic quality, but with few cultural disturbances already present. Residents, workers, and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) as they travel area roads.</p> <p>Solar development could produce large visual impacts on the SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed due to major modification of the character of the existing landscape.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 7.0 mi (13.5 km) from Queer Mountain WSA. Because of the elevated viewpoints in the WSA, moderate visual contrasts could be observed by WSA visitors.</p> <p>The SEZ is located 5.0 mi (8 km) from Magruder Mountain. Because of the close proximity and elevated viewpoints on Magruder Mountain, moderate visual contrasts could be observed by viewers on the mountain.</p> <p>Approximately 18 mi (29 km) of State Route 266 are within the SEZ viewshed. Because State Route 266 passes with 2 mi (3 km) of the SEZ, strong visual contrasts would be expected for nearby viewpoints on this highway.</p> <p>The community of Gold Point is located less than 2 mi (3 km) from the SEZ, although slight variations in topography and buildings could provide limited screening. Because of the close proximity of the SEZ to Gold Point, strong visual contrasts would be expected for viewpoints within the community of Gold Point.</p>	None.

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Gold Point SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Acoustic Environment	<p><i>Construction:</i> For construction of a solar facility located near the southern SEZ boundary, estimated noise levels at the nearest residences located about 2 mi (3 km) from the SEZ boundary would be about 34 dBA, which is below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. In addition, an estimated 40 dBA L_{dn} at these residences (i.e., no contribution from construction activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> For operation of a parabolic trough or power tower facility located near the southern SEZ boundary, the predicted noise level would be about 36 dBA at the nearest residences, which is below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. If the operation were limited to daytime, 12 hours only, a noise level of about 41 dBA L_{dn} (i.e., minimal contribution from facility operation) would be estimated for the nearest residences, which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. However, in the case of 6-hour TES, the estimated noise level at the nearest residences would be 46 dBA, which is well above the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. The day-night average noise level is estimated to be about 48 dBA L_{dn}, which is below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p>If 80% of the SEZ were developed with dish engine facilities, the estimated noise level at the nearest residences would be about 43 dBA, which is somewhat higher than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. On the basis of 12-hour daytime operation, the estimated 43 dBA L_{dn} at these residences would be well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p>	<p>Noise levels from cooling systems equipped with TES should be managed so that levels at the nearby residences to the south of the SEZ are kept within applicable guidelines. This could be accomplished in several ways, for example, through placing the power block approximately 1 to 2 mi (1.6 to 3 km) or more from residences, limiting operations to a few hours after sunset, and/or installing fan silencers.</p> <p>Dish engine facilities within the Gold Point SEZ should be located more than 1 to 2 mi (1.6 to 3 km) from the nearby residences. Direct noise control measures applied to individual dish engine systems could also be used to reduce noise impacts at nearby residences.</p>

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Gold Point SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Paleontological Resources	<p>Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely in the proposed Gold Point SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of the SEZ is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted.</p> <p>The potential for impacts on significant paleontological resources in portions of the transmission line corridor is unknown. A paleontological survey may be needed prior to project approval.</p>	<p>The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features would depend on the results of future paleontological investigations, especially along a potential new transmission corridor.</p>
Cultural Resources	<p>Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed Gold Point SEZ; however, further investigation is needed. Sites related to historic mining in the region are possible. Visual impacts on the Gold Point Town Site are also likely.</p> <p>A cultural resource survey of the entire area of potential effect, including consultation with affected Native American Tribes, would first need to be conducted to identify archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and traditional cultural properties, and an evaluation would need to follow to determine whether any are eligible for listing in the NRHP.</p> <p>Impacts on several sites are possible along the transmission line route, depending on the specific location of the line. Visual impacts along the transmission corridor are also possible, potentially affecting the Goldfield Historic District.</p>	<p>SEZ-specific design features would be determined through consultation with the Nevada SHPO and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future cultural investigations.</p> <p>General visual mitigation measures may need to be employed to reduce visual impacts on the Gold Point Town Site near the SEZ and along the possible transmission line near the Goldfield Historic District.</p>
Native American Concerns	<p>While no comments specific to the proposed Gold Point SEZ have been received from Native American Tribes to date, as consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it is possible that Native Americans will express concern over potential visual and other effects of solar energy development within the SEZ on specific resources, including culturally important landscapes.</p>	<p>The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features would be determined during government-to-government consultation with the affected Tribes.</p>

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Gold Point SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Socioeconomics	<p><i>Construction:</i> A total 173 to 2,287 jobs would be added; ROI income would increase by \$10.5 million to \$138.9 million.</p> <p><i>Operations:</i> A total of 10 to 224 annual jobs would be added; ROI income would increase by \$0.3 million to \$7.6 million.</p> <p>Construction of new transmission line: 79 jobs; \$3.7 million income in ROI.</p>	None.
Environmental Justice	As defined in CEQ guidelines, no minority or low-income populations occur within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ; thus, there would be no disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on low-income or minority populations.	None.
Transportation	The primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day, with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum). The increase in the volume of traffic on U.S. 95, State Route 266, and State Route 774 would represent an increase in traffic of about 100%, 1,000%, and 10,000%, respectively. Traffic on U.S. 95 could experience slowdowns, and local road improvements would be necessary on State Route 266 and on State Route 774.	None.

Abbreviations: AAQS = ambient air quality standards; ACEC = Area of Critical Environmental Concern; AQRV = air quality–related value; BLM = Bureau of Land Management; BMP = best management practice; CEQ = Council on Environmental Quality; CO₂ = carbon dioxide; dBA = A-weighted decibel; EPA = U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; ESA = Endangered Species Act; Hg = mercury; L_{dn} = day-night average sound level; MTR = military training route; NDOW = Nevada Department of Wildlife; NDWR = Nevada Division of Water Resources; NNHP = Nevada Natural Heritage Program; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; NP = National Park; NRHP = *National Register of Historic Places*; PEIS = programmatic environmental impact statement; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 μm or less; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 μm or less; PSD = prevention of significant deterioration; PV = photovoltaic; ROI = region of influence; ROW = right-of-way; SEZ = solar energy zone; SHPO = State Historic Preservation Office; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; SRMA = Special Recreation Management Area; TES = thermal energy storage; USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; WA = Wilderness Area.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.6.1.3-1 (Cont.)

- ^a The detailed programmatic design features for each resource area to be required under BLM's Solar Energy Program are presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would be required for development in the proposed Gold Point SEZ.
- ^b The scientific names of all plants, wildlife, aquatic biota, and special status species are provided in Sections 11.6.10 through 11.6.12.

1 Only those design features specific to the proposed Gold Point SEZ are included
2 in Sections 11.6.2 through 11.6.21 and in the summary table. The detailed programmatic design
3 features for each resource area to be required under BLM's Solar Energy Program are presented
4 in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would also be required for
5 development in this and other SEZs.
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1 **11.6.2 Lands and Realty**

2
3
4 **11.6.2.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is a small but well-blocked area of BLM-administered
7 land that is isolated but accessible via U.S. 95 and connecting to State Routes 266 and 774. The
8 latter highway is within 0.25 mi (0.4 km) of the eastern border of the SEZ. The SEZ is located
9 about 180 mi (290 km) northwest from Las Vegas. The character of the land in the SEZ is
10 undeveloped and rural with only a few dirt roads present within the area. There are no existing
11 ROWs within the SEZ, but there is a designated 368b transmission corridor (of the Energy
12 Policy Act of 2005) that passes about 6.5 mi (10 km) to the northeast of the area. There also is
13 a proposed local corridor located just west of the 368b corridor.
14

15 As of February 2010, there were no ROW applications for solar energy facilities within
16 the SEZ.
17

18
19 **11.6.2.2 Impacts**

20
21
22 ***11.6.2.2.1 Construction and Operations***

23
24 Full development of the proposed Gold Point SEZ could disturb up to 3,848 acres
25 (15.6 km²) (Table 11.6.1.2-1). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production
26 would establish an industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the
27 land, perhaps in perpetuity. Since the SEZ is undeveloped and isolated, utility-scale solar energy
28 development would be a new and highly discordant land use to the area.
29

30 Should the proposed area be identified as a solar energy zone in the ROD for this PEIS,
31 the BLM would still have discretion to authorize additional ROWs in the area until solar energy
32 development was authorized, and then future ROWs would be subject to the rights issued for
33 solar energy development. Because the proposed SEZ is surrounded by BLM-administered
34 lands, approval of solar energy development of the SEZ would not have any impact on the
35 availability of land for future ROWs in the area.
36

37
38 ***11.6.2.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***

39
40 An existing 120 kV transmission line runs 22 mi (35 km) northeast of the SEZ. It is
41 assumed that a new transmission line segment would be constructed from the proposed Gold
42 Point SEZ to the nearest existing transmission line to connect the SEZ to the transmission grid.
43 Construction of the line would result in the disturbance of 667 acres (2.7 km²) outside of the
44 SEZ. If a connecting transmission line were constructed in a different location outside of the
45 SEZ in the future, site developers would need to determine the impacts from construction and

1 operation of that line. In addition, developers would need to determine the impacts of line
2 upgrades if they were needed.

3
4 State Route 774 is adjacent to the SEZ, and it is assumed that no new roads would be
5 required to access the site.

6
7 Roads and transmission lines would be constructed within the SEZ as part of the
8 development of the area.

9
10
11 **11.6.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

12
13 No SEZ-specific design features would be required. Implementing the programmatic
14 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
15 Program, would provide adequate mitigation for some identified impacts. The exceptions would
16 be that the development of the SEZ would establish a large industrial area that would exclude
17 many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity and utility-scale solar energy
18 development would be a new and discordant land use to the area.

1 **11.6.3 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**
2
3

4 **11.6.3.1 Affected Environment**
5

6 There are 9 specially designated areas within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Gold Point
7 SEZ that potentially could be affected by solar energy development within the SEZ, principally
8 from impacts on scenic, recreation, and/or wilderness resources. The potential area of impact for
9 the SEZ includes parts of Nevada and California. The specially designated areas that could be
10 impacted from solar development within the SEZ include the following (see Figure 11.6.3.1-1):
11

- 12 • National Park
 - 13 – Death Valley
- 14
- 15 • National Conservation Area
 - 16 – California Desert
- 17
- 18 • Wilderness Areas
 - 19 – Death Valley
 - 20 – Piper Mountain
 - 21 – Sylvania Mountains
- 22
- 23 • Wilderness Study Areas
 - 24 – Pigeon Spring
 - 25 – Queer Mountain
 - 26 – Grapevine Mountains
- 27
- 28 • Special Recreation Management Area
 - 29 – Fish Lake Valley
- 30

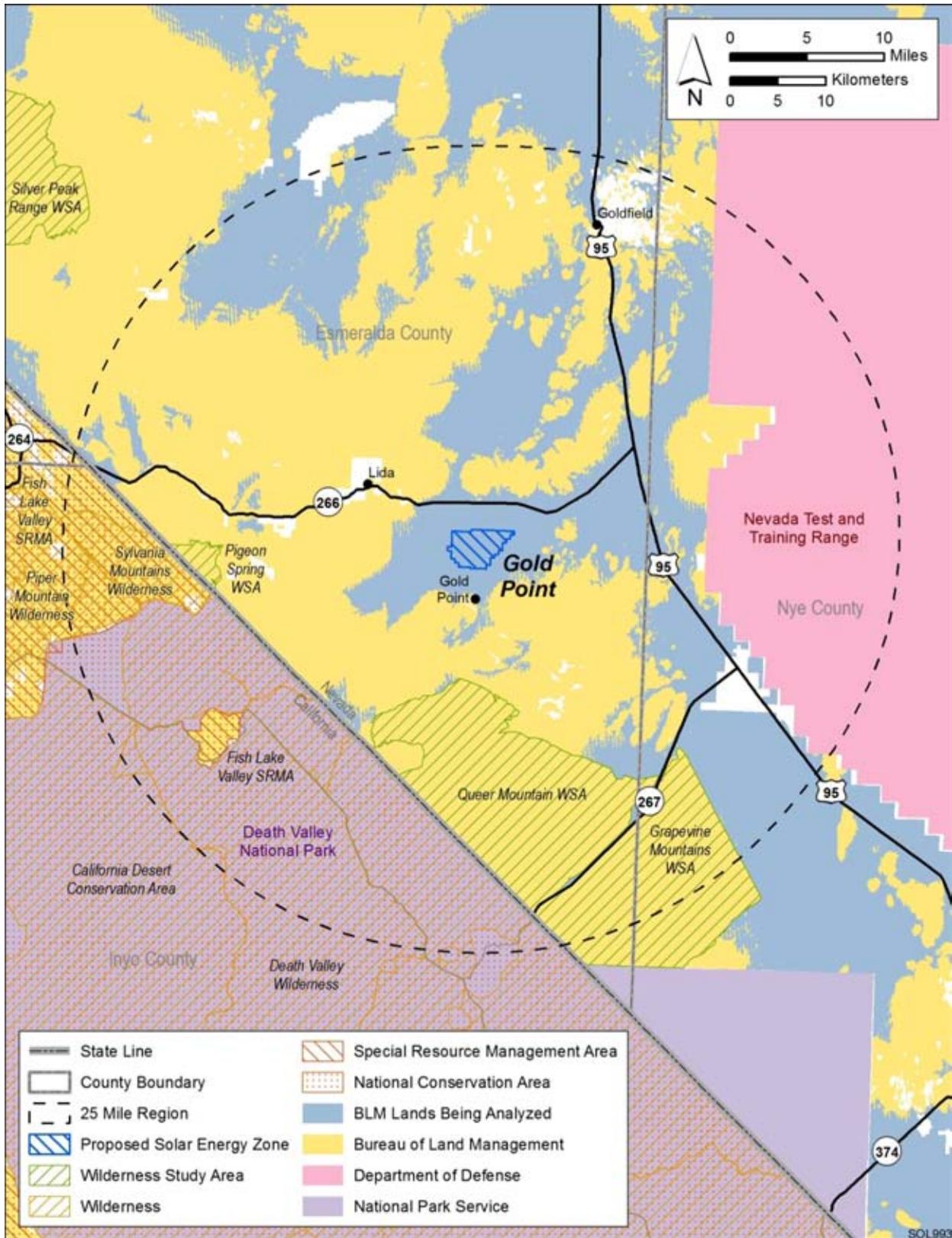
31 Although they are within the 25-mi (40-km) radius of the visual analysis area, both the
32 Piper Mountain and Sylvania Mountains WAs and the Grapevine Mountains WSA have no
33 visibility of potential development within the SEZ; thus they are not considered further.
34

35 No lands near the SEZ and outside of designated WAs or WSAs have been identified by
36 the BLM to be managed to protect wilderness characteristics.
37
38

39 **11.6.3.2 Impacts**
40
41

42 ***11.6.3.2.1 Construction and Operations***
43

44 The primary potential impacts on specially designated areas generally are from visual
45 impacts of solar energy development that could affect scenic, recreational, or wilderness
46 characteristics of the areas. This visual impact is difficult to determine and would vary by solar
47 technology employed, the specific area being affected, and the perception of individuals viewing



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.6.3.1-1 Specially Designated Areas in the Vicinity of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ**

1 the development. From viewshed analysis, it appears that solar development of the proposed
 2 Gold Point SEZ would not be a significant factor in the viewshed of any of these specially
 3 designated areas, as summarized in Table 11.6.3.2-1. Five of the specially designated areas
 4 would have no significant acreage with visibility of development within the SEZ closer than
 5 15 mi (24 km). The data provided in the table assume the use of 650-ft (98.1-m) power tower
 6 solar energy technology, which because of the potential height of these facilities, could be
 7 visible from the largest amount of land of the technologies being considered in the PEIS. (See
 8 Section 11.6.14 for more detail on all viewshed analysis discussed in this section). Assessment of
 9 the visual impact of solar energy projects must be conducted on a site-specific and technology-
 10 specific basis to accurately identify impacts.

11
 12 In general, the closer a viewer is to solar development, the greater the impact on an
 13 individual's perception. From a visual analysis perspective, the most sensitive viewing distances
 14 generally are from 0 to 5 mi (0 to 8 km). The viewing height above a solar energy development
 15 area, the size of the solar development area, and the purpose for which a person is visiting an
 16 area are also important. Individuals seeking a wilderness or scenic experience within these areas
 17
 18

TABLE 11.6.3.2-1 Potentially Affected Specially Designated Areas within a 25-mi (40-km) Viewshed of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ^a

Feature Type	Feature Name (Total Acreage) ^b	Feature Area ^c		
		Visible within 5 mi	Visible between	
			5 mi and 15 mi	15 mi and 25 mi
National Park	Death Valley (3,397,062 acres)	0 acres	67 acres (0%)	3,814 acres (0.11%)
National Conservation Area	California Desert (25,919,319 acres)	0 acres	67 acres (0%)	4,265 acres (0.02%)
WAs	Death Valley (3,074,256 acres)	0 acres	67 acres (0%)	3,774 acres (0.12%)
WSAs	Pigeon Spring (3,651 acres)	0 acres	0 acres (0%)	8 acres (0.21%)
	Queer Mountain (85,294 acres)	0 acres	1,276 acres	1,276 acres (0.23%)
SRMA	Fish Lake Valley (196,811 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	460 (0.23%)

^a Assuming power tower solar technology with a height of 650 ft (198.1 m).

^b To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047. To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.

^c Percentage of total feature acreage viewable.

1 could be expected to be more adversely affected than those simply traveling along a highway
2 with another destination in mind.

3
4 The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could potentially cause large though
5 temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities. The visual contrast levels
6 projected for sensitive visual resource areas that were used to assess potential impacts on
7 specially designated areas do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these
8 effects would be incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be
9 conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects.

10
11
12 ***California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA), Death Valley National Park,***
13 ***and Death Valley Wilderness Area.***

14
15 These areas are all located in California, and the state line is about 12.5 mi (20 km)
16 southwest of the SEZ. The three areas overlap one another in this area; the WA is within the
17 National Park, which is within the CDCA.

18
19 Solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible from the summits and northeast-facing
20 slopes of higher peaks in the area surrounding Last Chance Mountain in the northern portion of
21 Death Valley NP, at a distance of about 16 to 18 mi (26 to 29 km) from the SEZ. This area with
22 visibility encompasses about 4,000 acres (16 km²); however, visibility in about one-third of the
23 area would be restricted only to taller solar facility components, such as transmission towers and
24 power towers. Some viewpoints would have clear, but long-distance, views of the SEZ, but the
25 SEZ would occupy only a very small part of the horizontal field of view, and the vertical viewing
26 angle would be very low, despite the elevated viewpoints. Furthermore, most of the area has
27 scattered vegetation, and some views of the SEZ could therefore be subject to screening. Three
28 additional small areas with visibility of the SEZ exist at distances from 14 to 20 mi (23 to 30 km)
29 from the SEZ. The largest of these areas is less than 200 acres (0.8 km²) in size, and in these
30 smaller areas, visibility would be limited to the upper portions of tall power towers in the SEZ.
31 Visual contrast levels caused by solar facilities within the SEZ for viewpoints within all of the
32 areas described would not be expected to exceed very weak levels. For that reason, it is
33 anticipated that there would be no adverse impacts on wilderness, scenic, or recreational
34 resources within these three specially designated areas.

35
36 Because of the lack of development in the immediate region of the SEZ, the night sky
37 is very dark. The NPS has identified the concern that solar facility development in the region
38 adjacent to Death Valley NP could adversely affect the quality of the night sky environment as
39 viewed from the park. The amount of light that could emanate from this relatively small SEZ is
40 not known, but it could adversely affect night sky viewing from limited portions of the National
41 Park and the adjoining wilderness and other specially designated areas.

42
43
44 ***Queer Mountain WSA***

45
46 The boundary of this WSA is directly south of the SEZ at a distance of 7 mi (11 km) at
47 the closest point of approach. At a distance of about 10 mi (16 km) from the SEZ, solar facilities

1 in the SEZ could be visible from about 1,400 acres (5.7 km²) within the WSA on summits and
2 north-facing slopes of Gold Mountain and some ridges to the west of Gold Mountain in the
3 northern portion of the area. From the highest peaks and ridges in those portions of the WSA
4 that have views of the SEZ, the ridges of Slate Ridge screen portions of the SEZ from view;
5 however, from some viewpoints most of the SEZ would be visible, and the SEZ would occupy a
6 moderate amount of the horizontal field of view. The vertical angle of view is low, but high
7 enough that the tops of collector/reflector arrays within the SEZ would likely be visible. From
8 these very high-elevation viewpoints, visual contrast levels from solar facilities could potentially
9 reach moderate levels; for lower-elevation viewpoints, very weak or weak levels of visual
10 contrast would be expected. Because of these levels of contrast and the distance from the SEZ, it
11 is anticipated that there would be no adverse impact on wilderness characteristics in the WSA.
12
13

14 ***Pigeon Spring WSA***

15
16 This WSA is 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ. Because of topographic screening, only a
17 very small area within the WSA about 16 mi (26 km) from the westernmost boundary of the SEZ
18 would have any visibility of development in the SEZ. Because of the long distance view and
19 very low contrast levels from solar energy facilities, it is anticipated that there would be no
20 impact on wilderness characteristics within the WSA.
21
22

23 ***Fish Lake Valley SRMA***

24
25 The BLM-administered Fish Lake Valley SRMA is located within the CDCA and is
26 surrounded by Death Valley NP and Death Valley WA and is composed of two areas that are
27 about 6 mi (10 km) apart. The nearest boundary of the southern, smaller area of the SRMA is
28 located about 17 mi (27 km) southwest of the SEZ and is surrounded by designated wilderness
29 within Death Valley NP. This portion of the SRMA is not designated as wilderness.
30

31 The nearest boundary of the larger northern portion of the SRMA is west of the SEZ
32 about 16 mi (26 km). This portion of the SRMA contains the Sylvania Mountains and Piper
33 Mountain WAs, the White Mountains WSA, and some undesignated public lands. Although
34 almost all of the Sylvania Mountains, a portion of the Piper Mountain WAs, and some public
35 lands are within the 25-mi (40-km) visual analysis area surrounding the SEZ this portion of the
36 SRMA has no areas with views of the SEZ; thus there would be no impact from solar energy
37 development.
38

39 Within the smaller portion of the SRMA, there is very limited visibility of the SEZ from
40 less than 500 acres (2 km²) of the northeast-facing slopes of a few of the higher peaks in the
41 area, at an approximate distance of 18 to 19 mi (29 to 31 km) from the SEZ. Land surface
42 within the SEZ would not be visible from this area, but the upper portions of power towers
43 and transmission towers located in the far northern portion of the SEZ might just be visible
44 over intervening mountains. It is unlikely that the solar facilities would be seen by casual
45 viewers, and even if they were, expected visual contrast levels would be minimal. It is

1 anticipated that there would be no impact on recreational use in this portion of the SRMA
2 from development within the SEZ.

3 4 5 **11.6.3.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**

6
7 See Section 11.6.2.2.2 for the assumptions regarding the construction of new
8 transmission facilities. Depending on their location and visibility, new transmission facilities
9 could potentially cause additional visual impacts on the specially designated areas listed above.
10 However, because of the limited amount of area with visibility of the transmission line route and
11 the distance to the route, it is not anticipated that the impacts would be significant.

12
13 There would be no impacts outside of the SEZ to provide for road access to the area.

14 15 16 **11.6.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

17
18 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
19 as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would provide adequate mitigation for some
20 potential impacts.

21
22 A proposed design feature specific to the Gold Point SEZ includes:

- 23
24 • Transmission line construction should be routed and constructed in such a
25 way as to minimize visual impacts on specially designated areas.
26

1 **11.6.4 Rangeland Resources**

2
3
4 **11.6.4.1 Livestock Grazing**

5
6 Rangeland resources managed by the BLM on BLM-administered lands include livestock
7 grazing and habitat for wild horses and burros. These resources and possible impacts on them
8 from solar development within the proposed Gold Point SEZ are discussed in Sections 11.6.4.1
9 and 11.6.4.2.

10
11
12 **11.6.4.1.1 Affected Environment**

13
14 One grazing allotment overlaps the proposed SEZ—the large Magruder Mountain
15 allotment. The allotment contains 667,139 acres (2,700 km²) of public and private lands and has
16 an active grazing authorization of 6,300 AUMs (BLM 2009c). A total of 4,810 acres (19 km²),
17 or 0.7%, of the allotment is within the SEZ.

18
19
20 **11.6.4.1.2 Impacts**

21
22
23 **Construction and Operations**

24
25 Should utility-scale solar development occur in the Gold Point SEZ, grazing would be
26 excluded from the areas developed, as provided for in the BLM grazing regulations (43 CFR
27 Part 4100). The regulations provide for reimbursement of permittees for their portion of the
28 value for any range improvements in the area removed from the grazing allotment. The impact of
29 this change in the grazing permits would depend on several factors, including (1) how much of
30 an allotment the permittee might lose to development, (2) how important the specific land lost is
31 to the permittee’s overall operation, and (3) the amount of actual forage production that would be
32 lost by the permittee.

33
34 Since less than 1% of the Magruder Mountain allotment overlaps the SEZ, the loss of this
35 small amount of area is anticipated to have no impact on grazing use because the loss of use from
36 the SEZ likely could be absorbed elsewhere in the allotment.

37
38
39 **Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**

40
41 Connecting the SEZ to the regional power grid would require the construction of about
42 22 mi (35 km) of new transmission line and would disturb about 667 acres (2.7 km²) allocated in
43 the Magruder Mountain allotment. This additional loss of land also would not be significant for
44 the operation of the allotment.

1 There would be no impacts outside of the SEZ to provide for road access to the area. See
2 Section 11.6.1.2 regarding development assumptions for the SEZ.
3
4

5 ***11.6.4.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness*** 6

7 No SEZ-specific design features are required to protect livestock grazing. Implementing
8 the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under
9 BLM's Solar Energy Program, would provide adequate protection for livestock grazing.
10
11

12 **11.6.4.2 Wild Horses and Burros** 13 14

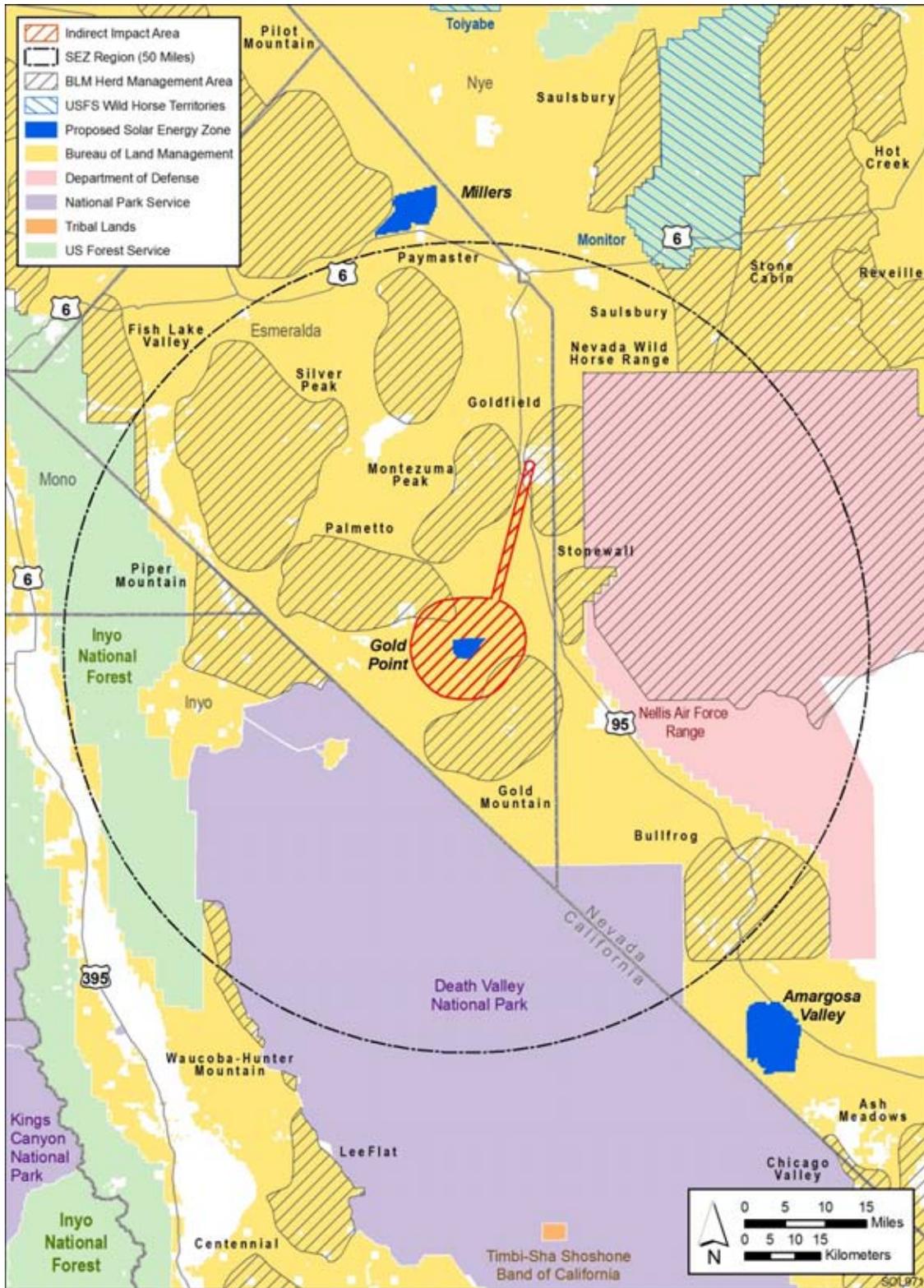
15 ***11.6.4.2.1 Affected Environment*** 16

17 Section 4.4.2 discusses wild horses (*Equus caballus*) and burros (*E. asinus*) that occur
18 within the six-state study area. Nearly 100 wild horse and burro herd management areas (HMAs)
19 occur within Nevada (BLM 2009d). Ten HMAs in Nevada are located wholly or partially within
20 the 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region for the proposed Gold Point SEZ, while two HMAs in California
21 also occur partially or wholly within the SEZ region (BLM 2010) (Figure 11.6.4.2-1). None of
22 the HMAs occur within the SEZ. Portions of the Palmetto and Gold Mountain HMAs occur
23 within the indirect impact area of the SEZ. They are located 2.2 and 2.9 mi (3.5 and 4.7 km),
24 respectively, from the SEZ. In FY 2009, no wild horses or burros occurred in the Palmetto HMA.
25 Six wild horses and one wild burro occurred in the Gold Mountain HMA in FY 2009; the
26 appropriate management levels were no wild horses and 78 wild burros (BLM 2010a). The
27 Goldfield HMA occurs within the assumed transmission line corridor for the proposed Gold
28 Point SEZ (Figure 11.6.4.2-1). In FY 2009, the Goldfield HMA contained a population of 8 wild
29 horses and 20 wild burros and had an appropriate management level of no wild horses and 37
30 wild burros (BLM 2010a).
31

32 In addition to the HMAs managed by the BLM, the USFS has wild horse and burro
33 territories in Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah and is the lead management
34 agency that administers 37 of the territories (Giffen 2009; USFS 2007). The closest territory to
35 the proposed Gold Point SEZ is the Monitor Territory, located about 51 mi (82 km) north of the
36 Gold Point SEZ (Figure 11.6.4.2-1).
37
38

39 ***11.6.4.2.2 Impacts*** 40

41 Because the proposed Gold Point SEZ is about 2.2 mi (3.5 km) or more from any wild
42 horse and burro HMA managed by the BLM and about 51 mi (82 km) from any wild horse and
43 burro territory administered by the USFS, solar energy development within the SEZ would not
44 directly affect wild horses and burros that are managed by these agencies. Indirect impacts on
45 wild horses and burros within the Gold Mountain HMA could result from fugitive dust generated
46 by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment.
47 Indirect impacts would be negligible with the implementation of design features.



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FIGURE 11.6.4.2-1 Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas and Territories within the Analysis Area for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ (Sources: BLM 2009d, 2010a; USFS 2007)

1 About 904 acres (3.7 km²) of the assumed transmission line corridor for the Gold Point
2 SEZ occurs within the 62,367-acre (252.4-km²) Goldfield HMA (Figure 11.6.4.2-1).
3 Construction of the transmission line would result in a direct impact on 43 acres (0.2 km²), or
4 about 0.07%, of the HMA. This would result in a small temporary direct impact on the wild
5 horses and burros within the HMA and would not have an overall adverse impact on the
6 management of the animals within the Goldfield HMA. Following construction, wild horses and
7 burros would be able to use the rangelands within the transmission line ROW. Indirect impacts,
8 as discussed above, could also be incurred by the wild horses and burros within the SEZ. These
9 impacts would be negligible with the implementation of programmatic design features.

10 11 12 ***11.6.4.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

13
14 No SEZ-specific design features for solar development within the proposed Gold Point
15 SEZ would be necessary to protect or minimize direct impacts on wild horses and burros.
16 Indirect impacts should be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic design
17 features and engineering controls that reduce noise lighting, spills, and fugitive dust.
18

1 **11.6.5 Recreation**

2
3
4 **11.6.5.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The site of the proposed Gold Point SEZ is an isolated area with no natural features that
7 invite recreational use. The area is flat but gently sloping to the northeast, with much gravel
8 pavement and uniform low-growing vegetation consisting primarily of shadscale, greasewood,
9 and winterfat, with some Indian ricegrass. The overall appearance of the site is uniform and
10 somewhat monotonous. There are a few scattered dirt trails that provide access into the area. The
11 area is classified as open to vehicle use (BLM 1997). Although there are no recreation figures for
12 the area, it is believed that the area receives no significant recreational use.

13
14
15 **11.6.5.2 Impacts**

16
17
18 **Construction and Operations**

19
20 Any recreational use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ developed for solar
21 energy production, and existing recreational users would be displaced. The area is not a major
22 recreation destination, and the loss of recreational opportunities would not be significant. If open
23 OHV routes within the SEZ were identified during project-specific analyses, these routes would
24 be re-designated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for more details on how routes coinciding with
25 proposed solar facilities would be treated). The SEZ is relatively small and there are good roads
26 around the north and east sides of the SEZ; thus solar development within the SEZ would not
27 cause the public to be hindered from accessing other public lands in the area.

28
29
30 **Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**

31
32 The construction of about 22 mi (35 km) of new transmission line and would disturb
33 about 667 acres (2.7 km²) northeast of the SEZ. This additional land disturbance would not be
34 anticipated to have a significant impact on recreation use.

35
36 There would be no impacts outside of the SEZ caused by road construction to provide
37 road access to the area.

38
39
40 **11.6.5.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

41
42 No SEZ-specific design features to protect recreational use in the area are required.
43 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as
44 required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would provide adequate mitigation for recreation
45 resources.

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1 **11.6.6 Military and Civilian Aviation**
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4 **11.6.6.1 Affected Environment**
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6 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located under numerous MTRs, one of which can be
7 used down to 100 ft (30 m) AGL. The area is also located between two MOAs. The area is
8 located within a zone identified in BLM land records as a DoD Consultation Area.
9

10 The nearest public airport is the Lida Junction Airport, a small BLM airport about 10 mi
11 (16 km) from the SEZ at the junction of State Route 266 and U.S. 95. The airport has a single
12 dirt runway and has no regularly scheduled use.
13

14
15 **11.6.6.2 Impacts**
16

17 The military has expressed serious concern over solar energy facilities being constructed
18 within the Gold Point SEZ. It is especially concerned over the potential use of power tower
19 facilities. Nellis Air Force Base has indicated that it has concerns for its use of the MTRs
20 because of potential overflight restrictions above a solar energy facility caused by the height
21 of solar facilities, possible restrictions on hydrocarbon or residue from fuel burn by aircraft,
22 possible glare from reflective surfaces, and any potential restrictions on supersonic operations
23 over solar facilities. The NTTR has indicated that solar technologies requiring structures higher
24 than 50 ft (15 m) AGL may present unacceptable electromagnetic compatibility concerns for its
25 test mission at NTTR. The NTTR maintains that a pristine testing environment is required for
26 the unique national security missions conducted on the NTTR. In the military's opinion, the
27 potential electromagnetic interference impacts from solar facilities on testing activities at the
28 NTTR, coupled with potential training route obstructions created by taller structures, make it
29 likely that solar facilities exceeding 50 ft (50 m) could significantly affect military operations.
30

31 The Air Force has stated that the NTTR complex is unique in the world in its ability to
32 provide realistic training of air crews. In addition to the effect of individual solar energy
33 facilities, there is a more general concern over the potential for cumulative effects from multiple
34 solar energy projects around the NTTR to eventually have a serious adverse effect on the training
35 environment of the NTTR.
36

37 The Lida Junction Airport is located far enough away from the proposed SEZ that there
38 would be no effect on airport operations. Any solar or related facilities in excess of 199 ft (61 m)
39 would require an FAA evaluation of flight hazards and could require hazard marking lights.
40

41
42 **11.6.6.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
43

44 No SEZ-specific design features to protect military or civilian aviation use in the area are
45 required. The programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, would
46 require early coordination with the DoD to identify and mitigate, if possible, potential impacts on
47 the use of MTRs.
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1 **11.6.7 Geologic Setting and Soil Resources**

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4 **11.6.7.1 Affected Environment**

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6
7 **11.6.7.1.1 Geologic Setting**

8
9
10 **Regional Setting**

11
12 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in the southern part of Lida Valley, a closed
13 intermontane basin within the Basin and Range physiographic province in southern Nevada. The
14 southern part of the valley lies between the Mount Jackson Ridge and Cuprite Hills to the north
15 and Slate Ridge to the south. It is bounded on the west by the Palmetto Mountains and on the
16 east by the Stonewall Mountains (Figure 11.6.7.1-1).

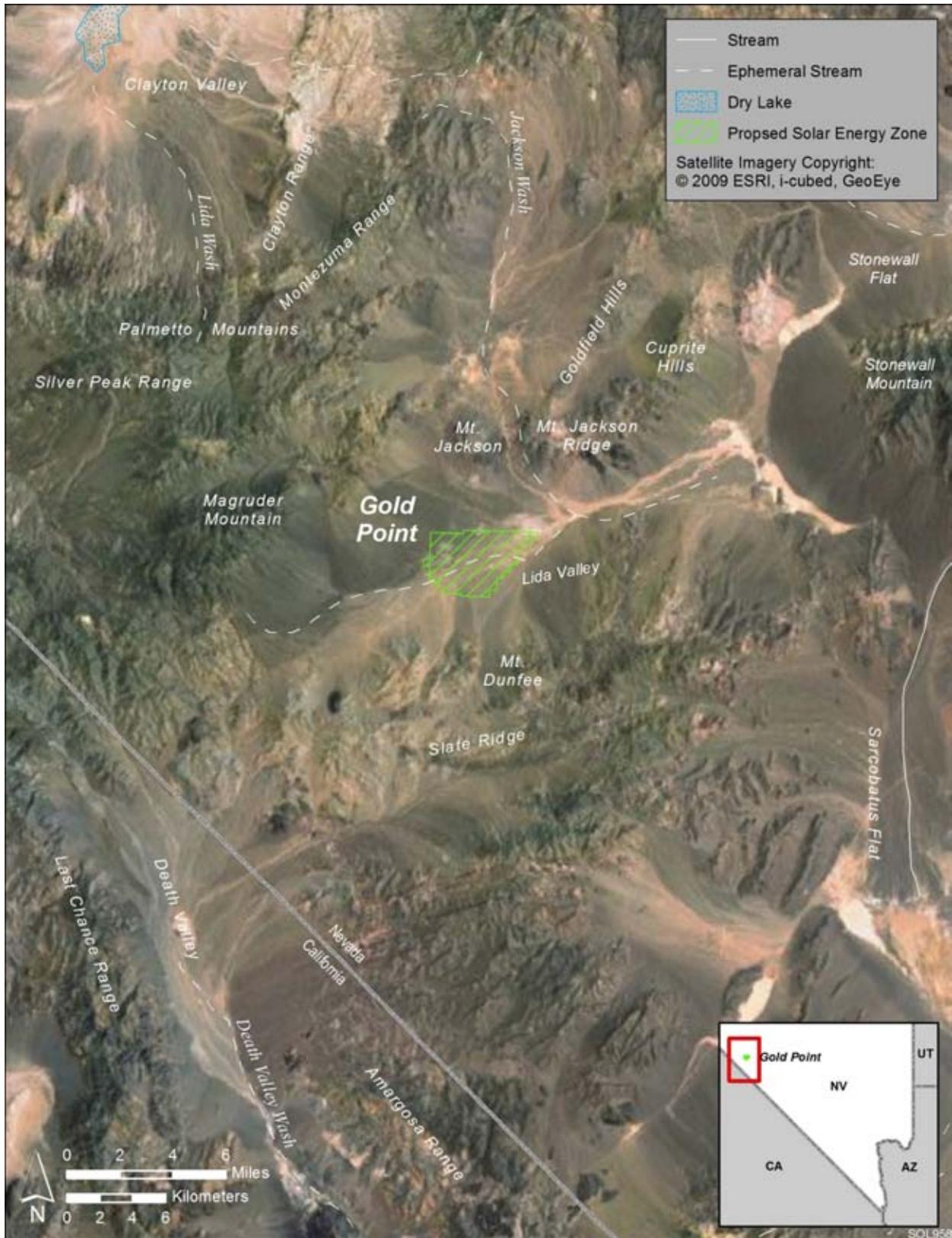
17
18 Basin fill consists of Quaternary and Tertiary alluvial fan and playa deposits of variable
19 thickness and induration. Recent gravity surveys in the southern part of Lida Valley indicate
20 that basin-fill sediments are up to 570 ft (175 m) thick near Stonewall Pass, just west of I-95,
21 increasing northward to greater than 1,640 ft (500 m) near the alkali flat (Hasbrouck 2010a,b).

22
23 Exposed sediments within and adjacent to the proposed SEZ consist mainly of modern
24 alluvial, eolian, and playa deposits (Figure 11.6.7.1-2). Exposures in the surrounding mountains
25 are predominantly Jurassic- and Cretaceous-age felsic intrusive rocks (diorite and granite),
26 especially along Slate Ridge south and southwest of the SEZ. Paleozoic and Precambrian
27 metamorphic rocks are exposed in the Palmetto Mountains and along Slate Ridge.

28
29
30 **Topography**

31
32 The southern part of Lida Valley (south of Mount Jackson Ridge) is a northeast-trending
33 basin, about 20-mi (32-km) long and 7-mi (11-km) wide. Elevations along the valley axis range
34 from about 5,300 ft (1,615 m) near the southwest end and along the valley sides to about 4,700 ft
35 (1,430 m) at the northeastern end of the valley (Figure 11.6.7.1-1). Moderately sloping alluvial
36 fan deposits occur along the mountain fronts, especially to the northwest (Palmetto Mountains)
37 and northeast (Stonewall Mountains). The valley is drained by the Jackson Wash, an ephemeral
38 stream that flows from Jackson Flat (through a breach in Mount Jackson Ridge) to an alkali flat
39 at the valley's northeastern end and then on to the south toward Sarcobatus Flat. The alkali flat
40 (also called the Lida Valley playa) is being explored as a source of lithium placer deposits (First
41 Liberty Power 2010).

42
43 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in the southern part of Lida Valley. Its
44 terrain gently slopes to the northeast. Elevations range from about 5,040 ft (1,535 m)
45 along the southwestern boundary to about 4,840 ft (1,475 m) at its northeastern corner
46 (Figure 11.6.7.1-3). Jackson Wash flows to the northeast through the center of the site.



1

2 **FIGURE 11.6.7.1-1 Physiographic Features of the Lida Valley Region**

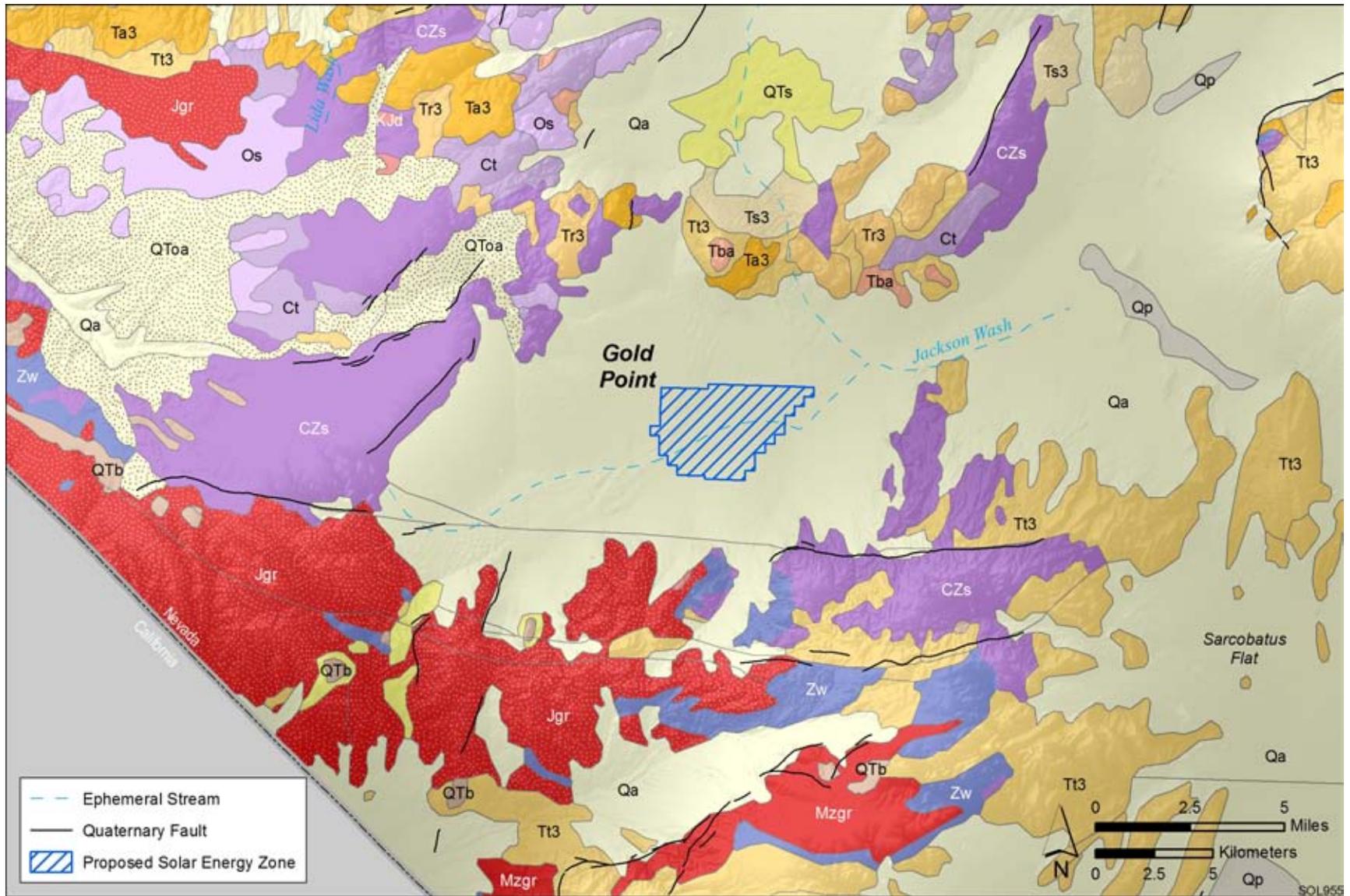


FIGURE 11.6.7.1-2 Geologic Map of the Lida Valley Region (Ludington et al. 2007; Stewart and Carlson 1978)

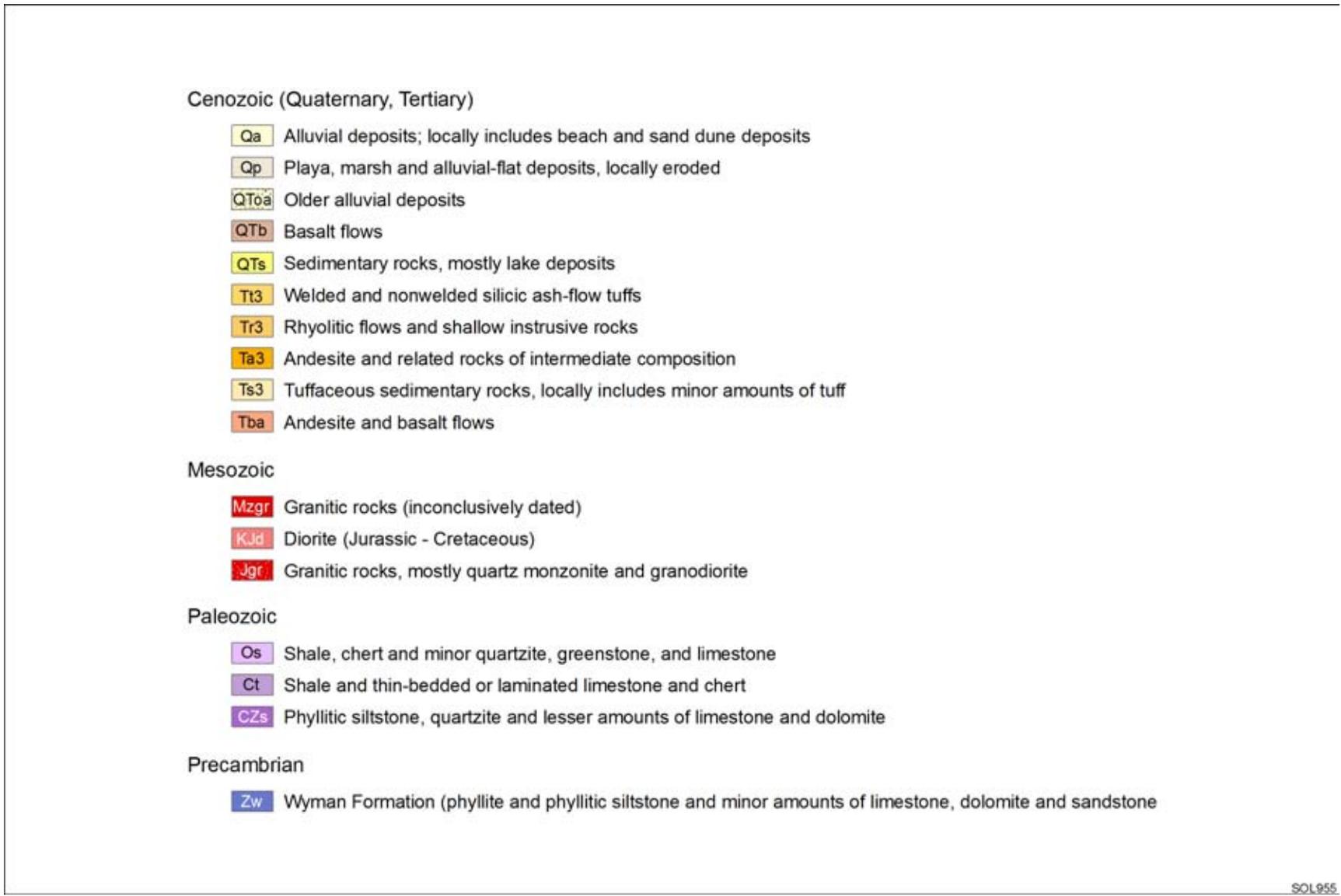
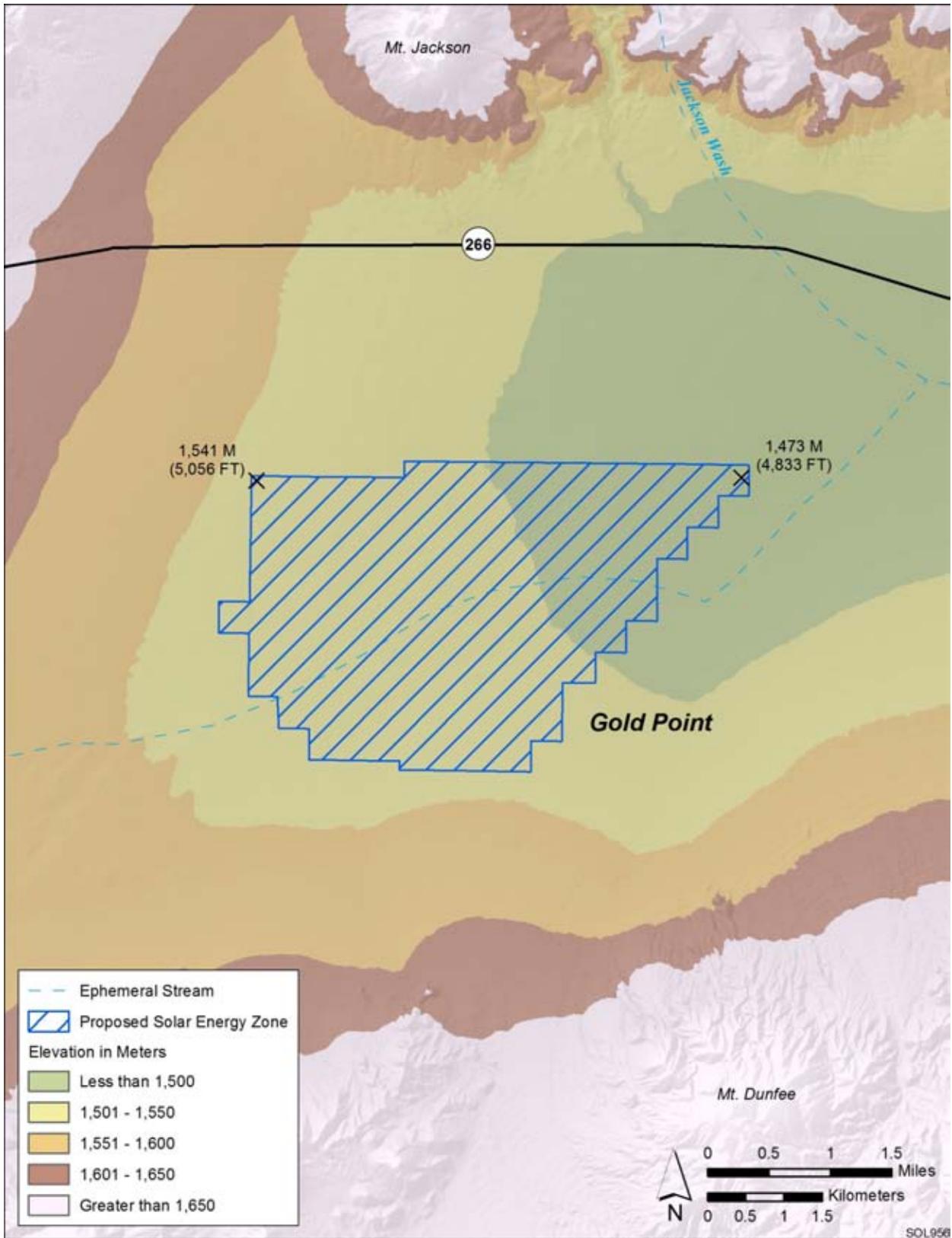


FIGURE 11.6.7.1-2 (Cont.)



1

2 **FIGURE 11.6.7.1-3 General Terrain of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ**

1 **Geologic Hazards**
2

3 The types of geologic hazards that could potentially affect solar project sites and their
4 mitigation are discussed in Section 5.7.3. The following sections provide a preliminary
5 assessment of these hazards at the proposed Gold Point SEZ. Solar project developers may need
6 to conduct a geotechnical investigation to identify and assess geologic hazards locally to better
7 identify facility design criteria and site-specific mitigation measures to minimize their risk.
8

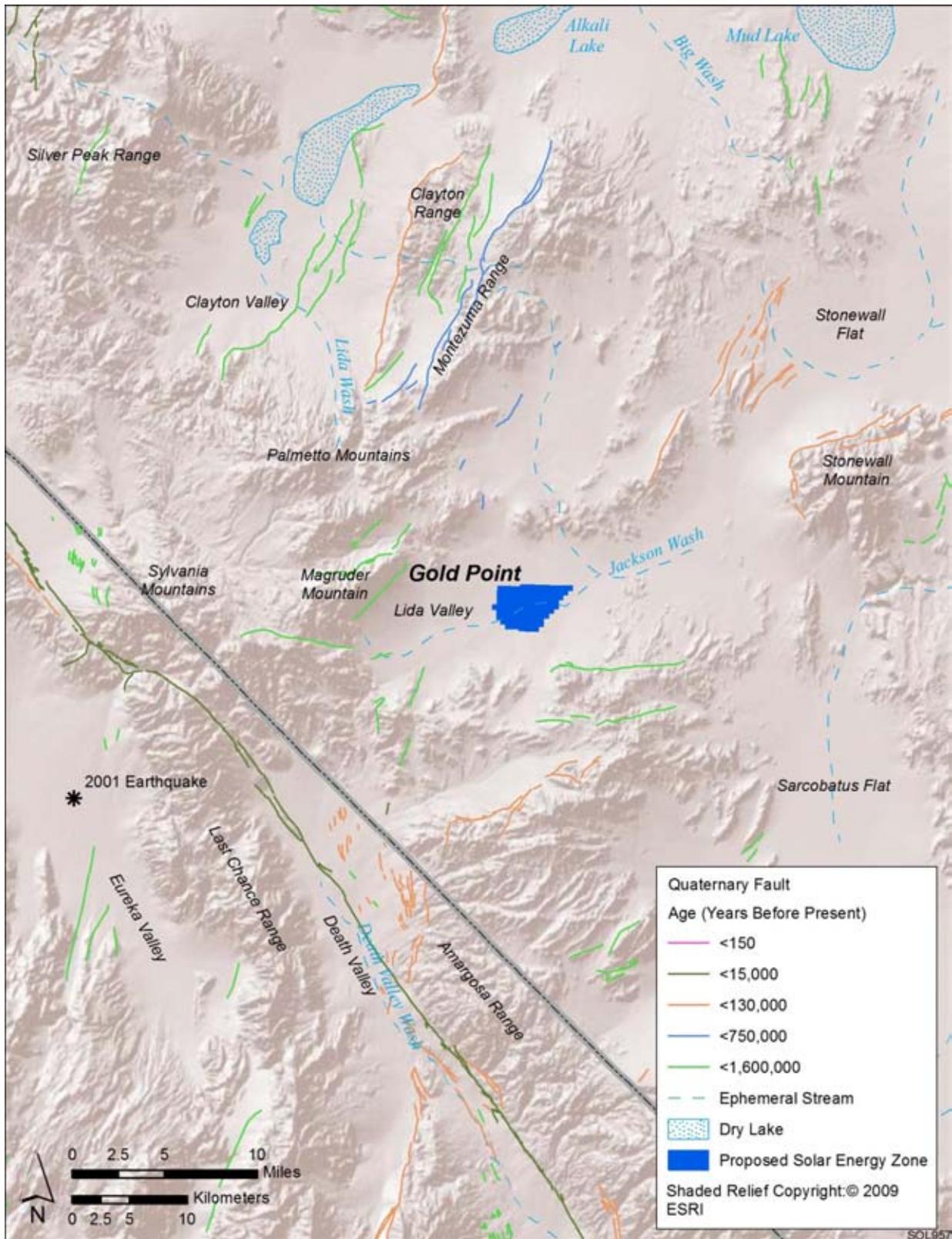
9
10 **Seismicity.** Lida Valley is located within the Walker Lane Belt, a northwest-trending
11 seismic region along the Nevada–California border that accommodates (right-lateral shear) strain
12 from movement between the Pacific and North American plates. Although there are no faults
13 within or immediately adjacent to the Gold Point SEZ, several Quaternary faults and fault
14 systems occur along the margins of Lida Valley. These include the Gold Mountain and Slate
15 Ridge faults to the south, Wild Rose Spring and Lida faults to the west, and Stonewall Flat and
16 Stonewall Mountain faults to the northeast. The most recently active faults in the region are
17 within the northwest-striking Fish Lake Valley fault zone (less than 15,000 years old), located in
18 California, parallel to the California–Nevada state line (Figure 11.6.7.1-4).
19

20 From June 1, 2000, to May 31, 2010, 107 earthquakes were recorded within a 61-mi
21 (100-km) radius of the proposed Gold Point SEZ (USGS 2010a). The largest earthquake
22 during that period occurred on August 2, 2001. It was located about 26 mi (43 km) southwest
23 of the SEZ in the Eureka Valley (California) and registered a Richter scale magnitude¹ (ML)
24 of 4.3 (Figure 11.6.7.1-4). During this period, 45 (42%) of the recorded earthquakes within a
25 61-mi (100-km) radius of the SEZ had magnitudes greater than 3.0; none were greater than 4.3
26 (USGS 2010a).
27

28
29 **Liquefaction.** The proposed Gold Point SEZ lies within an area where the peak
30 horizontal acceleration with a 10% probability of exceedance in 50 years is between 0.15 and
31 0.20 g. Shaking associated with this level of acceleration is generally perceived as moderate;
32 however, the potential damage to structures is light (USGS 2008). Given the deep water table
33 (from 300 to 400 ft [91 to 122 m] below the surface [USGS 2010c]) and the low intensity of
34 ground shaking estimated for Lida Valley, the potential for liquefaction in sediments within and
35 around the SEZ is also likely to be low.
36

37
38 **Volcanic Hazards.** Lida Valley is located about 60 mi (90 km) to the west-northwest of
39 the southwestern Nevada volcanic field, which consists of volcanic rocks (tuffs and lavas) of the
40 Timber Mountain-Oasis Valley caldera complex and Silent Canyon and Black Mountain
41 calderas. The area has been studied extensively because of its proximity to the Nevada Test Site

¹ Richter scale magnitude (ML) was the original magnitude defined by Richter and Gutenberg for local earthquakes in 1935. It was based on the maximum amplitude recorded on a Wood-Anderson torsion seismograph but is currently calculated for earthquakes with magnitudes ranging from 2 to 6, using modern instruments with adjustments (USGS 2010b).



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.6.7.1-4 Quaternary Faults in the Lida Valley Region (USGS and NBMG 2010;**
 3 **USGS 2010a)**

1 and Yucca Mountain repository. Two types of fields are present in the region: (1) large-volume,
2 long-lived fields with a range of basalt types associated with more silicic volcanic rocks
3 produced by melting of the lower crust, and (2) small-volume fields formed by scattered basaltic
4 scoria cones during brief cycles of activity, called rift basalts because of their association with
5 extensional structural features. The basalts of the region typically belong to the second group;
6 examples include the basalts of Silent Canyon and Sleeping Butte (Byers et al. 1989;
7 Crowe et al. 1983).

8
9 The oldest basalts in the region were erupted during the waning stages of silicic
10 volcanism in the southern Great Basin in the Late Miocene and are associated with silicic
11 volcanic centers like Dome Mountain (the first group). Rates of basaltic volcanic activity in the
12 region have been relatively constant but generally low. Basaltic eruptions closest to the proposed
13 Gold Point SEZ occurred from 1.7 million to 700,000 years ago, creating the cinder cones within
14 Crater Flat (Stuckless and O'Leary 2007). The most recent episode of basaltic eruptions occurred
15 at the Lathrop Wells Cone complex about 80,000 years ago (about 8 mi [13 km] east of the SEZ)
16 (Stuckless and O'Leary 2007). There has been no silicic volcanism in the region in the past
17 5 million years. Current silicic volcanic activity occurs entirely along the margins of the Great
18 Basin (Crowe et al. 1983).

19
20 Crowe et al. (1983) determined that the annual probability of a volcanic event for the
21 region is very low (3.3×10^{-10} to 4.7×10^{-8}), similar to the probability of 1.7×10^{-8} calculated
22 for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository (Cline et al. 2005). The volcanic risk in the region is
23 associated only with basaltic eruptions; the risk of silicic volcanism is negligible. Perry (2002)
24 cites geologic data that could indicate an increase in the recurrence rate (and thus the probability
25 of disruption). These data include hypothesized episodes of an anomalously high strain rate, the
26 hypothesized presence of a regional mantle hot spot, and new aeromagnetic data that suggest that
27 previously unrecognized volcanoes may be buried in the alluvial-filled basins in the region.

28
29
30 ***Slope Stability and Land Subsidence.*** The incidence of rock falls and slope failures can
31 be moderate to high along mountain fronts and can present a hazard to facilities on the relatively
32 flat terrain of valley floors such as Lida Valley, if they are located at the base of steep slopes.
33 The risk of rock falls and slope failures decreases toward the flat valley center.

34
35 No land subsidence monitoring has taken place in Lida Valley to date; however,
36 Katzenstein and Bell (2005) report ground subsidence of 1 to 1.5 in. (2.5 to 3.5 cm) related to
37 groundwater withdrawal in the Amargosa Valley, about 60 mi (100 km) southeast of the Gold
38 Point SEZ, which has caused compaction in the underlying aquifer. Subsidence is not generally
39 a serious hazard if it occurs as a broad depression over a large region (except in flood-prone
40 areas sensitive to changes in elevation). The major problems associated with subsidence occur
41 as a result of differential vertical subsidence, horizontal displacement, and earth fissures
42 (Burbey 2002).

43
44
45 ***Other Hazards.*** Other potential hazards at the proposed Gold Point SEZ include those
46 associated with soil compaction (restricted infiltration and increased runoff), expanding clay

1 soils (destabilization of structures), and hydro-compactable or collapsible soil (settlement).
2 Disturbance of soil crusts and desert pavement on soil surfaces may increase the likelihood of
3 soil erosion by wind.
4

5 Alluvial fan surfaces, such as those found in Lida Valley, can be the sites of damaging
6 high-velocity flash floods and debris flows during periods of intense and prolonged rainfall.
7 The nature of the flooding and sedimentation processes (e.g., stream flow versus debris flow)
8 will depend on the specific morphology of the fan (National Research Council 1996).
9 Section 11.6.9.1.1 provides further discussion of flood risks within the Gold Point SEZ.
10

11 **11.6.7.1.2 Soil Resources**

12
13
14 Soils within the Gold Point SEZ are predominantly sandy loams, gravelly sandy loams,
15 and gravelly loams of the Keefa-Itme, Stonell-Wardenet-Izo, and Papoose-Roic associations,
16 which together cover about 84% of the site (Figure 11.6.7.1-5). Soil map units within the SEZ
17 are described in Table 11.6.7.1-1. These gently to steeply sloping soils are derived from mixed
18 alluvium and the residuum and colluvium of tuffaceous sedimentary rocks. They are
19 predominantly very deep (with the exception of Roic series soils, which occur above a shallow
20 hardpan layer) and well drained. Most of the soils on the site have a low to moderate surface
21 runoff potential and moderate to moderately rapid permeability. The natural soil surface is
22 suitable for roads, with a slight to moderate erosion hazard when used as roads or trails. The
23 water erosion potential is low to moderate for all soils at the site. The susceptibility to wind
24 erosion is moderate for most soils, with as much as 86 tons (78 metric tons) of soil eroded by
25 wind per acre (0.004 km²,) each year (NRCS 2010). Biological soil crusts and desert pavement
26 have not been documented within the SEZ, but may be present.
27

28 None of the soils within the Gold Point SEZ are rated as hydric.² Flooding is not likely
29 for soils at the site, occurring with a frequency of less than once in 500 years. None of the soils
30 are classified as prime or unique farmland (NRCS 2010).
31

32 **11.6.7.2 Impacts**

33
34
35 Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities
36 (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase of a solar
37 project. These include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind,
38 soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. Such impacts are
39 common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities in varying degrees and are described in more
40 detail for the four phases of development in Section 5.7 1.
41

42 Because impacts on soil resources result from ground-disturbing activities in the project
43 area, soil impacts would be roughly proportional to the size of a given solar facility, with larger
44 areas of disturbed soil having a greater potential for impacts than smaller areas (Section 5.7.2).

² A hydric soil is a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding (NRCS 2010).

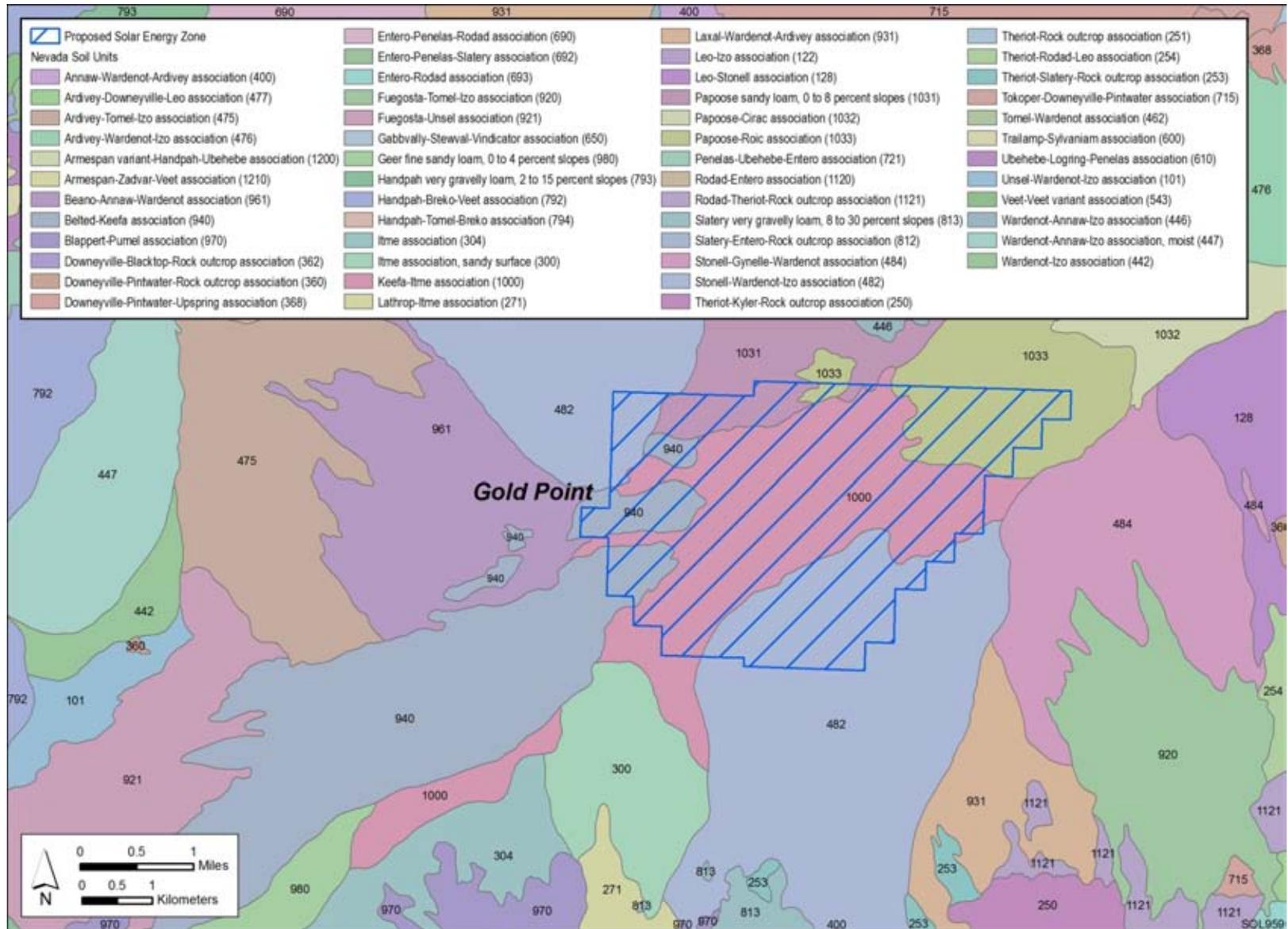


FIGURE 11.6.7.1-5 Soil Map for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ (NRCS 2008)

TABLE 11.6.7.1-1 Summary of Soil Map Units within the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area ^c (% of SEZ)
1000	Keefa-Itme association	Low (0.20)	Moderate (WEG 3) ^d	Consists of about 70% Keefa sandy loam and 20% Itme gravelly loamy sand. Gently sloping soils on fan skirts, inset fans, and lake plains. Parent material consists of mixed alluvium (including from granitic rocks). Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland; unsuitable for cultivation.	2,405 (50)
482	Stonell-Wardenot-Izo association	Low (0.05)	Moderate (WEG 5)	Consists of about 35% Stonell very gravelly sandy loam, 30% Wardenot very gravelly sandy loam, and 20% Izo very gravelly sand. Gently sloping soils on fan remnants, inset fans, and drainage ways. Parent material is mixed alluvium. Very deep and excessively drained, with low surface runoff potential (high infiltration rate) and moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is low to very low. Slight rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland and wildlife habitat; unsuitable for cultivation.	1,077 (22)
1033	Papoose-Roic association	Moderate (0.37)	Moderate (WEG 3)	Consists of about 50% Papoose sandy loam and 45% Roic very gravelly loam. Gently to steeply sloping soils on lake terraces, hills, and pediments. Parent material is mixed alluvium and residuum and colluvium from tuffaceous sedimentary rocks. Very deep (Papoose soils) and very shallow (Roic soils over shallow paralithic bedrock) and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate permeability. Available water capacity is low to very low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland or wildlife habitat; small areas may be irrigated and used for cropland (alfalfa and small grains).	577 (12)

TABLE 11.6.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area (% of SEZ)
940	Belted-Keefa association	Low (0.10)	Moderate (WEG 3)	Consists of about 70% Belted gravelly loamy sand and 20% Keefa sandy loam. Gently to steeply sloping soils on beach terraces and fan skirts. Parent material consists of mixed alluvium. Very deep (Keefa soils) and very shallow (Belted soils over shallow duripan) and well drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and moderate permeability. Available water capacity is low to very low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland, forest; unsuitable for cultivation.	451 (9)
1031	Papoose sandy loam (0 to 8% slopes)	Moderate (0.37)	Moderate (WEG 3)	Gently sloping soils on lake terraces. Parent material consists of mixed alluvium from tuffs, basalt, and andesite with small amounts of limestone and quartzite. Very deep and well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately slow permeability. Available water capacity is low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as rangeland or wildlife habitat; small areas may be irrigated and used for cropland (alfalfa and small grains).	299 (6)

^a Water erosion potential rates based on soil erosion factor K (whole rock), which indicates the susceptibility of soil to sheet and rill erosion by water. Values range from 0.02 to 0.69 and are provided in parentheses under the general rating; a higher value indicates a higher susceptibility to erosion. Estimates based on the percentage of silt, sand, and organic matter and on soil structure and saturated hydraulic conductivity.

^b Wind erosion potential here is based on the wind erodibility group (WEG) designation: groups 1 and 2, high; groups 3 through 6, moderate; and groups 7 and 8 low (see footnote c for further explanation).

^c To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d WEG = wind erodibility group. WEGs are based on soil texture, content of organic matter, effervescence of carbonates, content of rock fragments, and mineralogy, and also take into account soil moisture, surface cover, soil surface roughness, wind velocity and direction, and the length of unsheltered distance (USDA 2004). Groups range in value from 1 (most susceptible to wind erosion) to 8 (least susceptible to wind erosion). The NRCS provides a wind erodibility index, expressed as an erosion rate in tons per acre per year, for each of the wind erodibility groups: WEG 3, 86 tons (78 metric tons) per acre (0.004 km²) per year and WEG 5, 56 tons (51 metric tons) per acre (0.004 km²) per year.

Source: NRCS (2010).

1 The magnitude of impacts would also depend on the types of components built for a given
2 facility since installation of some components would involve greater disturbance and would take
3 place over a longer timeframe.
4

6 **11.6.7.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

7

8 No SEZ-specific design features were identified for soil resources at the proposed Gold
9 Point SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features described under both Soils and Air
10 Quality in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would
11 reduce the potential for soil impacts during all project phases.
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1 **11.6.8 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)**
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3

4 **11.6.8.1 Affected Environment**
5

6 As of September 21, 2010, there were no mining claims located in the proposed Gold
7 Point SEZ. The western half of the SEZ, however, was previously blanketed by both lode and
8 placer claims that have been closed (BLM and USFS 2010a). The public land within the SEZ
9 was closed to locatable mineral entry in June 2009 pending the outcome of this PEIS. There are
10 no active oil and gas leases in the area, nor has the area been previously leased (BLM and
11 USFS 2010b). The area remains open for discretionary mineral leasing for oil and gas and other
12 leasable minerals and for disposal of salable minerals. There is no active or historical geothermal
13 leasing or development in or near the SEZ (BLM and USFS 2010b).
14

15
16 **11.6.8.2 Impacts**
17

18 If the area were identified as a solar energy zone, it would continue to be closed to all
19 incompatible forms of mineral development. Since the SEZ does not contain existing mining
20 claims, it was also assumed that there would be no future loss of locatable mineral production.
21

22 For the purpose of this analysis, it was assumed that future development of oil and gas
23 resources, should any be found, would still be possible, since such development could occur with
24 directional drilling from outside the SEZ. Also, since the SEZ has no history of development of
25 geothermal resources, it is not anticipated that solar development would adversely affect the
26 development of geothermal resources.
27

28 The production of common minerals, such as sand and gravel and mineral materials used
29 for road construction or other purposes, might take place in areas not directly developed for solar
30 energy production.
31

32
33 **11.6.8.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
34

35 No SEZ-specific design features are required. Implementing the programmatic design
36 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
37 Program, would provide adequate mitigation to protect mineral resources.
38

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1 **11.6.9 Water Resources**

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4 **11.6.9.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located within the Central Nevada Desert subbasin of
7 the Great Basin hydrologic region (USGS 2010a) and the Basin and Range physiographic
8 province characterized by intermittent mountain ranges and desert valleys (Planert and
9 Williams 1995). The proposed SEZ is located in the southern portion of Lida Valley, which is
10 connected to the northern portion through narrow passes along Mount Jackson and Mount
11 Jackson Ridge. Because a shallow surface divide separates Lida Valley and Stonewall Flat
12 basins, Lida Valley drains south and east toward the Sarcobatus Flat area (Figure 11.6.9.1-1).
13 Surface elevations in the proposed SEZ range from 4,831 to 5,059 ft (1,472 to 1,542 m), with a
14 general southwest to northeast drainage pattern. Elevations in the surrounding mountains range
15 from about 5,700 ft (1,737 m) in Slate Ridge to the south and Mount Jackson Ridge to the
16 north, to about 9,000 ft (2,743 m) in Magruder Mountain and the Palmetto Mountains to the
17 northwest. The climate in this region of Nevada is characterized by low humidity and
18 precipitation, with mild winters and hot summers (Planert and Williams 1995; WRCC 2010a).
19 The average annual precipitation ranges from 3 to 6 in. (8 to 15 cm), and the average annual
20 snowfall ranges from 6 to 18 in. (15 to 46 cm) at the Sarcobatus and Goldfield weather stations,
21 respectively (WRCC 2010b,c). Very little phreatic vegetation is present in the Lida Valley, so
22 evapotranspiration is estimated to be negligible (Rush 1968), while the arid climate leads to high
23 evaporation rates, with pan evaporations rates estimated to be about 97 in./yr (246 cm/yr)
24 (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010d).

25
26
27 ***11.6.9.1.1 Surface Waters (Including Drainages, Floodplains, and Wetlands)***

28
29 No perennial surface water features are present in the proposed Gold Point SEZ. An
30 unnamed intermittent stream crosses the SEZ site in a northeasterly direction and converges
31 with Jackson Wash about 1.5 mi (2.4 km) east of the site. Jackson Wash is an intermittent stream
32 that originates in the Montezuma Range in the northern portion of Lida Valley and enters the
33 southern Lida Valley through the pass between Mount Jackson and Mount Jackson Ridge. It
34 drains to the east and north toward a series of dry lakes located near the boundary of Lida Valley
35 and Stonewall Flat about 8 mi (13 km) northeast of the site. Several ephemeral washes also drain
36 toward the northeast across the proposed SEZ and converge to a small playa area in the northeast
37 corner of the site (Figure 11.6.9.1-1).

38
39 A few, small lacustrine wetland areas near the boundary of Lida Valley and Stonewall
40 Flat basin cover between about 40 and 780 acres (0.2 and 3 km²) according to the NWI
41 (USFWS 2009). These dry lake wetland areas have sparse vegetation with water levels mostly
42 below the land surface for most of the year. Surface water drainage out of Lida Valley enters a
43 large playa region in the Sarcobatus basin about 18 mi (29 km) southeast of the proposed SEZ.
44 The playa regions in the Sarcobatus basin also coincide with the presence of lacustrine wetland
45 areas that cover between 755 and 1,875 acres (3 and 8 km²). Additional information regarding
46 wetlands within the region of the proposed SEZ is presented in Section 11.6.10.1.



1

2 **FIGURE 11.6.9.1-1 Surface Water Features near the Proposed Gold Point SEZ**

1 Flood hazards have not been identified in Esmeralda County but have been mapped for
2 Nye County, located 9 mi (14 km) east of the proposed Gold Point SEZ. In Nye County,
3 Jackson Wash and the playa area it drains to are identified as being within a 100-year floodplain
4 (Zone A) (FEMA 2009). It is likely that this 100-year floodplain region continues upstream
5 along the riparian areas of Jackson Wash, which could potentially include portions of the
6 proposed SEZ. Erosion and sedimentation are potentially concerns along the intermittent streams
7 and ephemeral washes in the vicinity of the proposed SEZ. Additionally, temporary flooding
8 may occur near the playa region in the northeast corner of the site during large rainfall events.
9

10 **11.6.9.1.2 Groundwater**

11
12
13 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is a part of the Lida Valley groundwater basin, which
14 covers an area of 342,400 acres (1,386 km²) (NDWR 2010a). The Lida Valley groundwater
15 basin is located on the northwestern edge of the Death Valley Regional Groundwater Flow
16 System (described in Section 11.1.9.1.2); however, it is not located over any of the regional-scale
17 carbonate-rock aquifers associated with the carbonate rock province that covers approximately
18 one-third of Nevada (Harrill and Prudic 1998, Faunt et al. 2004). The general hydrogeologic
19 structure of the Lida Valley groundwater basin is that of a basin-fill aquifer containing three
20 units: consolidated rocks, older alluvium, and younger alluvium. The consolidated rocks of the
21 surrounding mountains and bedrock (underlying the basin-fill alluvium) consist primarily of
22 volcanic rocks and intrusive structures, as well as some carbonate and sedimentary rocks
23 (Rush 1968). The older and younger alluvium units of the basin-fill are composed of sand,
24 gravel, and cobbles with interbedded silts and clays of late Tertiary and Quaternary age
25 (Belcher et al. 2001). The thickness of the basin-fill in the Lida Valley is typically greater than
26 500 ft (152 m) but not more than 2,460 ft (750 m) (Faunt et al. 2004).
27

28 Historically, there has been limited groundwater development in the Lida Valley
29 groundwater basin. In the early 1900s, groundwater from springs located in the Palmetto
30 Mountains were pumped to supply water for mining near the town of Goldfield, 20 mi (32 km)
31 north of the proposed SEZ; however, many of the springs in the surrounding mountains of the
32 Lida Valley were dry or discharged less than 10 ac-ft/yr (12,300 m³/yr) by the 1960s
33 (Rush 1968). The primary source of available groundwater in the Lida Valley is within the basin-
34 fill alluvium aquifers. Groundwater recharge in the Lida Valley groundwater basin is largely
35 driven by precipitation and subsurface inflow from the Stonewall Flat region. Depending on the
36 methods of calculation used, estimates of groundwater recharge range from 500 ac-ft/yr
37 (616,700 m³/yr) by precipitation and 200 ac-ft/yr (246,700 m³/yr) by subsurface inflow
38 (NDWR 1971), to a total recharge ranging from 50 to 420 ac-ft/yr (61,700 to 518,000 m³/yr)
39 (Flint et al. 2004). Groundwater discharge is driven primarily by subsurface outflow to the
40 Sarcobatus Flat basin and has estimated as 700 ac-ft/yr (863,400 m³/yr) (NDWR 1971).
41 Groundwater discharge by evapotranspiration is assumed to be negligible in the Lida Valley
42 groundwater basin, and groundwater pumping was less than 30 ac-ft/yr (37,000 m³/yr) in 1966
43 (Rush 1968).
44

45 Depth to groundwater is typically about 300 to 400 ft (91 to 122 m) below the ground
46 surface in the Lida Valley groundwater basin, and the general groundwater flow pattern is from

1 southwest to northeast in the vicinity of the proposed Gold Point SEZ, with an approximate
2 slope of 0.7% in groundwater surface elevations (well numbers 372138117274001 and
3 373003117110101) (USGS 2010d). Groundwater flows to the northeast past the proposed SEZ,
4 where it then converges with subsurface inflow from the Stonewall Flat basin, about 8 mi
5 (13 km) northeast (in the vicinity of the dry lakes mentioned in Section 11.6.9.1.1), and then
6 discharges to the south to the Sarcobatus Flat basin (Rush 1968; NDWR 1971; Faunt et al. 2004).
7 Groundwater in the Lida Valley groundwater basin has high TDS concentrations typically
8 greater than 500 mg/L, with sulfate concentrations greater than 250 mg/L (Rush 1968). The TDS
9 concentrations typically increase as groundwater flows out of the Lida Valley groundwater basin
10 an into the Sarcobatus Flat basin, where TDS concentrations are on the order of 1,000 mg/L
11 (well number 371647117015201) (Rush 1968; USGS 2010d).

14 ***11.6.9.1.3 Water Use and Water Rights Management***

16 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Esmeralda County
17 were 46,786 million ac-ft/yr (57.7 million m³/yr), of which 9% came from surface waters
18 and 91% came from groundwater. The largest water use categories for groundwater were
19 irrigation and mining at 28,235 and 14,202 ac-ft/yr (34.8 million and 17.5 million m³/yr),
20 respectively. The remaining groundwater withdrawals were for domestic use and livestock
21 watering (Kenny et al. 2009). The majority of the groundwater use in Esmeralda County occurs
22 north and west of the proposed Gold Point SEZ in the Fish Lake Valley groundwater basin
23 (NDWR 2010b); as groundwater withdrawals in the Lida Valley groundwater basin were only
24 30 ac-ft/yr (37,000 m³/yr) in 1966 (Rush 1968).

26 All waters in Nevada are the property of the public and are subject to the laws described
27 in Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapters 532 through 538 (available at: <http://leg.state.nv.us/nrs>).
28 The NDWR, led by the State Engineer, is the agency responsible for managing both the surface
29 water and groundwater resources. This responsibility includes overseeing water rights
30 applications, appropriations, and interbasin transfers (NDWR 2010c). The two primary
31 principles underlying water rights in Nevada are the prior appropriations doctrine and the
32 concept of beneficial use. A water right establishes an appropriation amount and date such that
33 more senior water rights have priority over newer water rights. Additionally, water rights are
34 treated as both real and personal property, such that water rights can be transferred without
35 affecting the land ownership (NDWR 2010c). Water rights applications (new or transfer of
36 existing) are approved if the water is available to be appropriated, if existing water rights will
37 not be affected, and if the proposed use is not deemed to be harmful to the public interest. If
38 these conditions are satisfied according to the State Engineer, a proof of beneficial use of the
39 approved water must be provided within a certain time period, and following that a certificate
40 of appropriation is issued (BLM 2001).

42 The Lida Valley groundwater basin is not a designated groundwater; thus, there are no
43 specified beneficial uses set by the NDWR (NDWR 1974). The perennial yield of the Lida
44 Valley groundwater basin is set at 350 ac-ft/yr (431,700 m³/yr), and current water rights total
45 76 ac-ft/yr (93,700 m³/yr). This water is being used for mining, stock water, and municipal
46 supply (NDWR 2010a). Solar energy developers would have to submit applications for new

1 groundwater withdrawals or transfer of existing water rights to the NDWR according to the
2 process described previously.

3 4 5 **11.6.9.2 Impacts**

6
7 Potential impacts on water resources related to utility-scale solar energy development
8 include direct and indirect impacts on surface waters and groundwater. Direct impacts occur at
9 the place of origin and at the time of the proposed activity, while indirect impacts occur away
10 from the place of origin or later in time. Impacts on water resources considered in this analysis
11 are the result of land disturbance activities (construction, final developed site plan, as well as off-
12 site activities such as road and transmission line construction) and water use requirements for
13 solar energy technologies during the four project phases: site characterization, construction,
14 operations, and decommissioning/reclamation. Both land disturbance and consumptive water use
15 activities can affect groundwater and surface water flows, cause drawdown of groundwater
16 surface elevations, modify natural drainage pathways, obstruct natural recharge zones, and alter
17 surface water-wetland-groundwater connectivity. Water quality can also be degraded through the
18 generation of wastewater, chemical spills, increased erosion and sedimentation, and increased
19 salinity (e.g., by the excessive withdrawal from aquifers).

20 21 22 **11.6.9.2.1 Land Disturbance Impacts on Water Resources**

23
24 Impacts related to land disturbance activities are common to all utility-scale solar energy
25 facilities and are described in more detail for the four phases of development in Section 5.9.1.
26 These impacts will be minimized through the implementation of programmatic design features
27 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Land disturbance activities should be minimized in the
28 vicinity of the unnamed intermittent stream and the several ephemeral washes draining across the
29 site. During large storm events, these intermittent streams have the potential to flood and cause
30 sedimentation and erosion issues. Additionally, alterations to these intermittent and ephemeral
31 stream features could have adverse impacts on sedimentation and erosion to the downstream
32 playa region in the northeast corner of the proposed SEZ, as well as off-site in Jackson Wash.

33 34 35 **11.6.9.2.2 Water Use Requirements for Solar Energy Technologies**

36 37 38 **Analysis Assumptions**

39
40 A detailed description of the water use assumptions for the four utility-scale solar energy
41 technologies (parabolic trough, power tower, dish engine, and PV systems) is presented in
42 Appendix M. Assumptions regarding water use calculations specific to the proposed Gold Point
43 SEZ include the following:

- 44
45 • On the basis of a total area of 4,810 acres (19 km²), it is assumed that one
46 solar project would be constructed during the peak construction year;

- Water needed for making concrete would come from an off-site source;
- The maximum land disturbance for an individual solar facility during the peak construction year is 3,000 acres (12 km²);
- Assumptions on individual facility size and land requirements (Appendix M), along with the assumed number of projects and maximum allowable land disturbance, results in the potential to disturb of up to 62% of the total SEZ area during the peak construction year; and
- Water use requirements for hybrid cooling systems are assumed to be on the same order of magnitude as those for dry-cooling systems (see Section 5.9.2.1).

Site Characterization

During site characterization, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust and the workforce potable water supply. Impacts on water resources during this phase of development are expected to be negligible since activities would be limited in area, extent, and duration; water needs could be met by trucking water in from an off-site source.

Construction

During construction, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust and the workforce potable water supply. Because there are no significant surface water bodies on the proposed Gold Point SEZ, the water requirements for construction activities could be met by either trucking water to the site or by using on-site groundwater resources.

Water requirements for dust suppression and potable water supply during construction, shown in Table 11.6.9.2-1, could be as high as 1,707 ac-ft (2.1 million m³) for the peak construction year. The assumptions underlying these estimates for each solar energy technology are described in Appendix M. The total water use estimates for the peak construction year are on the order of 3 to 5 times greater than the perennial yield of the Lida Valley groundwater basin. Thus, at least a portion of the water supply would have to come from an off-site source or be transferred from an adjacent basin (if unappropriated groundwater is available in adjacent basins), which would have to be negotiated with the NDWR. The effects of groundwater withdrawals on groundwater surface elevations in the Lida Valley would have to be assessed during the site characterization phase. In addition, the generation of up to 74 ac-ft (91,300 m³) of sanitary wastewater during the peak construction year would have to be treated either on-site or sent to an off-site facility.

TABLE 11.6.9.2-1 Estimated Water Requirements, by Technology, during the Peak Construction Year for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Water use requirements ^a				
Fugitive dust control (ac-ft) ^{b,c}	1,108	1,662	1,662	1,662
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft)	74	45	19	9
Total water use requirements (ac-ft)	1,182	1,707	1,681	1,671
Wastewater generated				
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft)	74	45	19	9

^a Assumptions of water use for fugitive dust control, potable supply for workforce, and wastewater generation are presented in Appendix M.

^b Fugitive dust control estimation assumes a local pan evaporation rate of 97 in./yr (246 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010d).

^c To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

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Operations

During operations, water would be required for mirror/panel washing, the workforce potable water supply, and cooling (parabolic trough and power tower only) (Table 11.6.9.2-2). Water needs for cooling would be a function of the type of cooling used (dry, hybrid, wet). Further refinements to water requirements for cooling would result from the percentage of time that the option was employed (30 to 60% range assumed) and the power of the system. The differences between the water requirements reported in Table 11.6.9.2-2 for the parabolic trough and power tower technologies are attributable to the assumptions of acreage per megawatt. As a result, the water usage for the more energy-dense parabolic trough technology is estimated to be almost twice as great as that for the power tower technology.

At full build-out capacity, water needs for mirror/panel washing are estimated to range from 21 to 385 ac-ft/yr (25,900 to 474,900 m³/yr) and the workforce potable water supply from 1 to 11 ac-ft/yr (1,234 to 13,600 m³/yr). The maximum total water usage during normal operation at full build-out capacity would be greatest for those technologies using the wet-cooling option and is estimated to be as high as 11,555 ac-ft/yr (14.3 million m³/yr). Water usage for dry-cooling systems would be as high as 1,166 ac-ft/yr (1.4 million m³/yr), approximately a factor of 10 times less than the wet-cooling option. Non-cooled technologies, dish engine and PV systems, require substantially less water at full build-out capacity at 219 ac-ft/yr (270,100 million m³/yr) for dish engine and 22 ac-ft/yr (27,100 million m³/yr) for PV (Table 11.6.9.2-2). Operations would produce up to 11 ac-ft/yr (13,600 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater. In addition, for wet-cooled technologies, 121 to 219 ac-ft/yr (149,300 to 270,100 million m³/yr) of cooling system blowdown water would need to be treated either on- or off-site. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure that treatment ponds are effectively lined in order to prevent any groundwater contamination.

TABLE 11.6.9.2-2 Estimated Water Requirements, by Technology, during Operations at the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Full build-out capacity (MW) ^{a,b}	770	428	428	428
Water use requirements				
Mirror/panel washing (ac-ft/yr) ^{c,d}	385	214	214	21
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft/yr)	11	5	5	1
Dry cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	154–770	86–428	NA ^f	NA
Wet cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	3,463–11,159	1,924–6,200	NA	NA
Total water use requirements				
Non-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	NA	NA	219	22
Dry-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	550–1,166	305–647	NA	NA
Wet-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	3,859–11,555	2,143–6,419	NA	NA
Wastewater generated				
Blowdown (ac-ft/yr) ^g	219	121	NA	NA
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft/yr)	11	5	5	1

^a Land area for parabolic trough was estimated at 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW); land area for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies was estimated at 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW).

^b Water needs are linearly related to power. Water usage for any other size project can be estimated by using multipliers provided in Table M.9-2 (Appendix M).

^c Value assumes a usage rate of 0.5 ac-ft/yr/MW for mirror washing for parabolic trough, power tower, and dish engine technologies and a rate of 0.05 ac-ft/yr/MW for panel washing for PV systems.

^d To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

^e Dry-cooling value assumes 0.2 to 1.0 ac-ft/yr per MW and wet-cooling value assumes 4.5 to 14.5 ac-ft/yr per MW (range in these values represents 30 and 60% operating times) (DOE 2009).

^f NA = not applicable.

^g Value scaled from 250-MW Beacon Solar project with an annual discharge of 44 gpm (167 L/min) (AECOM 2009). Blowdown estimates are relevant to wet cooling only.

1
2
3 Groundwater is the primary water resource available for solar energy development at
4 the proposed Gold Point SEZ, and the NDWR has set the perennial yield for the Lida Valley
5 groundwater basin at 350 ac-ft/yr (431,700 m³/yr). Estimated water needs for technologies using
6 wet cooling are at least a factor of 10 greater than the perennial yield (total available water) of
7 the basin, so wet cooling is not feasible at the proposed Gold Point SEZ. Technologies using
8 dry cooling have water use estimates on the order of the perennial yield to about 3 times the
9 perennial yield. It is doubtful that a full build-out scenario using dry-cooling technologies could
10 be supported with the available groundwater supplies. However, water conservation measures
11 and operational aspects (e.g. 30% operating time) could lower the water use requirements of dry-
12 cooling technologies. Full build-out operations of dish engine and PV technologies could be
13 supported by groundwater resources in the Lida Valley groundwater basin and would not require
14 the transfer of any existing groundwater rights.

15

1 The water quality of groundwater sources would have to be assessed during the site
2 characterization phase. Water used for the workforce potable water supply would have to meet or
3 be treated to comply with water quality standards described in the Nevada Administrative
4 Code (445A.453-445A.455).
5
6

7 **Decommissioning/Reclamation**

8

9 During decommissioning/reclamation, all surface structures associated with the solar
10 project would be dismantled, and the site would be reclaimed to its preconstruction state.
11 Activities and water needs during this phase would be similar to those during the construction
12 phase (dust suppression and potable supply for workers) and may also include water to establish
13 vegetation in some areas. However, the total volume of water needed is expected to be less than
14 during the construction phase. Because quantities of water needed during the decommissioning/
15 reclamation phase would be less than those for construction, impacts on surface and groundwater
16 resources also would be less.
17
18

19 ***11.6.9.2.3 Off-Site Impacts: Roads and Transmission Lines***

20

21 Impacts associated with the construction of roads and transmission lines primarily deal
22 with water use demands for construction, water quality concerns relating to potential chemical
23 spills, and land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology. The extent of the impacts on water
24 resources is proportional to the amount and location of land disturbance needed to connect the
25 proposed SEZ to major roads and existing transmission lines. The proposed Gold Point SEZ is
26 located adjacent to existing roads and 22 mi (35 km) from existing transmission lines, as
27 described in Section 11.6.1.2. Impacts to water resources from the construction of transmission
28 lines are expected to be negligible with the implementation of programmatic design features
29 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
30
31

32 ***11.6.9.2.4 Summary of Impacts on Water Resources***

33

34 The impacts on water resources associated with developing solar energy at the proposed
35 Gold Point SEZ are related to land disturbance effects to the natural hydrology, water quality
36 concerns, and water use requirements for the various solar energy technologies. Land disturbance
37 activities can cause localized erosion and sedimentation issues, as well as alter groundwater
38 recharge and discharge processes. The unnamed intermittent stream and ephemeral washes
39 within the proposed SEZ, along with the playa area in the northeast corner, may be in a 100-year
40 floodplain as they drain toward Jackson Wash, which has been identified as being within a
41 100-year floodplain in the neighboring Nye County, located 9 mi (14 km) east of the site. The
42 100-year floodplain would be identified during the site characterization phase, and solar energy
43 development should be excluded from areas of the proposed SEZ within the 100-year floodplain.
44

45 Impacts relating to water use requirements vary depending on the type of solar
46 technology built and, for technologies using cooling systems, the type of cooling used (wet, dry,

1 or hybrid). Groundwater is the primary water resource available to solar energy facilities in the
2 proposed Gold Point SEZ. Water requirements during the construction phase are greater than the
3 perennial yield of the Lida Valley groundwater basin for all technologies. Given the limited
4 temporal extent of construction activities, off-site water sources (including water transfers from
5 adjacent basins) would need to be considered to meet peak year construction water use
6 requirements. During the operations phase, the water use requirements for technologies using
7 wet cooling are at least a factor of 10 greater than the perennial yield for the Lida Valley
8 groundwater basin, so wet cooling would not be feasible for the full build-out scenario. Water
9 use estimates for dry cooling are on the same order of magnitude as the perennial yield of the
10 Lida Valley groundwater basin or greater, so water conservation measures would need to be
11 implemented to reduce water needs. Dish engine and PV technologies have full build-out water
12 use requirements that can be supported by unallocated water rights in the Lida Valley
13 groundwater basin, so these technologies are the preferred solar technologies for potential
14 development at the proposed Gold Point SEZ based on water use requirements.
15
16

17 **11.6.9.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

18

19 The program for solar energy development on BLM-administered lands will require the
20 programmatic design features given in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, to be implemented, thus
21 mitigating some impacts on water resources. Design features would focus on coordinating with
22 federal, state, and local agencies that regulate the use of water resources to meet the requirements
23 of permits and approvals needed to obtain water for development, and conducting hydrological
24 studies to characterize the aquifer from which groundwater would be obtained (including
25 drawdown effects, if a new point of diversion is created). The greatest consideration for
26 mitigating water impacts would be in the selection of solar technologies. The mitigation of
27 impacts would be best achieved by selecting technologies with low water demands.
28

29 Design features specific to the proposed Gold Point SEZ include the following:

- 30
31 • Water resource analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be
32 feasible; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures;
33
- 34 • Land disturbance activities should minimize impacts to the unnamed
35 intermittent stream, the playa area in the northeast corner, and ephemeral
36 washes on site;
37
- 38 • Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid any areas
39 identified as within a 100-year floodplain or jurisdictional waters;
40
- 41 • Groundwater supplies during the construction and operations phases would
42 need to be secured through coordination of the NDWR in terms of obtaining
43 groundwater rights with in the Lida Valley groundwater basin, and potentially
44 from off-site sources and adjacent groundwater basins for the construction
45 phase;
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- Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP 2010);
- Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in accordance with state standards (NDWR 2006); and
- Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet water quality standards in accordance with the *Nevada Administrative Code* (445A.453–445A.455).

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1 **11.6.10 Vegetation**
2

3 This section addresses vegetation that could occur or is known to occur within the
4 potentially affected area of the proposed Gold Point SEZ. The affected area considered in this
5 assessment includes the areas of direct and indirect effects. The area of direct effects is defined
6 as the area that would be physically modified during project development (i.e., where ground-
7 disturbing activities would occur) and includes the SEZ and a 250-ft (76-m) wide portion of an
8 assumed transmission line corridor. The area of indirect effects was defined as the area within
9 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide assumed transmission line
10 corridor, where ground-disturbing activities would not occur but that could be indirectly affected
11 by activities in the area of direct effects.
12

13 Indirect effects considered in the assessment include effects from surface runoff, dust,
14 and accidental spills from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential
15 degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. This area of
16 indirect effects was identified on the basis of professional judgment and was considered
17 sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be subject to indirect effects. The
18 affected area is the area bounded by the areas of direct and indirect effects. These areas are
19 defined and the impact assessment approach is described in Appendix M.
20

21
22 **11.6.10.1 Affected Environment**
23

24 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located primarily within the Tonopah Basin Level IV
25 ecoregion, which primarily supports sparse shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) communities on
26 broad valleys, hills, bajadas, and alluvial fans (Bryce et al. 2003). Additional commonly
27 occurring shrubs in this ecoregion include bud sagebrush (*Picrothamnus desertorum*), spiny
28 hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*), seepweed (*Suaeda* sp.), fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), spiny
29 menodora (*Menodora spinescens*), Nevada ephedra (*Ephedra nevadensis*), littleleaf horsebrush
30 (*Tetradymia glabrata*), Douglas rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), and winterfat
31 (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), which, along with shadscale, often co-dominate in highly diverse
32 mosaics. Warm season grasses, such as Indian rice grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) and galleta
33 grass (*Pleuraphis jamesii*), occur in the understory. Stands of inland saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*)
34 and alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*) also occur. Bailey greasewood (*Sarcobatus baileyi*) and
35 Shockley wolfberry (*Lycium* sp.) are widespread and often co-dominate on lower alluvial slopes
36 in this ecoregion. Black greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*) occurs in saline bottoms. Springs
37 and sporadic precipitation in foothills provide surface water sources.
38

39 The area surrounding the SEZ consists of a mosaic of the Tonopah Basin and the
40 Tonopah Sagebrush Foothills Level IV ecoregion. This ecoregion supports black sagebrush
41 (*Artemisia nova*) and Mojave species such as blackbrush (*Coleogyne ramosissima*), Joshua tree
42 (*Yucca brevifolia*), and cholla (*Cylindropuntia* sp.) on rocky substrates. The Tonopah Basin and
43 Tonopah Sagebrush Foothills ecoregions lie within the Central Basin and Range Level III
44 ecoregion, described in Appendix , I, and are part of the Great Basin desertscrub biome. Annual
45 precipitation in the vicinity of the SEZ is low, averaging about 6.1 in. (15.4 cm) at Goldfield,
46 Nevada (see Section 11.6.13).
47

1 Land cover types described and mapped under the SWReGAP (USGS 2005a) were used
2 to evaluate plant communities in and near the SEZ. Each cover type encompasses a range of
3 similar plant communities. Land cover types occurring within the potentially affected area of the
4 proposed Gold Point SEZ are shown in Figure 11.6.10.1-1. Table 11.6.10.1-1 lists the surface
5 area of each cover type within the potentially affected area.
6

7 Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub is the predominant cover type within the
8 proposed Gold Point SEZ. Additional cover types within the SEZ are given in Table 11.6.10.1-1.
9 During an August 2009 visit to the site, shadscale, greasewood, fourwing saltbush, winterfat,
10 spiny horsebrush (*Tetradymia* sp.), and Indian ricegrass were the dominant species observed in
11 the desert scrub communities throughout most of the SEZ. Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) was
12 sparse in the northwest area of the SEZ and absent elsewhere. Joshua tree density increased south
13 and southeast of the SEZ, within the area of indirect effects. Cacti observed on the SEZ included
14 beavertail (*Opuntia basilaris*). Sensitive habitats on the SEZ include riparian, desert dry wash,
15 and playa habitats. The area has a history of livestock grazing, and the plant communities on the
16 SEZ have likely been affected by grazing.
17

18 The indirect effects area, including the area within 5 mi (8 km) around the SEZ and
19 transmission line corridor, includes 16 cover types, which are listed in Table 11.6.10.1-1. The
20 predominant cover type in the indirect effects area is Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert
21 Scrub.
22

23 There are no wetlands mapped by the NWI within the SEZ or indirect effects area
24 (USFWS 2009). NWI maps are produced from high-altitude imagery and are subject to
25 uncertainties inherent in image interpretation (USFWS 2009). Small areas identified as Inter-
26 Mountain Basins Playa occur in the northeastern portion of the SEZ, along with scattered areas
27 of greasewood flat. An unnamed intermittent stream crosses the SEZ from west to east and
28 supports small areas of riparian plant communities. Numerous desert dry washes occur within the
29 SEZ. The dry washes typically do not support wetland or riparian habitats, but many support
30 communities of shrubs, including rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus/Ericameria* sp.). The dry washes,
31 greasewood flats, and playas typically contain water for short periods during or following
32 precipitation events. The entire SEZ is within the watershed of Jackson Wash, which supports
33 riparian communities downstream of the SEZ. Springs occur in the vicinity of the SEZ, primarily
34 to the west; however, discharge from these springs is generally low (see Section 11.6.9).
35

36 The State of Nevada maintains an official list of weed species that are designated noxious
37 species. Table 11.6.10.1-2 provides a summary of the noxious weed species regulated in Nevada
38 that are known to occur in Esmeralda County (USDA 2010, Creech et al. 2010), which includes
39 the proposed Gold Point SEZ. Russian thistle (*Salsola* sp.), a non-native species observed to
40 occur within much of the SEZ in August 2009, is not included in this table.
41

42 The NDA classifies noxious weeds into one of three categories (NDA 2010):
43

- 44 • “Category A: Weeds not found or limited in distribution throughout the state;
45 actively excluded from the state and actively eradicated wherever found;
46 actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; control required by the
47 state in all infestations.”

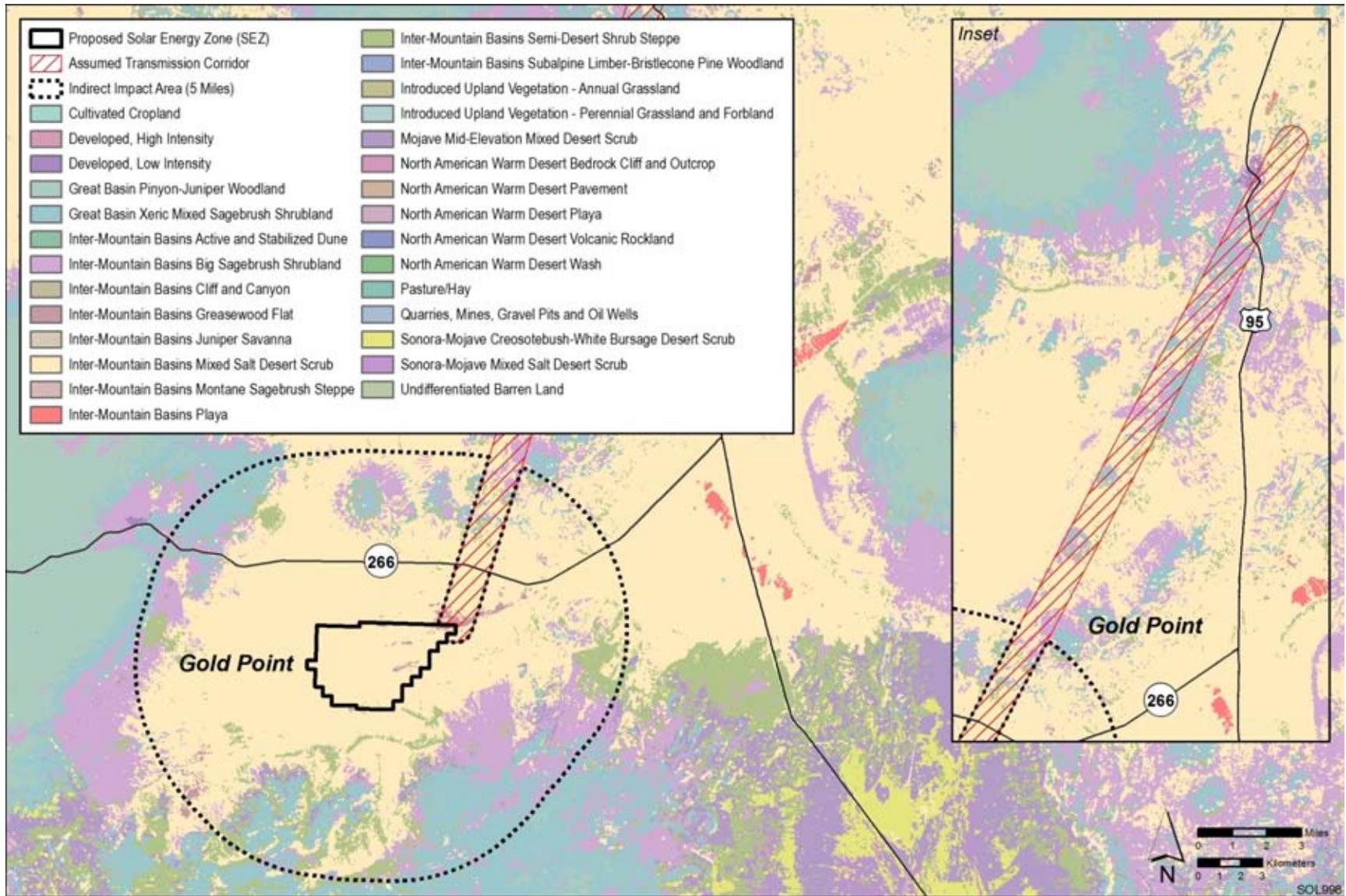


FIGURE 11.6.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Proposed Gold Point SEZ (Source: USGS 2004)

TABLE 11.6.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Potentially Affected Area of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ and Potential Impacts

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub: Generally consists of open shrublands that include at least one species of <i>Atriplex</i> , along with other shrubs. Perennial grasses dominate a sparse to moderately dense herbaceous layer.	4,641 acres ^g (0.5%, 0.6%)	397 acres (<0.1%)	60,242 acres (3.5%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat: Dominated or codominated by greasewood (<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>) and generally occurring in areas with saline soils, a shallow water table, and intermittent flooding, although remaining dry for most growing seasons. This community type generally occurs near drainages or around playas. These areas may include, or may be codominated by, other shrubs, and may include a graminoid herbaceous layer.	106 acres (0.6%, 1.1%)	8 acres (<0.1%)	582 acres (1.1%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Playa: Playa habitats are intermittently flooded and generally barren or sparsely vegetated. Depressions may contain small patches of grass, and sparse shrubs may occur around playa margins.	29 acres (0.1%, 0.1%)	2 acres (<0.1%)	46 acres (0.1%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe: Generally consists of perennial grasses with an open shrub and dwarf shrub layer.	23 acres (<0.1%, <0.1%)	32 acres (<0.1%)	8,122 acres (2.5%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland: Dominated by basin big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata tridentata</i>), Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis</i>), or both. Other shrubs may be present. Perennial herbaceous plants are present but not abundant.	2 acres (<0.1%, <0.1%)	140 acres (<0.1%)	14,299 acres (3.5%)	Small

TABLE 11.6.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Great Basin Xeric Mixed Sagebrush Shrubland: Generally occurs on level plains, slopes, and ridges. The dominant shrub species are black sagebrush (<i>Artemisia nova</i>) or, at higher elevations, little sagebrush (<i>Artemisia arbuscula</i>), and co-dominants may be Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata</i> ssp. <i>wyomingensis</i>) or yellow rabbitbrush (<i>Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus</i>). Other shrub species may also be present as well as sparse perennial bunchgrasses.	0 acres	76 acres (<0.1%)	12,739 acres (2.9%)	Small
Developed, Open Space – Low Intensity: Includes housing, parks, golf courses, and other areas planted in developed settings. Impervious surfaces compose up to 49 percent of the total land cover.	0 acres	4 acres (0.1%)	90 acres (1.9%)	Small
Barren Lands, Nonspecific: Includes a variety of barren areas, generally with less than 15% cover of vegetation.	0 acres	3 acres (0.1%)	57 acres (1.6%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Cliff and Canyon: Includes barren and sparsely vegetated (generally <10% plant cover) steep cliff faces, narrow canyons, small rock outcrops, and scree and talus slopes. Composed of widely scattered coniferous trees and a variety of shrubs.	0 acres	2 acres (<0.1%)	357 acres (1.3%)	Small
Developed, Medium-High Intensity: Includes housing and commercial/industrial development. Impervious surfaces compose 50 to 100% of the total land cover.	0 acres	1 acre (0.2%)	9 acres (2.9%)	Small
Great Basin Pinyon-Juniper Woodland: Occurs on low-elevation slopes and ridges. Singleleaf pinyon (<i>Pinus monophylla</i>), Utah juniper (<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i>), or both are the dominant species, generally associating with curl-leaf mountain mahogany (<i>Cercocarpus ledifolius</i>). Understory species include shrubs and grasses.	0 acres	<1 acre (<0.1%)	79 acres (<0.1%)	Small

TABLE 11.6.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Steppe: Dominated by basin big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata tridentata</i>), Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis</i>), big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata xericensis</i>), threetip sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tripartita tripartita</i>), or antelope bitterbrush (<i>Purshia tridentata</i>), or a combination of these species. Other shrubs may be present. Perennial grasses are often abundant. The distribution of shrubs may be patchy, with grassland predominating.	0 acres	<1 acre (<0.1%)	6 acres (1.8%)	Small
Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub: The vegetation composition is quite variable. Dominant species include shrubs, forbs, and grasses and may include <i>Yucca</i> spp.	0 acres	<1 acre (<0.1%)	1,303 acres (0.4%)	Small
Introduced Upland Vegetation – Annual and Perennial Grassland: Dominated by non-native annual and perennial grass species.	0 acres	<1 acre (<0.1%)	45 acres (0.6%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Grassland: Consists of perennial bunchgrasses as dominants or co-dominants. Scattered shrubs or dwarf shrubs may also be present.	0 acres	<1 acre (<0.1%)	15 acres (0.3%)	Small

TABLE 11.6.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^d	Corridor and Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Sonora-Mojave Creosotebush-White Bursage Desert Scrub: Occurs in broad valleys, lower bajadas, plains, and low hills in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts. Shrubs form a sparse to moderately dense cover (2 to 50%), although the ground surface may be mostly barren. The dominant species are typically creosotebush (<i>Larrea tridentata</i>) and white bursage (<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>). Other shrubs, dwarf-shrubs, and cacti may also be dominant or form sparse understories. Herbaceous species are typically sparse, but may be seasonally abundant.	0 acres	0 acres	80 acres (<0.1%)	Small

^a Land cover descriptions are from USGS (2005a). Full descriptions of land cover types, including plant species, can be found in Appendix I.

^b Area in acres, determined from USGS (2004).

^c Includes the area of the cover type within the SEZ, the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region (i.e., a 50-mi [80-km] radius from the center of the SEZ), and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type on BLM lands within the SEZ region. The SEZ region intersects portions of Nevada and California.

^d For transmission development, direct effects were estimated within a 22-mi (35-km) long, 250-ft (76-m) wide transmission ROW from the SEZ to the nearest existing line. Direct impacts within this area were determined from the proportion of the cover type within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide transmission corridor. Impacts are for the area of the cover type within the assumed ROW, and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region.

^e Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide assumed transmission line corridor, where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, and other factors from projects. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. Includes the area of the cover type within the area of indirect effects and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region. The area of indirect effects occurs only in Nevada.

^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and include (1) *small*: a relatively small proportion ($\leq 1\%$) of the cover type within the SEZ region would be lost; (2) *moderate*: an intermediate proportion (>1 but $\leq 10\%$) of a cover type would be lost; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a cover type would be lost.

^g To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

TABLE 11.6.10.1-2 Designated Noxious Weeds of Nevada Occurring in Esmeralda County

Common Name	Scientific Name	Category
Hoary cress/Whitetop ^a	<i>Cardaria</i> spp.	C
Johnsongrass ^a	<i>Sorghum halepense</i>	C
Musk thistle ^b	<i>Carduus nutans</i>	B
Perennial pepperweed ^a	<i>Lepidium latifolium</i>	C
Poison hemlock ^a	<i>Conium maculatum</i>	C
Puncture vine	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	C
Russian knapweed ^a	<i>Acroptilon repens</i>	B
Saltcedar ^{a,b}	<i>Tamarix</i> spp.	C
Scotch thistle ^a	<i>Onopordium acanthium</i>	B
Yellow toadflax ^a	<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	A

^a Creech et al. (2010).

^b USDA (2010).

Source: NDA (2010).

- “Category B: Weeds established in scattered populations in some counties of the state; actively excluded where possible, actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; control required by the state in areas where populations are not well established or previously unknown to occur.”
- “Category C: Weeds currently established and generally widespread in many counties of the state; actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; abatement at the discretion of the state quarantine officer.”

11.6.10.2 Impacts

The construction of solar energy facilities within the proposed Gold Point SEZ would result in direct impacts on plant communities due to the removal of vegetation within the facility footprint during land-clearing and land-grading operations. Approximately 80% of the SEZ (3,848 acres [15.6 km²]) would be expected to be cleared with full development of the SEZ. The plant communities affected would depend on facility locations and could include any of the communities occurring on the SEZ. Therefore, for this analysis, all the area of each cover type within the SEZ is considered to be directly affected by removal with full development of the SEZ.

Indirect effects (e.g., caused by surface runoff or dust from the SEZ) have the potential to degrade affected plant communities and to reduce biodiversity by promoting the decline or elimination of species sensitive to disturbance. Indirect effects can also cause an increase in disturbance-tolerant species or invasive species. High impact levels could result in the elimination of a community or the replacement of one community type by another. The proper

1 implementation of programmatic design features, however, would reduce indirect effects to a
2 minor or small level of impact.

3
4 Possible impacts from solar energy facilities on vegetation within the SEZ, are described
5 in more detail in Section 5.10.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the
6 implementation of required design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through
7 any additional mitigation applied. Section 11.6.10.2.3, below, identifies design features of
8 particular relevance to the proposed Gold Point SEZ.

9 10 11 ***11.6.10.2.1 Impacts on Native Species***

12
13 The impacts of construction, operation, and decommissioning were considered small if
14 the impact affected a relatively small proportion ($\leq 1\%$) of the cover type in the SEZ region
15 (within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ); moderate if it could affect an intermediate
16 proportion (>1 but $\leq 10\%$) of a cover type; and large if it could affect greater than 10% of a
17 cover type.

18
19 Solar facility construction and operation in the proposed Gold Point SEZ would
20 primarily affect communities of the Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub cover
21 type. Additional cover types that would be affected within the SEZ include Inter-Mountain
22 Basins Greasewood Flat, Inter-Mountain Basins Playa, Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert
23 Shrub Steppe, and Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland. Additional cover types that
24 would be affected only by the assumed transmission line include Great Basin Xeric Mixed
25 Sagebrush Shrubland, Developed, Open Space—Low Intensity, Barren Lands, Nonspecific,
26 Inter-Mountain Basins Cliff and Canyon, Developed, Medium-High Intensity, Great Basin
27 Pinyon-Juniper Woodland, Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Steppe, Mojave Mid-Elevation
28 Mixed Desert Scrub, Introduced Upland Vegetation—Annual and Perennial Grassland, Inter-
29 Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Grassland, and Sonora-Mojave Creosotebush-White Bursage
30 Desert Scrub. Introduced Upland Vegetation—Annual and Perennial Grassland, Developed,
31 Open Space—Low Intensity, and Developed, Medium-High Intensity cover types would likely
32 have relatively minor populations of native species. Table 11.6.10.1-1 summarizes the potential
33 impacts on land cover types resulting from solar energy facilities in the proposed Gold Point
34 SEZ. While these cover types are relatively common in the SEZ region, several cover types
35 within the transmission line corridor are relatively uncommon, representing less than 1% of the
36 land area within the SEZ region: Inter-Mountain Basins Cliff and Canyon (0.5%), Inter-
37 Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Grassland (0.09%), Barren Lands, Non-specific (0.07%), and
38 Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Steppe (0.006%). The construction, operation, and
39 decommissioning of solar projects within the proposed Gold Point SEZ would result in small
40 impacts on all cover types in the affected area. Playa, riparian, and desert dry wash are important
41 sensitive habitats in the SEZ and corridor.

42
43 Because of the arid conditions, reestablishment of desert scrub communities in
44 temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult and might require extended periods
45 of time. In addition, noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize
46 adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in

1 widespread habitat degradation. Cryptogamic soil crusts occur in many of the shrubland
2 communities in the region and likely occur on the SEZ. Damage to these crusts, by the operation
3 of heavy equipment or other vehicles, can alter important soil characteristics, such as nutrient
4 cycling and availability, and affect plant community characteristics (Lovich and
5 Bainbridge 1999).

6
7 The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside
8 a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community
9 composition. Fugitive dust deposition could affect plant communities of each of the cover
10 types occurring within the area of indirect affects identified in Table 11.6.10.1-1.

11
12 Communities associated with riparian habitats, playa habitats, greasewood flats
13 communities, desert dry wash habitats, or other periodically flooded areas within solar projects
14 or the transmission line corridor could be directly affected by ground-disturbing activities.
15 Similar habitats downgradient from ground-disturbing activities could be indirectly affected.
16 Surface drainage in the northern portion of the SEZ is directed toward playa habitats. The entire
17 SEZ is within the watershed of Jackson Wash, which supports riparian communities downstream
18 of the SEZ. Site-clearing and -grading could disrupt surface water flow patterns, resulting in
19 changes in the frequency, duration, depth, or extent of inundation or soil saturation; could
20 potentially alter plant communities within riparian or playa habitats or along Jackson Wash,
21 including occurrences outside of the SEZ; and could affect community function. Increases in
22 surface runoff from a solar energy project site or transmission line could also affect hydrologic
23 characteristics of these communities. The introduction of contaminants into these habitats could
24 result from spills of fuels or other materials used on a project site. Soil disturbance could result
25 in sedimentation in these areas, which could degrade or eliminate sensitive plant communities.
26 Alteration of surface drainage patterns or hydrology could also adversely affect downstream
27 desert dry wash communities. Vegetation within these communities could be lost by erosion or
28 desiccation.

29
30 Although the use of groundwater within the Gold Point SEZ for technologies with high
31 water requirements, such as wet-cooling systems, may be unlikely, groundwater withdrawals
32 for such systems could reduce groundwater elevations. Communities that depend on accessible
33 groundwater, such as those associated with springs in the Lida Valley groundwater basin, or in
34 other hydrologically connected basins, could become degraded or lost as a result of lowered
35 groundwater levels. The potential for impacts on springs would need to be evaluated by project-
36 specific hydrological studies.

37 38 39 ***11.6.10.2.2 Impacts from Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plant Species***

40
41 On February 8, 1999, the President signed E.O. 13112, "Invasive Species," which directs
42 federal agencies to prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and
43 to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts of invasive species (*Federal*
44 *Register*, Volume 64, page 61836, Feb. 8, 1999). Potential impacts of noxious weeds and
45 invasive plant species resulting from solar energy facilities are described in Section 5.10.1.
46 Despite required design features to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, project disturbance

1 could potentially increase the prevalence of noxious weeds and invasive species in the affected
2 area of the proposed Gold Point SEZ, such that weeds could be transported into areas that were
3 previously relatively weed-free, which could result in reduced restoration success and possible
4 widespread habitat degradation. Species designated as noxious weeds in Nevada and known to
5 occur in Esmeralda County are listed in Table 11.6.10.1-2. Less than 1 acre (<0.004 km²) of
6 Introduced Upland Vegetation—Annual and Perennial Grassland occurs within the direct effects
7 area of the assumed transmission line and approximately 45 acres (0.2 km²) occurs in the
8 indirect effects area of the SEZ.
9

10 Past or present land uses may affect the susceptibility of plant communities to the
11 establishment of noxious weeds and invasive species. Existing roads, transmission lines, and
12 recreational OHV use within the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ would also likely
13 contribute to the susceptibility of plant communities to the establishment and spread of noxious
14 weeds and invasive species. Disturbed areas may contribute to the establishment of noxious
15 weeds and invasive species. Approximately 1 acre (0.004 km²) of Developed, Medium-High
16 Intensity occurs within the direct effects area of the assumed transmission line and 9 acres
17 (0.04 km²) in the area of indirect effects; 4 acres (0.02 km²) of Developed, Open Space—Low
18 Intensity occurs within the direct effects area of the assumed transmission line and 90 acres
19 (0.4 km²) in the area of indirect effects.
20
21

22 **11.6.10.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

23

24 In addition to programmatic design features, SEZ-specific design features would reduce
25 the potential for impacts on plant communities. While specific practices are best established
26 when project details are considered, some SEZ-specific design features can be identified at this
27 time, as follows.
28

- 29 • An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species
30 control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan,
31 addressing habitat restoration, should be approved and implemented to
32 increase the potential for successful restoration of desert scrub, greasewood
33 flat, and other affected habitats, and to minimize the potential for the spread of
34 invasive species. Invasive species control should focus on biological and
35 mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use of herbicides.
36
- 37 • All riparian, dry wash, and playa communities within the SEZ and
38 transmission line corridor should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any
39 impacts minimized and mitigated. Any Joshua tree or other *Yucca* species,
40 cacti, or succulent plant species that cannot be avoided should be salvaged. A
41 buffer area should be maintained around dry wash, riparian, and playa habitats
42 to reduce the potential for impacts.
43
- 44 • Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on dry
45 wash, playa, wetland, greasewood flat, and riparian habitats, including
46 downstream occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion,

1 sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition
2 to these habitats. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be
3 determined through agency consultation.

- 4
- 5 • Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect
6 impacts on habitats associated with springs. Potential impacts on springs
7 should be determined through hydrological studies.
- 8

9 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to other programmatic
10 design features, it is anticipated that a high potential for impacts from invasive species and
11 potential impacts on dry washes, playas, riparian habitats, wetlands, and springs would be
12 reduced to a minimal potential for impact.

13

11.6.11 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota

This section addresses wildlife (amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals) and aquatic biota that could occur within the potentially affected area of the proposed Gold Point SEZ. Wildlife known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined from the SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from the SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). The amount of aquatic habitat within the SEZ region was determined by estimating the length of linear perennial stream and canal features and the area of standing water body features (i.e., ponds, lakes, and reservoirs) within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ using available GIS surface water datasets.

The affected area considered in this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur) and included the SEZ and a 250-ft (76-m) wide portion of an assumed 22-mi (35.4-km) long transmission line corridor. The maximum developed area within the SEZ would be 3,848 acres (15.6 km²).

The area of indirect effects was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within a 1.0-mi (1.6-km) wide transmission line corridor where ground-disturbing activities would not occur, but that could be indirectly affected by activities in the areas of direct effects (e.g., surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and accidental spills). An additional area of indirect effects was considered for 17 mi (27.4 km) of the transmission line corridor that would extend beyond the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect effects for the SEZ. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. The area of indirect effects was identified on the basis of professional judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be subject to indirect effects. These areas of direct and indirect effects are defined and the impact assessment approach is described in Appendix M.

Dominant land cover habitats in the affected area are sagebrush shrubland and desert scrub (see Section 11.6.10). An unnamed wash traverses the SEZ, and converges with Jackson Wash, about 1.5 mi (2.4 km) east of the proposed Gold Point SEZ (Figure 11.6.9.1-1). Several ephemeral washes converge to a small playa area in the northeast corner of the SEZ.

11.6.11.1 Amphibians and Reptiles

11.6.11.1.1 Affected Environment

This section addresses amphibian and reptile species that are known to occur, or for which potentially suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Gold Point SEZ. The list of amphibian and reptile species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined from species lists available from the Nevada Natural Heritage Program (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available from the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CDFG 2008) and the SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types

1 suitable for each species were determined from the SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See
2 Appendix M for additional information on the approach used.

3
4 Based on species distributions within the area of the SEZ and habitat preferences of the
5 amphibian species, the Great Plains toad (*Bufo cognatus*) and red-spotted toad (*Bufo punctatus*)
6 would be expected to occur within the SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). Both toad species
7 would most likely occur in or near the wash and playa habitats within the SEZ.

8
9 More than 25 reptile species occur within the area that encompasses the proposed Gold
10 Point SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) is a federal and
11 state listed threatened species. This species is discussed in Section 11.6.12. Lizard species
12 expected to occur within the SEZ include the desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*),
13 Great Basin collared lizard (*Crotaphytus bicinctores*), long-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia*
14 *wislizenii*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus*
15 *tigris*), and zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus draconoides*). Snake species expected to occur within
16 the SEZ are the coachwhip (*Masticophis flagellum*), common kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula*),
17 glossy snake (*Arizona elegans*), gophersnake (*Pituophis catenifer*), groundsnake (*Sonora*
18 *semiannulata*), long-nosed snake (*Rhinocheilus lecontei*), and nightsnake (*Hypsiglena torquata*).
19 The Mojave rattlesnake (*Crotalus scutulatus*) would be the most common poisonous snake
20 species expected to occur on the SEZ.

21
22 Table 11.6.11.1-1 provides habitat information for representative amphibian and reptile
23 species that could occur within the proposed Gold Point SEZ. Special status amphibian and
24 reptile species are addressed in Section 11.6.12.

25 26 27 **11.6.11.1.2 Impacts**

28
29 The types of impacts that amphibians and reptiles could incur from construction,
30 operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in
31 Section 5.10.2.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
32 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the
33 application of any additional mitigation measures. Section 11.6.11.1.3, below, identifies SEZ-
34 specific design features of particular relevance to the proposed Gold Point SEZ.

35
36 The assessment of impacts on amphibian and reptile species is based on available
37 information on the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.6.11.1.1,
38 following the analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments
39 and coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-
40 specific impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in
41 additional required actions to avoid or mitigate impacts on amphibians and reptiles
42 (see Section 11.6.11.1.3).

43
44 In general, impacts on amphibians and reptiles would result from habitat disturbance
45 (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration) and from disturbance, injury, or mortality
46 to individual amphibians and reptiles. On the basis of the magnitude of impacts on amphibians

TABLE 11.6.11.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Amphibian and Reptile Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Amphibians					
Great Plains toad (<i>Bufo cognatus</i>)	Prefers desert, grassland, and agricultural habitats. Breeds in shallow temporary pools, quiet areas of streams, marshes, irrigation ditches, and flooded fields. In cold winter months, it burrows underground and becomes inactive. About 1,165,800 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	129 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	10,101 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	40 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 805 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid playa and wash habitats.
Red-spotted toad (<i>Bufo punctatus</i>)	Dry, rocky areas at lower elevations near desert springs and persistent pools along rocky arroyos; desert streams and oases; open grassland; scrubland oaks; and dry woodlands. About 3,104,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	62,556 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	397 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 7,988 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash and playa habitats, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Lizards					
Desert horned lizard (<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>)	Deserts dominated by sagebrush, creosotebush, greasewood, or cactus. Occurs on sandy flats, alluvial fans, washes, and edges of dunes. Burrows in soil during periods of inactivity. About 4,700,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,366 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	655 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,179 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Lizards (Cont.)					
Great Basin collared lizard (<i>Crotaphytus bicinctores</i>)	Usually inhabits alluvia, lava flows, mountain slopes, canyons, buttes, rock outcrops, washes, and rocky plains. Limiting factors are presence of large boulders and open/sparse vegetation. About 3,794,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	83,658 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	508 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 10,221 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Long-nosed leopard lizard (<i>Gambelia wislizenii</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas with scattered shrubs. Prefers sandy or gravelly flats and plains. Also prefers areas with abundant rodent burrows that they occupy when inactive. About 3,740,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	89,458 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	613 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 12,340 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Western fence lizard (<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>)	Disturbed areas, roadsides, gravel beds, rock quarries, lava flows, outcrops, talus slopes, shrublands, riparian areas, and coniferous woodlands. About 4,792,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	96,741 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	648 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,038 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Lizards (Cont.)					
Western whiptail (<i>Aspidoscelis tigris</i>)	Primarily occurs in sparsely vegetated desert and shrubland habitats. During cold winter months, it often occupies underground burrows created by rodents or other lizards. About 3,818,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	84,083 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	514 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 10,342 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Zebra-tailed lizard (<i>Callisaurus draconoides</i>)	Open, warm-desert habitats, especially dry washes and canyons with fine gravel and sand. About 3,228,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	75,157 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	473 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 9,517 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Snakes					
Coachwhip (<i>Masticophis flagellum</i>)	Creosotebush desert, shortgrass prairie, shrub-covered flats and hills. Sandy to rocky substrates. Avoids dense vegetation. About 2,940,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	131 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.004% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	36,272 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	259 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.009% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,211 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.6.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Snakes (Cont.)					
Common kingsnake (<i>Lampropeltis getula</i>)	Coniferous forests, woodlands, swampland, coastal marshes, river bottoms, farmlands, prairies, chaparral, and deserts. Uses rock outcrops and rodent burrows for cover. About 4,581,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	85,515 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	518 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 10,422 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Glossy snake (<i>Arizona elegans</i>)	Light shrubby to barren deserts, sagebrush flats, grasslands, and chaparral-covered slopes and woodlands. Prefers sandy grasslands, shrublands and woodlands. About 1,604,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	54 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	22,562 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	174 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 3,501 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.
Gophersnake (<i>Pituophis catenifer</i>)	Plains grasslands, sandhills, riparian areas, marshes, edges of ponds and lakes, rocky canyons, semidesert and mountain shrublands, montane woodlands, rural and suburban areas, and agricultural areas. Likely inhabits pocket gopher burrows in winter. About 2,739,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	31 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	28,660 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	223 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.008% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,487 acres in area of indirect effect	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.6.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Snakes (Cont.)					
Groundsnake (<i>Sonora semiannulata</i>)	Arid and semiarid regions with rocky to sandy soils. River bottoms, desert flats, sand hummocks, and rocky hillsides. About 2,748,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	36,642 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	249 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.009% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,010 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid greasewood flat habitat.
Mojave rattlesnake (<i>Crotalus scutulatus</i>)	Mostly upland desert and lower mountain slopes. Barren desert, grassland, open juniper woodland, and scrubland; especially common in areas of scattered scrubby growth such as creosote and mesquite. About 5,435,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.07% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,023 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	666 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,400 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Nightsnake (<i>Hypsiglena torquata</i>)	Arid and semiarid desert flats, plains, and woodlands; areas with rocky and sandy soils are preferred. During cold periods of the year, it seeks refuge underground, in crevices, or under rocks. About 3,460,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	69,785 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	434 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 8,732 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

Footnotes on next page.

TABLE 11.6.11.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ would consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations. A maximum of 3,848 acres (15.6 km²) would be developed in the SEZ.
- ^d The area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide transmission line corridor (less the assumed area of direct effects) that extends beyond the 5-mi (8-km) area adjacent to the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 3,848 acres (15.6 km²) of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ.
- ^e For transmission line development, direct effects were estimated within a 22-mi (35-km) long, 250-ft (76-m) wide ROW for an assumed new transmission line connecting to the nearest existing line. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide transmission corridor to the existing transmission line, less the assumed area of direct effects. Additional indirect effects for the transmission line considered only the 17-mi (27-km) long portion that extends outside of the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect effects for the SEZ.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: ≤1% of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but ≤10% of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: >10% of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects, because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 and reptiles summarized in Table 11.6.11.1-1, direct impacts on amphibian and reptile species
2 would be small, as 0.1% or less of potentially suitable habitats identified for the species in the
3 SEZ region would be lost. Larger areas of potentially suitable habitats for most amphibian and
4 reptile species occur within the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 2.4% of available
5 habitat for the long-nosed leopard lizard). Other impacts on amphibians and reptiles could result
6 from surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project
7 activities, accidental spills, collection, and harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be
8 negligible with implementation of programmatic design features.
9

10 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
11 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
12 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
13 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
14 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
15 particular importance for amphibian and reptile species would be the restoration of original
16 ground surface contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with semiarid
17 shrublands.
18
19

20 ***11.6.11.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

21

22 The successful implementation of programmatic design features presented in Appendix
23 A, Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on amphibians and reptiles, especially
24 for those species that depend on habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., washes and playas).
25 Indirect impacts could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic design
26 features, especially those engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills,
27 and fugitive dust. While SEZ-specific design features are best established when considering
28 specific project details, one design feature can be identified at this time:
29

- 30 • Development in wash, playa, and cliff and canyon habitats should be avoided.
- 31

32 If this SEZ-specific design feature is implemented in addition to the programmatic design
33 features, impacts on amphibian and reptile species could be reduced. However, as potentially
34 suitable habitats for a number of the representative amphibian and reptile species occur
35 throughout much of the SEZ, additional species-specific mitigation of direct effects for those
36 species would be difficult or infeasible.
37
38

39 **11.6.11.2 Birds**

40
41

42 ***11.6.11.2.1 Affected Environment***

43

44 This section addresses bird species that are known to occur, or for which potentially
45 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Gold Point
46 SEZ. The list of bird species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined from the

1 Nevada Natural Heritage Program (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information
2 available from the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CDFG 2008) and the
3 SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from the
4 SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). See Appendix M for additional information on the
5 approach used.

6
7 Five bird species that could occur on or in the affected area of the SEZ are considered
8 focal species in the *Desert Bird Conservation Plan* (CalPIF 2009): ash-throated flycatcher
9 (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), burrowing owl
10 (*Athene cunicularia*), common raven (*Corvus*
11 *corax*), ladder-backed woodpecker (*Picoides*
12 *scalaris*), and Le Conte’s thrasher (*Toxostoma*
13 *lecontei*). Habitats for most of these species are
14 described in Table 11.6.11.2-1. Because of its
15 special species status, the burrowing owl is
16 discussed in Section 11.6.12.

Desert Focal Bird Species

Bird species whose requirements define spatial attributes, habitat characteristics, and management regimes representative of a healthy desert system (Chase and Geupel 2005).

Waterfowl, Wading Birds, and Shorebirds

17
18
19 As discussed in Section 4.10.2.2.2, waterfowl (ducks, geese, and swans), wading birds
20 (herons and cranes), and shorebirds (avocets, gulls, plovers, rails, sandpipers, stilts, and terns) are
21 among the most abundant groups of birds in the six-state study area. However, within the
22 proposed Gold Point SEZ, waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebird species would be mostly
23 absent to uncommon. Playa and wash habitats within the SEZ may attract shorebird species, but
24 Deep Springs Lake, Cottonwood and Crooked creeks, and larger washes and dry lakes within 50
25 mi (80 km) of the SEZ would provide more viable habitat for this group of birds. The killdeer
26 (*Charadrius vociferus*) is the shorebird species most likely to occur within the SEZ.

Neotropical Migrants

27
28
29 As discussed in Section 4.10.2.2.3, neotropical migrants represent the most diverse
30 category of birds within the six-state study area. Species expected to occur within the proposed
31 Gold Point SEZ include the ash-throated flycatcher, Bewick’s wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*),
32 Brewer’s sparrow (*Spizella breweri*), cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*), common
33 poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), common raven, greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx*
34 *californianus*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), ladder-backed woodpecker, Le Conte’s
35 thrasher, lesser nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*),
36 northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), rock wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), sage sparrow
37 (*Amphispiza belli*), Say’s phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), and western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)
38 (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007).

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Bird Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Shorebirds					
Killdeer (<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>)	Open areas such as fields, meadows, lawns, mudflats, and shores. Nests on ground in open dry or gravelly locations. About 129,200 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	29 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	145 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	7 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.005% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 141 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid playa and wash habitats. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Neotropical Migrants					
Ash-throated flycatcher (<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>)	Common in scrub and woodland habitats including desert riparian and desert washes. Requires hole/cavity for nesting. Uses shrubs or small trees for foraging perches. About 4,365,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.09% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	90,225 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	621 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 12,495 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Bewick's wren (<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>)	Generally associated with dense, brushy habitats. Permanent resident of lowland deserts and pinyon-juniper forests of southern Utah. Breeding occurs in brushy areas of open woodlands and other open habitats. Cavity nester with nests constructed in small enclosed areas such as tree cavities, nesting boxes, rock crevices, or the center of a brush pile. About 3,047,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	160 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.005% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	36,303 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	261 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.009% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,251 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Brewer's sparrow (<i>Spizella breweri</i>)	Considered a shrub-steppe obligate. Occupies open desert scrub and cropland habitats. However, may also occur in high desert scrub (greasewood) habitats, particularly where adjacent to shrub-steppe habitats. Nests are usually located in patches of sagebrush that are taller and denser, with more bare ground and less herbaceous cover, than the surrounding habitat. Also breeds in large sagebrush openings in pinyon-juniper or coniferous forest habitats. About 3,801,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	89,479 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	613 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 12,334 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)</i>					
Common poorwill (<i>Phalaenoptilus nutallii</i>)	Scrubby and brushy areas, prairie, desert, rocky canyons, open woodlands, and broken forests. Mostly in arid and semi-arid habitats. Nests in open areas on a bare site. About 4,474,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.09% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	88,928 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	621 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 12,495 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Common raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	Occurs in most habitats. Trees and cliffs provide cover. Roosts primarily in trees. Nests on cliffs, bluffs, tall trees, or man-made structures. Forages in sparse, open terrain. About 4,755,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,891 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	661 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,299 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Greater roadrunner (<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>)	Desert scrub, chaparral, edges of cultivated lands, and arid open areas with scattered brush. Requires thickets, large bushes, or small trees for shade, refuge, and roosting. Usually nests low in trees, shrubs, or clumps of cactus. Rarely nests on ground. About 4,772,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	89,983 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	620 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 12,474 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Horned lark (<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>)	Common to abundant resident in a variety of open habitats. Breeds in grasslands, sagebrush, semidesert shrublands, and alpine tundra. During migration and winter, inhabits the same habitats, other than tundra, and occurs in agricultural areas. Usually occurs where plant density is low and there are exposed soils. About 4,198,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.09% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,444 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	658 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,239 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Ladder-backed woodpecker (<i>Picoides scalaris</i>)	Variety of habitats including deserts, arid scrub, riparian woodlands, mesquite, scrub oak, pinyon-juniper woodlands. Digs nest hole in rotted stub or dead or dying branches of various trees. Also nests in saguaro, agave, yucca, fence posts, and utility poles. Nests on ledges; branches of trees, shrubs, and cactus; and holes in trees or walls. About 3,179,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	62,853 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	400 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 8,048 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Le Conte's thrasher (<i>Toxostoma lecontei</i>)	Open desert wash, alkali desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats. Prefers to nest and forage in arroyos and washes lined with dense stands of creosotebush and salt bush. About 2,537,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	62,418 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	397 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 7,988 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Lesser nighthawk (<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>)	Open country, desert regions, scrub, savanna, and cultivated areas. Usually near water including open marshes, salt ponds, large rivers, rice paddies, and beaches. Roosts on low perches or the ground. Nests in the open on bare sites. About 4,288,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.09% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	89,458 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	613 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 12,334 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Loggerhead shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	Open country with scattered trees and shrubs, savanna, desert scrub, desert riparian, Joshua tree, and occasionally open woodland habitats. Perches on poles, wires, or fence posts (suitable hunting perches are important aspect of habitat). Nests in shrubs and small trees. About 4,732,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,831 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	660 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,279 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Northern mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	Parkland, cultivated lands, second-growth habitats, desert scrub, and riparian areas. Forages on ground in short, grassy to nearly barren substrates. About 5,167,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.07% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,921 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	663 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,340 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Rock wren (<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>)	Arid and semiarid habitats. Breeds in areas with talus slopes, scrublands, or dry washes. Nests, constructed of plant materials, are located in rock crevices, and the nest entrance is paved with small rocks and stones. About 5,235,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.07% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,969 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	665 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,380 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash habitat, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Sage sparrow (<i>Amphispiza belli</i>)	Prefers shrubland, grassland, and desert habitats. The nest, constructed of twigs and grasses, is located either low in a shrub or on the ground. About 4,005,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,364 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	656 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,199 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Say's phoebe (<i>Sayornis saya</i>)	Arid open country, deserts, sagebrush plains, dry barren foothills, canyons, cliffs, ranches, and rural homes. Nests in cliff crevices, holes in banks, sheltered ledges, tree cavities, under bridges and roofs, and in mines. About 2,558,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	108 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.004% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	29,455 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	231 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.009% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,648 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Neotropical Migrants (Cont.)					
Western kingbird (<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>)	Occurs in a variety of habitats including riparian forests and woodlands, savannas, shrublands, agricultural lands, deserts, and urban areas. Nesting occurs in trees, bushes, and other raised areas, such as buildings. Migrates to Central America or the southeastern United States for the winter. About 4,046,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,064 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	653 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,138 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Birds of Prey					
American kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius</i>)	Occurs in most open habitats, in various shrub and early successional forest habitats, forest openings, and various ecotones. Perches on trees, snags, rocks, utility poles and wires, and fence posts. Uses cavities in trees, snags, rock areas, banks, and buildings for nesting and cover. About 4,756,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,766 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	661 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,299 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Birds of Prey</i> (Cont.)					
Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)	Grasslands, shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine forests. Occasionally in most other habitats, especially during migration and winter. Nests on cliffs and sometimes trees in rugged areas, with breeding birds ranging widely over surrounding areas. About 4,800,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,667 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	656 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,199 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
Great horned owl (<i>Bubo virginianus</i>)	Needs large abandoned bird nest or large cavity for nesting. Usually lives on forest edges and hunts in open areas. In desert areas, requires wooded cliff areas for nesting. About 5,070,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,023 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	666 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,400 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)					
Long-eared owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)	Nests and roosts in dense vegetation and hunts in open areas (e.g., creosotebush-bursage flats, desert scrub, grasslands, and agricultural fields). About 4,611,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,391 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	653 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,138 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Red-tailed hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	Wide variety of habitats from deserts, mountains, and populated valleys. Open areas with scattered, elevated perch sites such as scrub desert, plains and montane grassland, agricultural fields, pastures, urban parklands, broken coniferous forests, and deciduous woodland. Nests on cliff ledges or in tall trees. About 3,192,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	85,251 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	576 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 11,589 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)					
Turkey vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>)	Occurs in open stages of most habitats that provide adequate cliffs or large trees for nesting, roosting, and resting. Migrates and forages over most open habitats. Will roost communally in trees, exposed boulders, and occasionally transmission line support towers. About 3,517,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	62,853 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	400 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 8,048 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Upland Game Birds					
Chukar (<i>Alectoris chukar</i>)	Steep, semiarid slopes with rocky outcrops and shrubs with a grass and forb understory. Distribution often follows that of cheatgrass. Sources of water are required during hot, dry periods, with most birds found within 0.25 mi (0.4 km) of water during the brooding period. About 4,585,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,747 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	646 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 12,998 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Other than avoidance of wash and playa habitats, no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Upland Game Birds</i>					
Gambel's quail (<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>)	Deserts, especially in areas with brushy or thorny growth, and adjacent cultivated areas. Usually occurs near water. Nests on the ground under cover of small trees, shrubs, and grass tufts. About 2,781,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	131 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.005% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	37,496 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	259 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,211 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid wash and playa habitats.
Mourning dove (<i>Zenaidura macroura</i>)	Habitat generalist, occurring in grasslands, shrublands, croplands, lowland and foothill riparian forests, ponderosa pine forests, deserts, and urban and suburban areas. Rarely in aspen and other forests, coniferous woodlands, and alpine tundra. Nests on ground or in trees. Winters mostly in lowland riparian forests adjacent to cropland. About 4,379,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.09% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	85,865 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	584 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 11,750 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area.

^c Direct effects within the SEZ would consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations. A maximum of 3,848 acres (15.6 km²) of direct effects within the SEZ was assumed.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.6.11.2-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^d The area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide transmission line corridor (less the assumed area of direct effects) that extends beyond the 5-mi (8-km) area adjacent to the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 3,848 acres (15.6 km²) of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include those from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ.
- ^e For transmission line development, direct effects were estimated within a 22-mi (35-km) long, 250-ft (76-m) wide ROW for an assumed new transmission line connecting to the nearest existing line. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide transmission corridor to the existing transmission line, less the assumed area of direct effects. Additional indirect effects for the transmission line only considered the 17-mi (27-km) long portion that extends outside of the 5 mi (8 km) area of indirect effects for the SEZ.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: > 1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $> 10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects, because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 **Birds of Prey**

2
3 Section 4.10.2.2.4 provides an overview of the birds of prey (raptors, owls, and vultures)
4 within the six-state study area. Twenty-seven bird of prey species have been reported from Iron
5 County (Utah Ornithological Society 2007). Raptor species that could occur within the
6 proposed Gold Point SEZ include the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), golden eagle
7 (*Aquila chrysaetos*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), red-tailed
8 hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), and turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002;
9 USGS 2007). Several special status birds of prey species are discussed in Section 11.6.12.

10
11
12 **Upland Game Birds**

13
14 Section 4.10.2.2.5 provides an overview of the upland game birds (primarily pheasants,
15 grouse, quail, and doves) that occur within the six-state study area. Upland game species that
16 could occur within the proposed Gold Point SEZ include the chukar (*Alectoris chukar*),
17 Gambel's quail (*Callipepla gambelii*), and mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*) (CDFG 2008;
18 NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007).

19
20 Table 11.6.11.2-1 provides habitat information for representative bird species that could
21 occur within the proposed Gold Point SEZ. Special status bird species are discussed in
22 Section 11.6.12.

23
24
25 **11.6.11.2.2 Impacts**

26
27 The types of impacts that birds could incur from construction, operation, and
28 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
29 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
30 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the application of any additional
31 mitigation measures. Section 11.6.11.2.3, below, identifies design features of particular
32 relevance to the proposed Gold Point SEZ.

33
34 The assessment of impacts on bird species is based on available information on the
35 presence of species in the affected area, as presented in Section 11.6.11.2.1 following the
36 analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination
37 with federal or state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts
38 more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions
39 to avoid or mitigate impacts on birds (see Section 11.6.11.2.3).

40
41 In general, impacts on birds would result from habitat disturbance (i.e., habitat reduction,
42 fragmentation, and alteration), and from disturbance, injury, or mortality to individual birds.
43 Table 11.6.11.2-1 summarizes the magnitude of potential impacts on representative bird species
44 resulting from solar energy development in the proposed Gold Point SEZ. Direct impacts on all
45 representative bird species would be small, as only 0.2% or less of potentially suitable habitats
46 for the bird species would be lost (Table 11.6.11.2-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitat

1 for bird species occur within the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 2.7% of potentially
2 suitable habitat for the red-tailed hawk). Other impacts on birds could result from collision with
3 vehicles and buildings, surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust
4 generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and
5 harassment. Indirect impacts on areas outside the SEZ (e.g., impacts caused by dust generation,
6 erosion, and sedimentation) are expected to be negligible with implementation of programmatic
7 design features.
8

9 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
10 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
11 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
12 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
13 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
14 particular importance for bird species would be the restoration of original ground surface
15 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with desert scrub, playa, and wash
16 habitats.
17
18

19 ***11.6.11.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness*** 20

21 The successful implementation of programmatic design features presented in Appendix
22 A, Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on birds, especially for those species that
23 depend on habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., wash and playa habitats). Indirect impacts
24 could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic design features, especially
25 those engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust.
26 While SEZ-specific design features important to reducing impacts on birds are best established
27 when project details are considered, some design features can be identified at this time:
28

- 29 • The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding
30 between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds
31 will be followed.
32
- 33 • Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation
34 regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the
35 USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and
36 Golden Eagle Protection Act.
37
- 38 • Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.
39

40 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to the programmatic
41 design features, impacts on bird species could be reduced. However, as potentially suitable
42 habitats for a number of the bird species occur throughout much of the SEZ, additional species-
43 specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.
44
45

1 **11.6.11.3 Mammals**

2
3
4 **11.6.11.3.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section addresses mammal species that are known to occur, or for which potentially
7 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Gold Point
8 SEZ. The list of mammal species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined from
9 the Nevada Natural Heritage Program (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information
10 available from the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CDFG 2008) and the
11 SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from
12 the SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). Appendix M contains additional information on the
13 approach used.

14
15 More than 55 species of mammals have ranges that encompass the area of the proposed
16 Gold Point SEZ (NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007); however, suitable habitats for a number of these
17 species are limited or nonexistent within the SEZ (USGS 2007). Similar to the overview of
18 mammals provided for the six-state study area (Section 4.10.2.3), the following discussion for
19 the SEZ emphasizes big game and other mammal species that (1) have key habitats within or
20 near the SEZ, (2) are important to humans (e.g., big game, small game, and furbearer species),
21 and/or (3) are representative of other species that share similar habitats.

22
23
24 **Big Game**

25
26 The big game species that could occur within the area of the proposed Gold Point SEZ
27 include cougar (*Puma concolor*), elk (*Cervus canadensis*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*),
28 Nelson’s bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*), and pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*)
29 (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007). Because of its special species status, Nelson’s
30 bighorn sheep is addressed in Section 11.6.12. Based on land cover, potentially suitable habitat
31 for the cougar and mule deer occur throughout the SEZ; whereas, limited suitable habitat for elk
32 and pronghorn occurs within the SEZ (Table 11.6.11.3-1). Figures 11.6.11.3-1 and 11.6.11.3-2
33 show the location of the SEZ relative to the mapped ranges of mule deer and pronghorn,
34 respectively.

35
36
37 **Other Mammals**

38
39 A number of furbearers and small game mammal species occur within the area of the
40 proposed Gold Point SEZ. Species that could occur within the area of the SEZ include the
41 American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), bobcat (*Lynx*
42 *rufus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), gray fox (*Urocyon*
43 *cinereoargenteus*), kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*), and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) (CDFG 2008;
44 NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007).

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Mammal Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Big Game					
Cougar (<i>Puma concolor</i>)	Most common in rough, broken foothills and canyon country, often in association with montane forests, shrublands, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. About 5,040,400 acres ^h of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,059 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	648 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,038 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Elk (<i>Cervis canadensis</i>)	Semi-open forest, mountain meadows, foothills, plains, valleys, and alpine tundra. Uses open spaces such as alpine pastures, marshy meadows, river flats, brushy clean cuts, forest edges, and semidesert areas. About 1,242,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	2 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.0002% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	27,044 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	216 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,346 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Big Game (Cont.)					
Mule deer (<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>)	Most habitats, including coniferous forests, desert shrub, chaparral, and grasslands with shrubs. Greatest densities in shrublands on rough, broken terrain that provides abundant browse and cover. About 4,182,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.09% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,401 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	658 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,239 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Pronghorn (<i>Antilocapra americana</i>)	Grasslands and semidesert shrublands on rolling topography that affords good visibility. Most abundant in shortgrass or midgrass prairies and least common in xeric habitats. About 1,582,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	131 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.008% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	35,757 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	256 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,151 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers</i>					
American badger (<i>Taxidea taxus</i>)	Open grasslands and deserts, meadows in subalpine and montane forests, alpine tundra. Digs burrows in friable soils. Most common in areas with abundant populations of ground squirrels, prairie dogs, and pocket gophers. About 4,698,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,882 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	658 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,239 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Black-tailed jackrabbit (<i>Lepus californicus</i>)	Open plains, fields, and deserts with scattered thickets or patches of shrubs. Also open, early stages of forests and chaparral habitats. Rests during the day in shallow depressions, and uses shrubs for cover. About 5,121,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,969 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	665 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,380 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Bobcat (<i>Lynx rufus</i>)	Most habitats except subalpine coniferous forest and montane meadow grasslands. Most common in rocky country from deserts through ponderosa forests. About 2,922,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	160 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.005% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	37,360 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	263 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.009% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,292 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)					
Coyote (<i>Canis latrans</i>)	All habitats at all elevations. Least common in dense coniferous forest. Where human control efforts occur, restricted to broken, rough country with abundant shrub cover and a good supply of rabbits or rodents. About 5,406,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.07% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	99,023 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	666 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,400 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Desert cottontail (<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>)	Abundant to common in grasslands, open forests, and desert shrub habitats. Can occur in areas with minimal vegetation as long as adequate cover (e.g., rock piles, fallen logs, fence rows) is present. Thickets and patches of shrubs, vines, and brush also used as cover. About 4,302,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	110,264 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	94 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 1,884 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Gray fox (<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>)	Deserts, open forests and brush. Prefer wooded areas, broken country, brushlands, and rocky areas. Tolerant of low levels of residential development. About 3,572,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	70,473 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	442 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 8,893 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)</i>					
Kit fox <i>(Vulpes macrotis)</i>	Desert and semidesert areas with relatively open vegetative cover and soft soils. Seeks shelter in underground burrows. About 4,227,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.09% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,683 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	648 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,038 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Red fox <i>(Vulpes vulpes)</i>	Most common in open woodlands, pasturelands, riparian areas, and agricultural lands. About 2,610,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	54 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	35,736 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	253 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 5,090 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals</i>					
Big brown bat (<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>)	Most habitats from lowland deserts to timberline meadows. Roosts in hollow trees, rock crevices, mines, tunnels, and buildings. About 3,535,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	70,572 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	447 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 8,994 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Botta's pocket gopher (<i>Thomomys bottae</i>)	Variety of habitats, including shortgrass plains, oak savanna, agricultural lands, and deserts. Burrows are more common in disturbed areas such as roadways and stream floodplains. About 3,382,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	84,339 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	579 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 11,649 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Brazilian free-tailed bat (<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>)	Cliffs, deserts, grasslands, old fields, savannas, shrublands, woodlands, and suburban/urban areas. Roosts in buildings, caves, and hollow trees. May roost in rock crevices, bridges, signs, or cliff swallow nests during migration. Large maternity colonies inhabit caves, buildings, culverts, and bridges. About 4,307,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.09% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	84,574 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	587 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 11,810 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small) Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Cactus mouse (<i>Peromyscus eremicus</i>)	Variety of areas, including desert scrub, semidesert chaparral, desert wash, semidesert grassland, and cliff and canyon habitats. About 1,780,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	129 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.007% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	10,537 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	43 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.002% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 865 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitat.
California myotis (<i>Myotis californicus</i>)	Desertscrub, semidesert shrublands, lowland riparian, swamps, riparian suburban areas, plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, woodlands, and forests. Roosts in caves, mine tunnels, hollow trees, and loose rocks. About 3,780,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	84,339 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	579 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.015% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 11,649 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Canyon mouse (<i>Peromyscus crinitus</i>)	Associated with rocky substrates in a variety of habitats including desert scrub, sagebrush shrublands, woodlands, cliffs and canyons, and volcanic rock and cinder lands. Source of free water not required. About 2,124,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	2 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.0001% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	28,421 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	216 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,346 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Deer mouse (<i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i>)	Tundra; alpine and subalpine grasslands; plains grasslands; open, sparsely vegetated deserts; warm temperate swamps and riparian forests; and Sonoran desert scrub habitats. About 4,976,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.08% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,741 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	656 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,199 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Desert shrew (<i>Notiosorex crawfordi</i>)	Usually in arid areas with adequate cover such as semiarid grasslands, shortgrass plains, desert scrub, chaparral slopes, shortgrass plains, oak savannas and woodlands, and alluvial fans. About 3,479,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	71,340 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	440 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 8,853 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Desert woodrat (<i>Neotoma lepida</i>)	Sagebrush scrub; chaparral; deserts and rocky slopes with scattered cactus, yucca, pine-juniper, or other low vegetation; creosotebush desert; Joshua tree woodlands; scrub oak woodlands, pinyon-juniper woodlands; and riparian zones. Dens built of debris on ground, among cacti or yucca, along cliffs, among rocks, or occasionally in trees. About 5,231,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.07% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,747 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	656 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,199 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Hoary bat (<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>)	Chaparral, shortgrass plains, scrub-grassland, desertscrub, forests and woodlands. Usually roosts in trees, also in caves, rock crevices, and houses. About 1,799,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	158 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.009% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	9,379 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	50 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.003% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 1,006 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Little pocket mouse (<i>Perognathus longimembris</i>)	Mostly sandy and gravelly soils, but also stony soils and rarely rocky sites. About 2,314,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	25 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	36,543 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	248 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,990 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.
Long-legged myotis (<i>Myotis volans</i>)	Prefers pine forest, desert, and riparian habitats. Old buildings, rock crevices, and hollow trees are used for daytime roosting and winter hibernation. Forages in open areas, such as forest clearings. About 3,605,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	70,925 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	449 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 9,034 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Merriam's kangaroo rat (<i>Dipodomys merriami</i>)	Plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, desertscrub, shortgrass plains, oak and juniper savannas, mesquite dunes, and creosote flats. About 4,206,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.09% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,387 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	655 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 13,179 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Northern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys leucogaster</i>)	Occurs in grasslands, sagebrush deserts, overgrazed pastures, weedy roadside ditches, sand dunes, and other habitats with sandy soil and sparse vegetation. About 2,793,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	25 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.001% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	36,637 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	248 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.009% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 4,990 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact.
Silver-haired bat (<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>)	Urban areas, chaparral, alpine and subalpine grasslands, forests, scrub-grassland, oak savanna and desertscrub habitats. Roosts under bark, in hollow trees, caves and mines. Forages over clearings and open water. About 4,252,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.09% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	84,170 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	579 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 11,649 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Southern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys torridus</i>)	Low, arid, shrub and semiscrub vegetation of deserts. About 2,882,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	70,577 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.015% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 8,652 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Western pipistrelle (<i>Parastrellus esperus</i>)	Deserts and lowlands, desert mountain ranges, desert scrub flats, and rocky canyons. Roosts mostly in rock crevices, sometimes mines and caves, and rarely in buildings. Suitable roosts occur in rocky canyons and cliffs. Most abundant bat in desert regions. About 3,726,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	84,495 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	587 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.02% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 11,810 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
White-tailed antelope squirrel (<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>)	Low deserts, semidesert and montane shrublands, plateaus, and foothills in areas with sparse vegetation and hard gravelly surfaces. Spends nights and other periods of inactivity in underground burrows. About 3,735,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	84,085 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	516 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 10,382 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b			Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
		Within SEZ Direct Effects ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Within Transmission Corridor (Indirect and Direct Effects) ^e	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>					
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>					
Yuma myotis (<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>)	Riparian areas, grasslands, semidesert shrubland, mountain brush, woodlands, and deserts. Occurs where there is open water, regardless of the habitat. Roosts in caves, mines, cliffs, crevices, buildings, and swallow nests. About 3,762,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,848 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	83,651 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	571 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.015% of available potentially suitable habitat) and 11,489 acres in area of indirect effects	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 3,848 acres (15.6 km²) of direct effects within the SEZ was assumed.

^c Direct effects within the SEZ would consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.

^d The area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide transmission line corridor (less the assumed area of direct effects) that extends beyond the 5-mi (8-km) area adjacent to the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 3,848 acres (15.6 km²) of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include those from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ.

^e For transmission line development, direct effects were estimated within a 22-mi (35-km) long, 250-ft (76-m) wide ROW for an assumed new transmission line connecting to the nearest existing line. Indirect effects were estimated within a 1-mi (1.6-km) wide transmission corridor to the existing transmission line, less the assumed area of direct effects. Additional indirect effects for the transmission line only considered the 17-mi (27-km) long portion that extends outside of the 5 mi (8 km) area of indirect effects for the SEZ

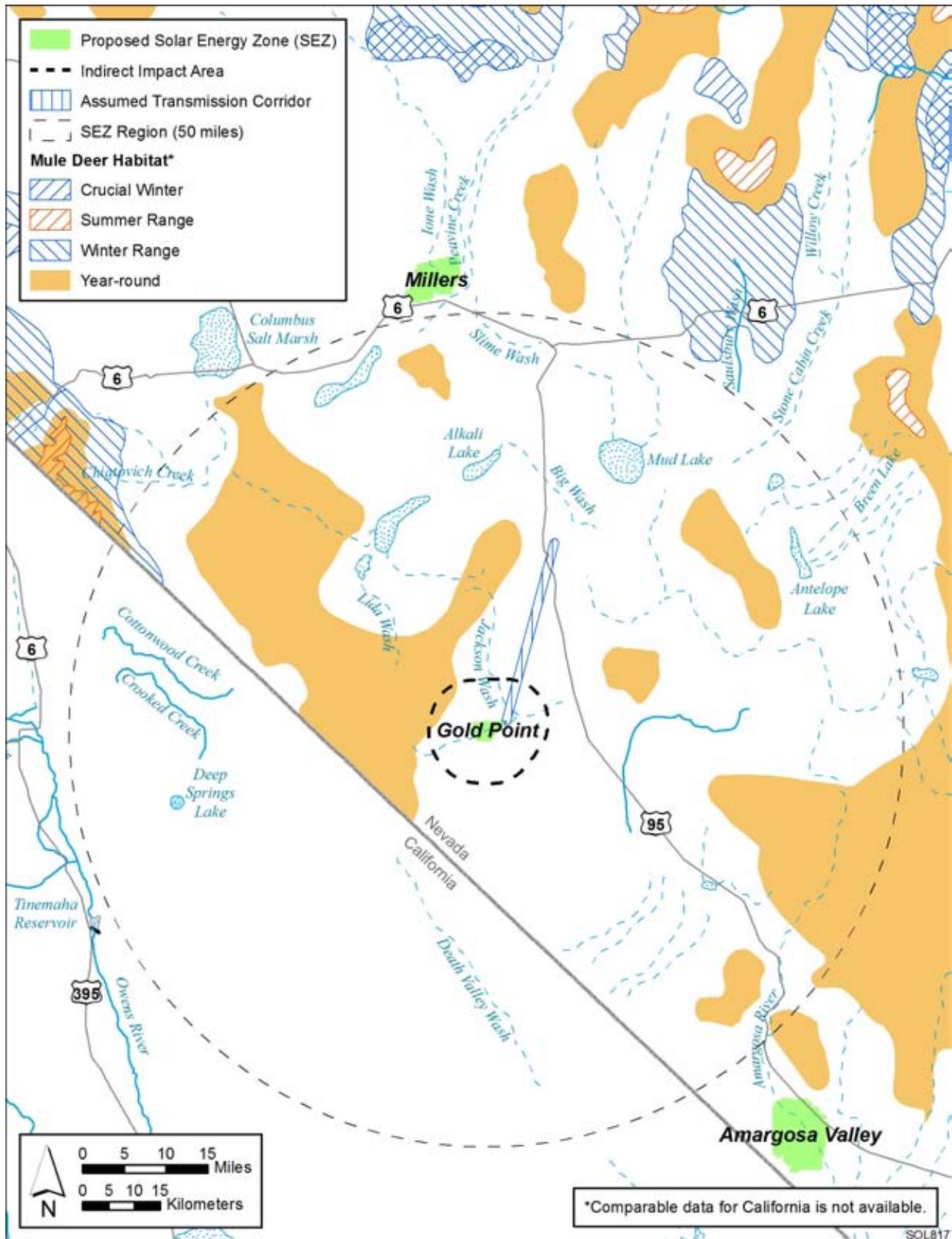
Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.6.11.3-1 (Cont.)

- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) small: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) moderate: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) large: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects, because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

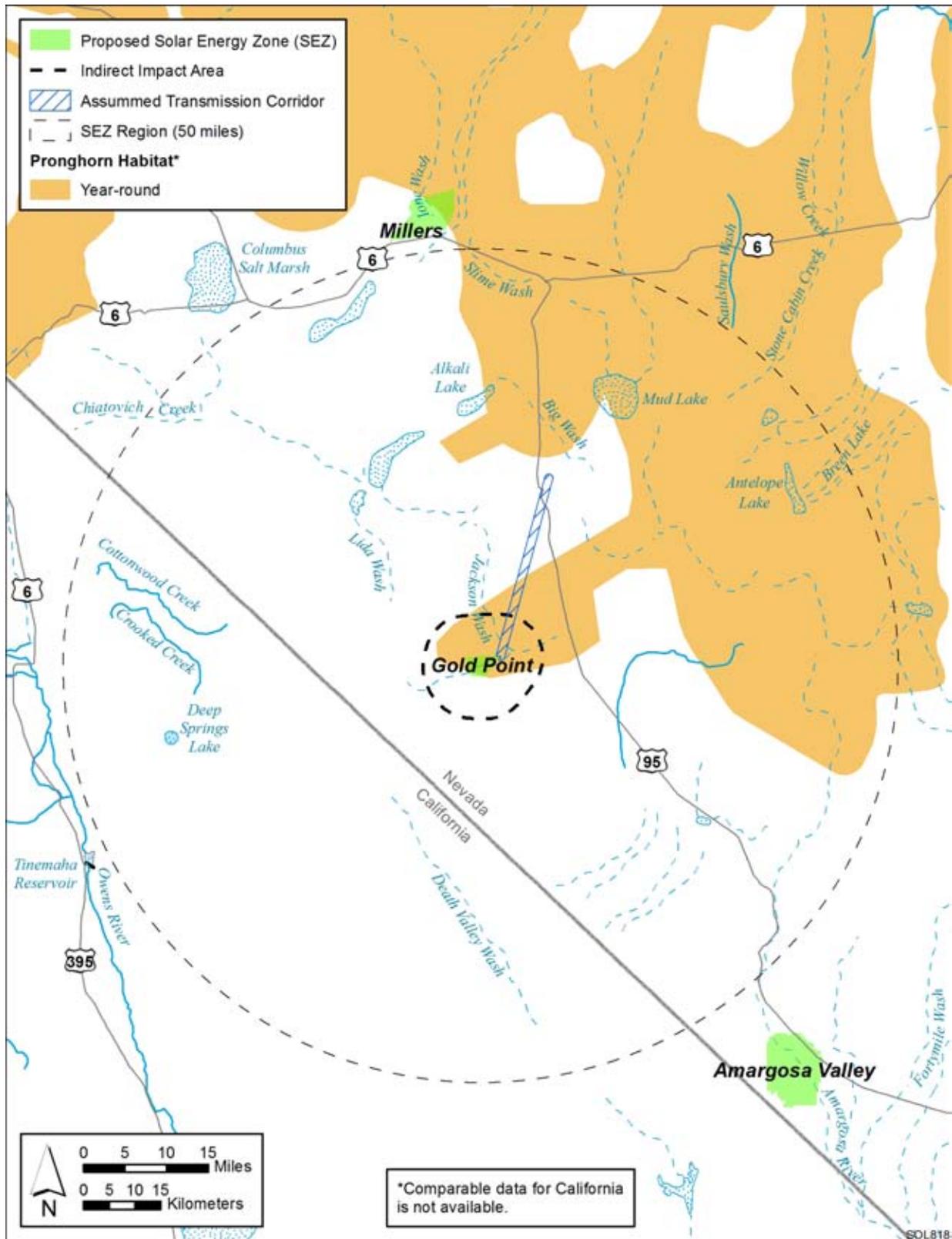
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1

2 **FIGURE 11.6.11.3-1 Location of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ Relative to the Mapped Range of**

3 **Mule Deer (Source: NDOW 2010)**



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.6.11.3-2 Location of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ Relative to the Mapped Range of**
 3 **Pronghorn (Source: NDOW 2010)**

1 The nongame (small) mammals include bats, rodents, and shrews. Representative
2 species for which potentially suitable habitat occurs within the proposed Gold Point SEZ include
3 Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), cactus mouse (*Peromyscus eremicus*), canyon mouse
4 (*P. crinitis*), deer mouse (*P. maniculatus*), desert kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys deserti*), desert shrew
5 (*Notiosorex crawfordi*), little pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris*), Merriam's pocket
6 mouse (*Dipodomys merriami*), northern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys leucogaster*), southern
7 grasshopper mouse (*O. torridus*), and white-tailed antelope squirrel (*Ammospermophilus*
8 *leucurus*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007). Bat species that may occur within the area
9 of the SEZ include the big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), Brazilian free-tailed bat (*Tadarida*
10 *brasiliensis*), California myotis (*Myotis californicus*), hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), long-legged
11 myotis (*M. volans*), silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), and western pipistrelle
12 (*Parastrellus hesperus*) (CDFG 2008; NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007). However, roost sites for the
13 bat species (e.g., caves, hollow trees, rock crevices, or buildings) would be limited or absent
14 within the SEZ. Several other special status bat species that could occur within the SEZ area are
15 addressed in Section 11.6.12.

16
17 Table 11.6.11.3-1 provides habitat information for representative mammal species that
18 could occur within the proposed Gold Point SEZ. Special status mammal species are discussed in
19 Section 11.6.12.

20 21 22 **11.6.11.3.2 Impacts**

23
24 The types of impacts that mammals could incur from construction, operation, and
25 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
26 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
27 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the application of any additional
28 mitigation measures. Section 11.6.11.3.3, below, identifies design features of particular
29 relevance to mammals for the proposed Gold Point SEZ.

30
31 The assessment of impacts on mammal species is based on available information on
32 the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.6.11.3.1, following the
33 analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination
34 with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts more
35 thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions to
36 avoid or mitigate impacts on mammals (see Section 11.6.11.3.3). Table 11.6.11.3-1 summarizes
37 the magnitude of potential impacts on representative mammal species resulting from solar
38 energy development (with the inclusion of programmatic design features) in the proposed Gold
39 Point SEZ.

40 41 42 **Cougar**

43
44 Up to 3,848 acres (15.6 km²) of potentially suitable cougar habitat could be lost by solar
45 energy development within the proposed Gold Point SEZ and another 648 acres (2.6 km²) by
46 transmission line construction. This represents about 0.09% of potentially suitable cougar habitat

1 within the SEZ region. More than 98,000 acres (396 km²) of potentially suitable cougar habitat
2 occurs within the area of indirect effects. Overall, impacts on cougar from solar energy
3 development in the SEZ would be small.
4
5

6 **Elk**

7

8 Only 2 acres (0.008 km²) of potentially suitable elk habitat could be lost by solar
9 energy development within the proposed Gold Point SEZ and another 216 acres (0.9 km²) by
10 transmission line construction. This represents about 0.02% of potentially suitable elk habitat
11 within the SEZ region. More than 27,000 acres (109 km²) of potentially suitable elk habitat
12 occurs within the area of indirect effects. No mapped elk range occurs near the SEZ (NDOW
13 2010). Overall, impacts on elk from solar energy development in the SEZ would be small.
14

15 **Mule Deer**

16

17
18 Based on land cover analyses, up to 3,848 acres (15.6 km²) of potentially suitable mule
19 deer habitat could be lost by solar energy development within the proposed Gold Point SEZ and
20 another 658 acres (2.7 km²) by transmission line construction. This represents about 0.1% of
21 potentially suitable mule deer habitat within the SEZ region. More than 98,000 acres (396 km²)
22 of potentially suitable mule deer habitat occurs within the area of indirect effects. Based on
23 mapped range, the closest year-round mule deer habitat is about 4.0 mi (6.4 km) from the SEZ
24 (Figure 11.6.11.3-1). About 4,560 acres (18.5 km²) of year-round mule deer habitat occurs
25 within the area of indirect effects. This is about 0.6% of the year-round mule deer habitat within
26 the SEZ region. The closest summer range, winter range, and crucial winter ranges are over 40
27 mi (64 km) from the SEZ (Figure 11.6.11.3-1). Thus, no direct or indirect effects on these mule
28 deer ranges would occur. Overall, impacts on mule deer from solar energy development in the
29 SEZ would be small.
30

31 **Pronghorn**

32

33
34 Based on land cover analyses, about 130 acres (0.5 km²) of potentially suitable
35 pronghorn habitat could be lost by solar energy development within the proposed Gold Point
36 SEZ and another 256 acres (1.0 km²) by transmission line construction. This represents
37 about 0.03% of potentially suitable pronghorn habitat within the SEZ region. Fewer than
38 35,800 acres (145 km²) of potentially suitable pronghorn habitat occurs within the area of
39 indirect effects. Based on mapped range, year-round pronghorn habitat occurs within the SEZ
40 (Figure 11.6.11.3-2). Over 4,430 acres (17.9 km²) of year-round habitat occurs within the SEZ;
41 therefore, up to 3,848 acres (15.6 km²) could be lost by solar energy development within the
42 SEZ and about 300 acres (1.2 km²) could be lost by construction of the proposed transmission
43 line. These losses would total about 0.3% of the year-round pronghorn range within the SEZ
44 region. About 45,630 acres (185 km²) of year-round pronghorn habitat occurs within the area of
45 indirect effects. This is about 3.9% of the year-round pronghorn habitat within the SEZ region.
46 Overall, impacts on pronghorn from solar energy development in the SEZ would be small.
47

1 **Other Mammals**

2
3 Direct impacts on small game, furbearers, and nongame (small) mammal species would
4 be small, as about 0.01 to 0.1% of potential habitats identified for the representative species
5 would be lost by solar energy development within the SEZ and associated transmission line
6 construction (Table 11.6.11.3-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitat for these species
7 occur within the area of potential indirect effects (i.e., ranging from 0.5% for the hoary bat to
8 2.5% for the desert cottontail and Botta's pocket gopher).

9
10
11 **Summary of Impacts on Mammals**

12
13 Overall, direct impacts on mammal species would be small for all species, as only 0.1%
14 or less of potentially suitable habitats for the representative mammal species would be lost
15 (Table 11.6.11.3-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitat for mammal species occur within
16 the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 2.5% for the desert cottontail and Botta's pocket
17 gopher). Other impacts on mammals could result from collision with vehicles and facilities
18 (e.g., fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by
19 project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment.
20 Indirect impacts on areas outside the SEZ (e.g., impacts caused by dust generation, erosion, and
21 sedimentation) would be negligible with implementation of programmatic design features.

22
23 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
24 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
25 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
26 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
27 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
28 particular importance for mammal species would be the restoration of original ground surface
29 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with semiarid shrublands.

30
31
32 ***11.6.11.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

33
34 The implementation of required programmatic design features presented in Appendix A,
35 Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on mammals. Indirect impacts could be
36 reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic design features, especially those
37 engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While
38 SEZ-specific design features important for reducing impacts on mammals are best established
39 when considering specific project details, design features that can be identified at this time are:

- 40
41 • The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free
42 movement of mammals, particularly big game species.
43
44 • Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.
45

1 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to the programmatic
2 design features, impacts on mammals could be reduced. However, potentially suitable habitats
3 for a number of the mammal species occur throughout much of the SEZ; therefore, species-
4 specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.
5

6 7 **11.6.11.4 Aquatic Biota**

8 9 10 ***11.6.11.4.1 Affected Environment***

11
12 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is in a desert valley where surface waters are typically
13 limited to ephemeral and intermittent washes that contain water only for short periods during or
14 following precipitation. No perennial streams or water bodies are present in the proposed Gold
15 Point SEZ or within the area of direct effects associated with the proposed new transmission line
16 corridor. Approximately 3 mi (5 km) of an unnamed intermittent stream runs through the center
17 of the SEZ and flows into the intermittent Jackson Wash. Several ephemeral streams also cross
18 the SEZ, flowing to the northeast and terminating in dry lakes. In addition, the presumed new
19 transmission line (250 ft [76 m] wide) would cross the intermittent Jackson Wash. The
20 intermittent and ephemeral streams within the area of direct effects flow primarily in response to
21 rainfall and typically do not support wetland or riparian habitats or flow into perennial surface
22 waters. Although not considered aquatic habitat, such nonpermanent surface waters may contain
23 invertebrates that are either aquatic opportunists (i.e., species that occupy both temporary and
24 permanent waters) or specialists adapted to living in temporary aquatic environments
25 (Graham 2001). On the basis of information from ephemeral pools in the American Southwest,
26 ostracods (seed shrimp) and small planktonic crustaceans (e.g., copepods or cladocerans) may be
27 present, and larger branchiopod crustaceans such as fairy shrimp could occur (Graham 2001).
28 Various types of insects that have aquatic larval stages, such as dragonflies and a variety of
29 midges and other fly larvae, may also occur depending on the duration of standing water, the
30 distance to permanent water features, and the abundance of other invertebrates for prey
31 (Graham 2001). The NWI mapping does not indicate any wetlands within the Gold Point SEZ
32 (USFWS 2009).
33

34 No perennial streams or water bodies are present within the area of indirect effects
35 associated with the proposed Gold Point SEZ or the presumed new transmission line corridor.
36 There are 8 mi (13 km) of the intermittent Jackson Wash and 8 mi (13 km) of an unnamed
37 intermittent stream present within the area of indirect effects associated with the SEZ. In
38 addition, the 1-mi (2-km) area of indirect effects associated with the proposed new transmission
39 line corridor crosses over Jackson Wash. Washes within the area of indirect effects are typically
40 dry and do not flow into any perennial surface waters. There are also several ephemeral streams
41 within the area of indirect effects. Although typically dry, such ephemeral and intermittent
42 habitat may contain opportunistic crustaceans and aquatic insect larvae. The National Wetlands
43 Inventory mapping does not indicate any wetlands within the area of indirect effects associated
44 with the Gold Point SEZ (USFWS 2009).
45

1 Outside of the indirect effects area, but within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed Gold
2 Point SEZ, are approximately 70 mi (113 km) of perennial streams and 449 mi (723 km) of
3 intermittent streams, 44,389 acres (180 km²) of dry lakes and 1,255 acres (5 km²) of
4 intermittent lakes. The nearest permanent surface water is more than 14 mi (22 km) from the
5 SEZ. Intermittent streams are the only surface water feature in the area of direct and indirect
6 effects, and their area represents approximately 0.7 % of the total amount of intermittent stream
7 present in the 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region.
8
9

10 ***11.6.11.4.2 Impacts*** 11

12 Because surface water habitats are a unique feature in the arid landscape in the vicinity of
13 the proposed Gold Point SEZ, the maintenance and protection of such habitats may be important
14 to the survival of aquatic and terrestrial organisms. The types of impacts that aquatic habitats
15 and biota could incur from the development of utility-scale solar energy facilities are described
16 in detail in Section 5.10.3. Aquatic habitats present on or near the locations selected for
17 construction of solar energy facilities could be affected in a number of ways, including (1) direct
18 disturbance, (2) deposition of sediments, (3) changes in water quantity, and (4) degradation of
19 water quality.
20

21 There are no permanent water bodies, streams, or wetlands within the area of direct or
22 indirect effects associated with the proposed Gold Point SEZ or the presumed new transmission
23 line corridors, and consequently there would be no direct impacts on aquatic habitat from solar
24 energy development. There are intermittent and ephemeral streams in the area of direct and
25 indirect effects associated with the SEZ and presumed new transmission line corridor, and
26 ground disturbance associated with solar development could increase the transport of soil into
27 these streams via water- and airborne pathways. However, intermittent and ephemeral streams in
28 the area of direct and indirect effects are typically dry and are not expected to support aquatic
29 habitat or communities, nor do they flow into perennial surface waters. It is unlikely that
30 significant airborne dust associated with ground disturbance within the SEZ would reach aquatic
31 habitat, given the large distance from the SEZ to the nearest stream (14 mi [22 km]). However,
32 fugitive dust could be minimized using the appropriate dust suppression measures as needed.
33

34 In arid environments, reductions in the quantity of water in aquatic habitats are of
35 particular concern. Water quantity in aquatic habitats could also be affected if significant
36 amounts of surface water or groundwater are utilized for power plant cooling water, for washing
37 mirrors, or for other needs. The greatest need for water would occur if technologies employing
38 wet cooling, such as parabolic trough or power tower, were developed at the site; the associated
39 impacts would ultimately depend on the water source used (including groundwater from aquifers
40 at various depths). There are no surface water habitats on the proposed Gold Point SEZ that
41 could be used to supply water needs. Water demands during normal operations would most
42 likely be met by withdrawing groundwater from wells constructed on-site, and given the
43 subsurface connection between regional groundwater and basins outside the SEZ (see
44 Section 11.6.9.1.2), there is the potential that groundwater withdrawals could reduce surface
45 water levels in streams and wetlands outside of the proposed SEZ. Additional details on the

1 volume of water required and the types of organisms present in potentially affected water bodies
2 would be required in order to further evaluate the potential for impacts from water withdrawals.
3

4 As described in Section 5.10.3, water quality in aquatic habitats could be affected by the
5 introduction of contaminants such as fuels, lubricants, or pesticides/herbicides during site
6 characterization, construction, operation, or decommissioning/reclamation of a solar energy
7 facility. Construction activities occurring near intermittent streams in the Gold Point SEZ and
8 in the proposed new transmission line corridor could introduce contaminants into intermittent
9 streams. However, these features are not expected to contain aquatic habitat or biota and do
10 not connect to any perennial surface waters. The introduction of contaminants could be further
11 minimized by avoiding construction near streams.
12
13

14 ***11.6.11.4.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

15
16 No SEZ-specific design features are identified at this time. If programmatic design
17 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, are implemented as needed and if the
18 utilization of water from groundwater or surface water sources is adequately controlled to
19 maintain sufficient water levels in aquatic habitats, the potential impacts on aquatic biota and
20 habitats from solar energy development at the proposed Gold Point SEZ would be negligible.
21
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23

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1 **11.6.12 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Rare Species)**
2

3 This section addresses special status species that are known to occur, or for which
4 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Gold Point
5 SEZ. Special status species include the following types of species³:
6

- 7 • Species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA;
- 8
- 9 • Species that are proposed for listing, are under review, or are candidates for
10 listing under the ESA;
- 11
- 12 • Species that are listed by the BLM as sensitive;
- 13
- 14 • Species that are listed by the State of Nevada⁴; and
- 15
- 16 • Species that have been ranked by the State of Nevada as S1 or S2 or species of
17 concern by the State of Nevada or the USFWS; hereafter referred to as “rare”
18 species.
19

20 Special status species known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the Gold Point SEZ
21 center (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined from natural heritage records available through
22 NatureServe Explorer (NatureServe 2010), information provided by the NDOW NNHP
23 (Miskow 2009; NDCNR 2004, 2009a,b), CNDDDB (CDFG 2010), the SWReGAP (USGS 2004,
24 2005a, 2007), the CAREGAP (Davis et al. 1998; USGS 2010e), and the USFWS ECOS
25 (USFWS 2010). Information reviewed consisted of county-level occurrences as determined
26 from Nature Serve, element occurrences provided by the CDFG and NNHP, as well as modeled
27 land cover types and predicted suitable habitats for the species within the 50 mi (80 km) region
28 as determined from CAREGAP and SWReGAP. The 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region intersects
29 Esmeralda and Nye Counties, Nevada, as well as Inyo and Mono Counties, California. However,
30 the SEZ and affected area occurs only in Esmeralda County, Nevada. See Appendix M for
31 additional information on the approach used to identify species that could be affected by
32 development within the SEZ.
33

34
35 **11.6.12.1 Affected Environment**
36

37 The affected area considered in the assessment included the areas of direct and indirect
38 effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified
39 during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur). For the Gold
40 Point SEZ, the area of direct effects included the SEZ and the areas within the transmission

³ See Section 4.6.4 for definitions of these species categories. Note that some of the categories of species included here do not fit BLM’s definition of special status species as defined in BLM Manual 6840 (BLM 2008b). These species are included here to ensure broad consideration of species that may be most vulnerable to impacts.

⁴ State-listed species for the state of Nevada are those protected under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants).

1 corridor where ground-disturbing activities are assumed to occur. No new access roads are
2 expected to be needed to serve development on the SEZ because of the proximity of existing
3 infrastructure (refer to Section 11.6.1.2 for development assumptions). The area of indirect
4 effects was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and the portion of the
5 transmission corridor where ground-disturbing activities would not occur but that could be
6 indirectly affected by activities in the area of direct effects. Indirect effects considered in the
7 assessment included effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and accidental spills from
8 the SEZ and transmission construction area, but did not include ground-disturbing activities. The
9 potential magnitude of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ.
10 This area of indirect effects was identified on the basis of professional judgment and was
11 considered sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be subject to indirect
12 effects. The affected area includes both the direct and indirect effects areas.
13

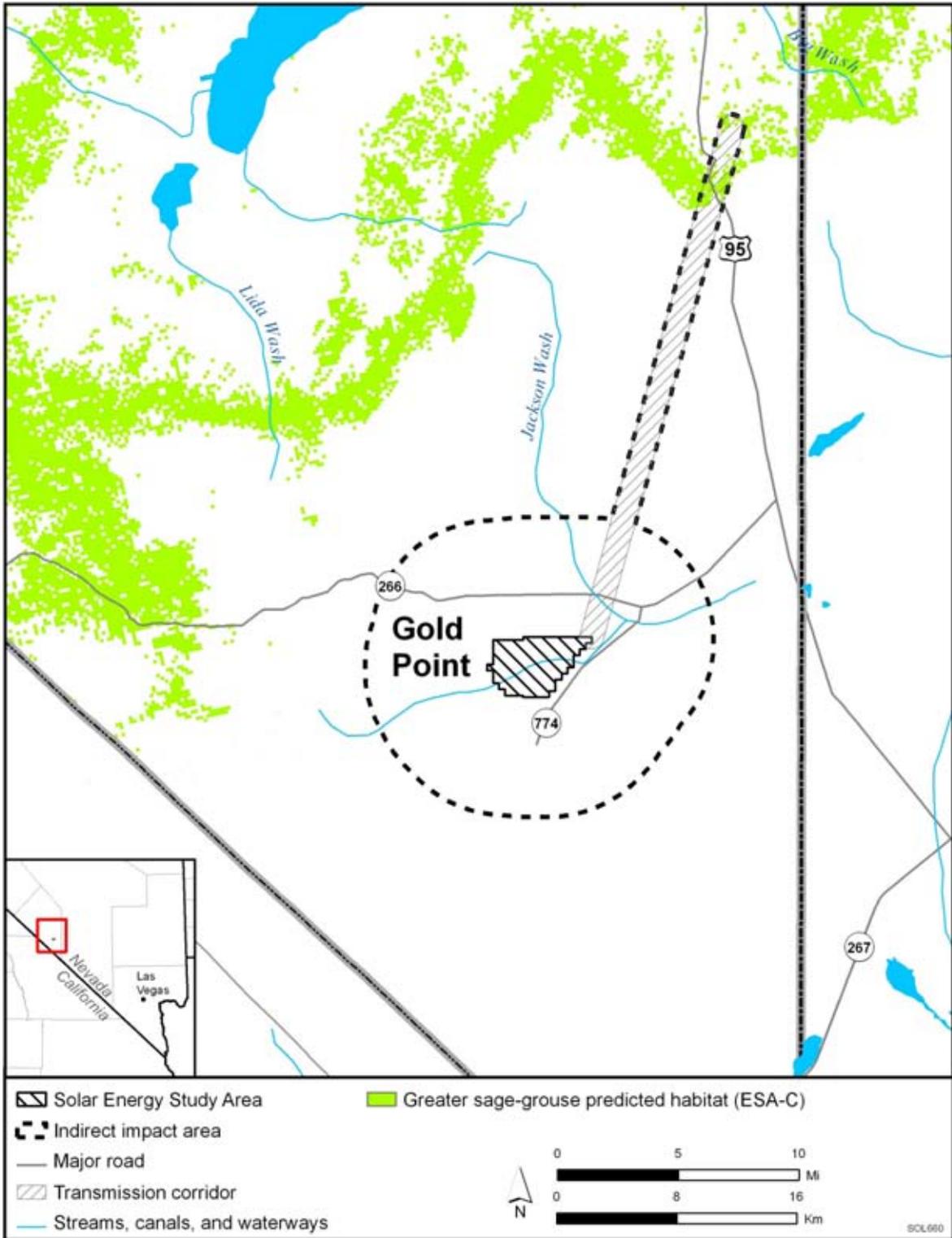
14 The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is intermountain basin mixed
15 desert scrub (see Section 11.6.10). Potentially unique habitats in the affected area in which
16 special status species may reside include rocky cliffs and outcrops, desert washes, playas, and
17 woodland habitats. There are no permanent or perennial surface water features on the SEZ or
18 within the area of indirect effects. However, various intermittent streams (washes) and playas
19 occur on the SEZ and throughout the area of indirect effects. In particular, Jackson Wash occurs
20 northeast of the SEZ within the transmission corridor, and an unnamed tributary to Jackson
21 Wash occurs on the SEZ (Figure 11.6.12.1-1).
22

23 All special status species that are known to occur within the Gold Point SEZ region
24 (i.e., within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ) are listed, with their status, nearest
25 recorded occurrence, and habitats, in Appendix J. Of these species, 21 could be affected by solar
26 energy development on the SEZ based on recorded occurrences or the presence of potentially
27 suitable habitat in the area. These species, their status, and their habitats are presented in
28 Table 11.6.12.1-1. For many of the species listed in the table, their predicted potential occurrence
29 in the affected area is based only on a general correspondence between mapped SWReGAP land
30 cover types and descriptions of species habitat preferences. This overall approach to identifying
31 species in the affected area probably overestimates the number of species that actually occur in
32 the affected area. For many of the species identified as having potentially suitable habitat in the
33 affected area, the nearest known occurrence is more than 20 mi (32 m) away from the SEZ.
34

35 Based on NNHP records, there are no special status species known to occur within the
36 affected area of the Gold Point SEZ (Table 11.6.12.1-1). There are no groundwater-dependent
37 species in the vicinity of the SEZ based upon NNHP records, comments provided by the
38 USFWS (Stout 2009), and the evaluation of groundwater resources in the Gold Point SEZ region
39 (Section 11.6.9).
40
41

42 ***11.6.12.1.1 Species Listed under the Endangered Species Act That Could Occur*** 43 ***in the Affected Area*** 44

45 In scoping comments on the proposed Gold Point SEZ (Stout 2009), the USFWS did not
46 express concern for impacts of project development within the SEZ on any species listed as



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2

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4

5

FIGURE 11.6.12.1-1 Known or Potential Occurrences of Species Listed as Endangered or Threatened under the ESA, Candidates for Listing under the ESA, or Species under Review for ESA Listing in the Affected Area of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ (Sources: Miskow 2009; USGS 2007)

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Special Status Species That Could Be Affected by Solar Energy Development on the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
<i>Plants</i>							
Bullfrog Hills sweetpea	<i>Lathyrus hitchcockianus</i>	NV-S2	Open, dry to slightly moist gravels of rocky drainage bottoms in canyons and on upper alluvial slopes, often at bases of boulders or canyon walls and climbing up through shrubs, in areas of volcanic tuff or carbonate rocks in the mixed-shrub, sagebrush, and pinyon-juniper zones. Elevation ranges between 4,000 and 7,000 ft. ⁱ Nearest recorded occurrence is 35 mi ^j southeast of the SEZ. About 512,600 acres ^k of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,850 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	30 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	90,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoidance or minimization of disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects; translocation of individuals from area of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. Note that these same potential mitigations apply to all special status plants.
Clokey paintbrush	<i>Castilleja martinii</i> var. <i>clokeyi</i>	FWS-SC	Pinyon-juniper woodland at elevations between 6,500 and 9,500 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi east of the SEZ. About 513,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	80 acres of potentially suitable habitat (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
<i>Plants (Cont.)</i>							
Eastwood milkweed	<i>Asclepias eastwoodiana</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada in Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, and Nye Counties in open areas on a wide variety of basic (pH usually >8) soils, including calcareous clay knolls, sand, carbonate or basaltic gravels, or shale outcrops, generally barren and lacking competition. Frequently occurs in small washes or other moisture-accumulating microsites at elevations between 4,700 and 7,100 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 30 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 37,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	An unquantified amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat occurs on the SEZ. ¹	An unquantified amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat occurs in the transmission corridor. ¹	420 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small to large overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. The amount of potentially suitable desert wash habitat in the area of direct effects is not quantified. See the Bullfrog Hills sweetpea for a list of other potential mitigation measures.
Holmgren lupine	<i>Lupinus holmgrenianus</i>	BLM-S; NV-S2	Inhabits dry desert slopes, washes, and valleys on volcanic substrates, in association with sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodland. Elevation ranges between 4,600 and 8,200 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 9 mi west of the SEZ. About 119,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	10 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	27,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to sagebrush habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce impacts. See the Bullfrog Hills sweetpea for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Panamint Mountains bedstraw	<i>Galium hilendiae</i> ssp. <i>carneum</i>	NV-S1	Rocky or gravelly substrates of rocky slopes or open flats within Mojave desert scrub and pinyon-juniper woodlands at elevations between 4,000 and 11,200 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 30 mi southeast of the SEZ. About 962,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	160 acres of potentially suitable habitat (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effects. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Squalid milkvetch	<i>Astragalus serenoii</i> var. <i>sordescens</i>	NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada on dry, open, gravelly, or sandy soils along gentle slopes of alluvial fans or light-colored clay hills, within mixed-shrub, sagebrush, and lower pinyon-juniper communities at elevations between 5,000 and 6,800 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 35 mi north of the SEZ. About 2,815,250 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,850 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	30 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	90,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See the Bullfrog Hills sweetpea for a list of potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Plants (Cont.)							
Tonopah pincushion cactus	<i>Sclerocactus nyensis</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S1	Endemic to Esmeralda and Nye Counties, Nevada on dry rocky soils and low outcrops of rhyolite, tuff, and possibly other rock types, on gentle slopes in open areas or under shrubs in the upper salt desert and lower sagebrush zones. Elevation ranges between 5,700 and 5,800 ft. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 2,370,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,850 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	30 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	88,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See the Bullfrog Hills sweetpea for a list of potential mitigations.
Weasel phacelia	<i>Phacelia mustelina</i>	NV-S2	Mojave desert scrub and pinyon-juniper woodlands on volcanic or gravelly substrates at elevations between 5,000 and 5,500 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 35 mi southeast of the SEZ. About 1,462,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	0 acres	1,450 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
<i>Birds</i>							
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Winter resident in project area in grasslands, sagebrush and saltbrush habitats, as well as the periphery of pinyon-juniper woodlands throughout the project area. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 790,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	200 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	225 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	28,100 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Greater sage-grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	ESA-C; BLM-S;	Year-round resident in SEZ region. Plains, foothills, and mountain valleys dominated by sagebrush. Lek sites are located in relatively open areas surrounded by sagebrush or in areas where sagebrush density is low. Nesting usually occurs on the ground where sagebrush density is higher. Some populations may travel up to 60 mi between summer and winter habitats. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 312,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	50 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	900 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoidance or minimization of disturbance to occupied habitats and/or suitable leks and nesting sites in the area of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in coordination with the USFWS and NDOW.

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Birds (Cont.)							
Prairie falcon	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	BLM-S	Year-round resident in the project area, primarily in open habitats in mountainous areas, steppe, grasslands, or cultivated areas. Nests in well-sheltered ledges of rocky cliffs and outcrops. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 2,387,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,500 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	500 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	81,350 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No direct effects on nesting habitat. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Swainson's hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; CA-S2; NV-S2	Summer breeding resident in the SEZ region. Savanna, open pine-oak woodlands, grasslands, and cultivated lands. Nests typically in solitary trees, bushes, or small groves; sometimes nests near urban areas. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 735,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	50 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	9,650 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No direct impact on nesting habitat. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Western burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia hypugaea</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in open grasslands and prairies, as well as disturbed sites such as golf courses, cemeteries, and airports throughout the SEZ region. Nests in burrows constructed by mammals (prairie dog, badger, etc.). Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 3,082,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,625 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	650 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	97,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact on foraging and nesting habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys; avoidance or minimization of disturbance to occupied burrows and habitats in the area of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.
Mammals							
Brazilian free-tailed bat	<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>	BLM-S; NV-P	Year-round resident in SEZ region. Forages in desert grassland, old fields, savanna, shrubland, and woodland habitats as well as urban areas. Roosts in old buildings, caves, mines, and hollow trees. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi west of the SEZ. About 2,651,850 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,800 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	590 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	83,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Fringed myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in SEZ region. Wide range of habitats including lowland riparian, desert shrub, pinyon-juniper, and sagebrush habitats. Roost in buildings and caves. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 3,051,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,700 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	620 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	88,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Nelson's bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis nelsoni</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Open, steep rocky terrain in mountainous habitats of the eastern Mojave and Sonoran Deserts in California. Rarely uses desert lowlands, but may use them as corridors for travel between mountain ranges. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 941,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	0 acres	150 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	24,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Impacts could be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding occupied habitats and important movement corridors in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Pale kangaroo mouse	<i>Microdipodops pallidus</i>	NV-P; NV-S2	Known from southwestern Nevada and southeastern California. Inhabits fine sands in alkali sink and desert scrub dominated by shadscale or big sagebrush. Often burrows in areas of soft, windblown sand piled at the bases of shrubs. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 1,251,250 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,700 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	200 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	50,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys; avoidance or minimization of disturbance to occupied habitats on the SEZ; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.
Pallid bat	<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in SEZ region. Low-elevation desert communities, including grasslands, shrublands, and woodlands. Roosts in caves, crevices, and mines. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi west of the SEZ. About 2,616,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,550 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	575 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	83,175 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Silver-haired bat	<i>Lasiorycteris noctivagans</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in SEZ region. Primarily high-elevation (1,600 to 8,500 ft) forested areas comprising aspen, cottonwood, white fir, pinyon-juniper, subalpine fir, willow, and spruce communities. Roost and nursery sites occur in tree foliage, cavities, or under loose bark. Rarely hibernates in caves. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi west of the SEZ. About 2,609,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,600 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	580 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	83,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Spotted bat	<i>Euderma maculatum</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in SEZ region. Year-round resident in SEZ region near forests and shrubland habitats throughout the SEZ region. Uses caves and rock crevices for day roosting and winter hibernation. Nearest recorded occurrence is 15 mi west of the SEZ. About 2,605,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,700 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	550 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	76,750 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c			Overall Impact Magnitude ^g and Species-Specific Mitigation ^h
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Transmission Line (Direct Effects) ^e	Indirect Effects (Outside SEZ) ^f	
Mammals (Cont.)							
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S2	Year-round resident in SEZ region near forests and shrubland habitats below 9,000 ft elevation throughout the SEZ region. Roosts and hibernates in caves, mines, and buildings. Nearest recorded occurrence is 8 mi west of the SEZ. About 2,347,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,600 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	450 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	68,550 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Western small-footed myotis	<i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in SEZ region in a variety of woodlands and riparian habitats at elevations below 9,000 ft. Roosts in caves, buildings, mines, and crevices of cliff faces. Nearest recorded occurrence is 9 mi south of the SEZ. About 3,374,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,800 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	650 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	97,950 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

^a BLM-S = listed as a sensitive species by the BLM; ESA-C = candidate for listing under the ESA; FWS-SC = USFWS species of concern; NV-P = protected in the State of Nevada under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants); NV-S1 = ranked as S1 in the State of Nevada; NV-S2 = ranked as S2 in the State of Nevada.

^b For plant species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP land cover types. For terrestrial vertebrate species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.6.12.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^c Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. Impacts of access road construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this evaluation due to the proximity of existing infrastructure to the SEZ.
- ^d Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^e For transmission line development, direct effects were estimated within a 22-mi (8-km), 250-ft (76-m) wide ROW from the SEZ to the nearest transmission line. Direct impacts within this area were determined from the proportion of potentially suitable habitat within the 1-mi (1.6-km) wide transmission corridor.
- ^f Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and the portion of the transmission corridor where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from projects. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- ^g Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment, as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects, because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^h Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ⁱ To convert ft to m, multiply by 0.3048.
- ^j To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.
- ^k To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.
- ^l Although the SWReGAP did not map any wash habitat on the SEZ, there appear to be numerous desert washes that could provide habitat for this species on the SEZ, in the transmission corridor, and in the area of indirect effects, including Jackson Wash and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified.

1 threatened or endangered under the ESA. There are no NNHP records or potentially suitable
2 habitats for any ESA-listed species within the affected area. According to SWReGAP and USGS
3 habitat suitability models, potentially suitable habitat for the desert tortoise, a species listed as
4 threatened under the ESA, does not occur within the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ.
5
6

7 ***11.6.12.1.2 Species That Are Candidates for Listing under the ESA*** 8

9 In scoping comments on the proposed Gold Point SEZ, the USFWS did not identify any
10 candidate species for listing under the ESA that may be directly or indirectly affected by solar
11 energy development on the SEZ (Stout 2009). However, one candidate species, the greater sage-
12 grouse, may occur within the affected area. This species primarily inhabits sagebrush habitats in
13 plains, foothills, and mountain valley regions. This species is known to occur in Esmeralda
14 County, Nevada, and potentially suitable year-round sagebrush habitat is expected to occur
15 within the affected area (Figure 11.6.12.1-1). According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability
16 model, suitable habitat for this species is not expected to occur on the SEZ. However,
17 approximately 50 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat for this species is estimated to
18 occur in the assumed transmission ROW; approximately 900 acres (4 km²) of potentially suitable
19 habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Additional basic information on
20 life history, habitat needs, and threats to populations of the greater sage-grouse is provided in
21 Appendix J.
22
23

24 ***11.6.12.1.3 Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA*** 25

26 On the basis of information provided by the NNHP and the USFWS (Stout 2009) and on
27 availability of potentially suitable habitats, there are no species under review for ESA listing that
28 may occur in the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ.
29
30

31 ***11.6.12.1.4 BLM-Designated Sensitive Species*** 32

33 There are 16 BLM-designated sensitive species that may occur in the affected area of
34 the Gold Point SEZ or that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ
35 (Table 11.6.12.1-1). These BLM-designated sensitive species include the following: (1) plants:
36 Eastwood milkweed, Holmgren lupine, and Tonopah pincushion cactus; (2) birds: ferruginous
37 hawk, greater sage-grouse, prairie falcon, Swainson's hawk, and western burrowing owl; and
38 (3) mammals: Brazilian free-tailed bat, fringed myotis, Nelson's bighorn sheep, pallid bat,
39 silver-haired bat, spotted bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, and western small-footed myotis.
40 Habitats in which BLM-designated sensitive species are found, the amount of potentially suitable
41 habitat in the affected area, and known locations of the species relative to the SEZ are presented
42 in Table 11.6.12.1-1. The greater sage-grouse has been discussed previously because of its
43 candidate status under the ESA (Section 11.6.12.1.2). The remaining 15 species as related to the
44 SEZ are described in the remainder of this section. Additional life history information for these
45 species is provided in Appendix J.
46
47

1 **Eastwood Milkweed**

2
3 The Eastwood milkweed is a perennial herb endemic to Nevada on public and private
4 lands in Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, and Nye Counties. It occurs in open areas on a wide variety
5 of basic (pH usually >8) soils, including calcareous clay knolls, sand, carbonate, or basaltic
6 gravels, washes, or shale outcrops at elevations between 4,700 and 7,100 ft (1,430 and 2,150 m).
7 According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable rocky cliffs and wash
8 habitats do not occur on the SEZ or in the transmission corridor; however, these suitable habitats
9 may occur within the area of indirect effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Although the SWReGAP did
10 not map any wash habitat on the SEZ or transmission corridor, there appear to be numerous
11 washes that could provide habitat for this species in the area of direct effects, including Jackson
12 Wash and its tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified.
13

14
15 **Holmgren Lupine**

16
17 The Holmgren lupine is a perennial herb known from southeastern California and
18 southwestern Nevada. It inhabits dry desert slopes, washes, and valleys on volcanic substrates in
19 sagebrush communities and pinyon-juniper woodlands. The species occurs at elevations between
20 4,600 and 8,200 ft (1,400 and 2,500 m). The nearest known occurrences are approximately 9 mi
21 (14 km) west of the Gold Point SEZ. According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially
22 suitable sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodland habitats may occur within the transmission
23 corridor and in the area of indirect effects. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land
24 cover types, potentially suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ.
25

26
27 **Tonopah Pincushion Cactus**

28
29 The Tonopah pincushion cactus is endemic to Esmeralda and Nye Counties, Nevada.
30 This species occurs on dry rocky soils and low outcrops on gentle slopes in open areas or under
31 shrubs in the upper salt desert and lower sagebrush zones. This species is not known to occur in
32 the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ; however, potentially suitable alkaline playa habitat may
33 occur on the SEZ and within the area of indirect effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1).
34

35
36 **Ferruginous Hawk**

37
38 The ferruginous hawk occurs throughout the western United States. According to the
39 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, only potentially suitable winter habitat for the ferruginous
40 hawk is predicted to occur within the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ, although potentially
41 suitable year-round habitat is expected to occur outside of the affected area within the SEZ
42 region. The species inhabits open grasslands, sagebrush flats, desert scrub, and the edges of
43 pinyon-juniper woodlands. This species occurs in Esmeralda County, Nevada, and potentially
44 suitable foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area
45 (Table 11.6.12.1-1).
46
47

1 **Prairie Falcon**

2
3 The prairie falcon occurs throughout the western United States. According to the
4 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable year-round habitat for the prairie
5 falcon may occur within the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ. The species occurs in open
6 habitats in mountainous areas, sagebrush-steppe, grasslands, or cultivated areas. Nests are
7 typically constructed in well-sheltered ledges of rocky cliffs and outcrops. This species occurs
8 in Esmeralda County, Nevada, and potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and
9 in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.6.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of
10 SWReGAP land cover types, there is no suitable nesting habitat within the area of direct effects,
11 but approximately 350 acres (1.5 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially
12 suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
13

14
15 **Swainson's Hawk**

16
17 The Swainson's hawk occurs throughout the southwestern United States. According to
18 the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the Swainson's hawk, only summer breeding
19 habitat occurs in the Gold Point SEZ region. This species inhabits desert, savanna, open pine-
20 oak woodland, grassland, and cultivated habitats. Nests are typically constructed in solitary
21 trees, bushes, or small groves. This species occurs in Esmeralda County, Nevada. According to
22 the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the
23 SEZ; however, potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the transmission corridor and in
24 portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of
25 SWReGAP land cover types, there is no suitable nesting habitat within the area of direct effects,
26 but approximately 80 acres (0.3 km²) of pinyon-juniper woodland habitat that may be potentially
27 suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
28

29
30 **Western Burrowing Owl**

31
32 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the western burrowing owl,
33 the species is a summer breeding resident of open, dry grasslands and desert habitats in the
34 Gold Point SEZ region. The species occurs locally in open areas with sparse vegetation, where
35 it forages in grasslands, shrublands, open disturbed areas, and nests in burrows typically
36 constructed by mammals. The species occurs in Esmeralda County, Nevada, and potentially
37 suitable summer breeding habitat may occur in the SEZ, the transmission corridor, and portions
38 of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1). The availability of nest sites (burrows) within
39 the affected area has not been determined, but shrubland habitat that may be suitable for either
40 foraging or nesting occurs throughout the affected area.
41

42
43 **Brazilian Free-Tailed Bat**

44
45 The Brazilian free-tailed bat is known from isolated locations throughout the
46 southwestern United States and is considered to be a year-round resident in the Gold Point SEZ

1 region. The species roosts in buildings, caves, mines, and hollow trees. Foraging occurs in desert
2 grasslands, old fields, savannas, shrublands, woodlands, and urban areas. This species occurs
3 approximately 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability
4 model, potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ, in the transmission corridor,
5 and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation
6 of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and
7 outcrops) on the SEZ or in the transmission corridor, but approximately 350 acres (1.5 km²) of
8 potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
9

10 **Fringed Myotis**

11
12
13 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident in the Gold Point SEZ region, where it occurs
14 in a variety of habitats including riparian, shrubland, sagebrush, and pinyon-juniper woodlands.
15 Roosting occurs in buildings and caves. This species occurs in Esmeralda County, Nevada.
16 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable foraging habitat may
17 occur on the SEZ, in the transmission corridor, and in portions of the area of indirect effects
18 (Table 11.6.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no
19 potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ or transmission
20 corridor, but approximately 350 acres (1.5 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in
21 the area of indirect effects.
22

23 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

24
25
26 The Nelson's bighorn sheep is one of several subspecies of bighorn sheep that occurs in
27 the southwestern United States. This species occurs in desert mountain ranges in Arizona,
28 California, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah. The Nelson's bighorn sheep uses primarily montane
29 shrubland, forest, and grassland habitats, and may utilize desert valleys as corridors for travel
30 between range habitats. According to information provided by the NDOW, the Nelson's bighorn
31 sheep occurs in Esmeralda County, Nevada and potentially suitable habitat may occur in the
32 Silver Peak Range west of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model,
33 potentially suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ; however, potentially
34 suitable habitat may occur in the transmission corridor and in portions of the area of indirect
35 effects. Despite the apparent lack of suitable habitat on the SEZ, this species may utilize portions
36 of the Gold Point SEZ and the transmission corridor as migratory habitat between range habitats
37 (Table 11.6.12.1-1).
38

39 **Pallid Bat**

40
41
42 The pallid bat is a large pale bat with large ears locally common in desert grasslands and
43 shrublands in the southwestern United States. It roosts in caves, crevices, and mines. The species
44 is a year-round resident throughout southern Nevada. The nearest recorded occurrence is
45 approximately 15 mi (24 km) west of the Gold Point SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat
46 suitability model, potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ, in the transmission

1 corridor, and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1). On the basis of an
2 evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no potentially suitable roosting habitat (rocky
3 cliffs and outcrops) on the SEZ or in the transmission corridor, but approximately 350 acres
4 (1.5 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
5
6

7 **Silver-Haired Bat**

8
9 The silver-haired bat is a year-round resident in the Gold Point SEZ region, where it
10 occurs in montane forested habitats such as aspen, pinyon-juniper, and spruce communities.
11 Foraging may occur in desert shrubland habitats. This species roosts in tree foliage, rock
12 outcrops, cavities, or under loose bark. The species is known to occur about 15 mi (24 km) west
13 of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable foraging
14 habitat may occur on the SEZ, in the transmission corridor, and in portions of the area of indirect
15 effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is
16 no potentially suitable roosting habitat (woodlands) on the SEZ or transmission corridor, but
17 approximately 80 acres (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of
18 indirect effects.
19
20

21 **Spotted Bat**

22
23 The spotted bat is a year-round resident in the Gold Point SEZ region, where it occurs in
24 a variety of forested and shrubland habitats. It roosts in caves and rock crevices. The species is
25 known to occur approximately 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ. Potentially suitable foraging
26 habitat may occur on the SEZ, in the transmission corridor, and in portions of the area of indirect
27 effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land-cover types, there
28 is no suitable roosting habitat within the SEZ or transmission corridor, but approximately
29 350 acres (1.5 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially suitable roosting
30 habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
31
32

33 **Townsend's Big-Eared Bat**

34
35 The Townsend's big-eared bat is widely distributed throughout the western United States.
36 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, the species forages year-round in a wide
37 variety of desert and nondesert habitats in the Gold Point SEZ region. The species roosts in
38 caves, mines, tunnels, buildings, and other man-made structures. Nearest recorded occurrences
39 are approximately 8 mi (13 km) west of the Gold Point SEZ. According to the SWReGAP
40 habitat suitability model, potentially suitable foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ, in the
41 transmission corridor, and in portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1). On the
42 basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no suitable roosting habitat within
43 the SEZ or transmission corridor, but approximately 350 acres (1.5 km²) of cliff and rock
44 outcrop habitat that may be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect
45 effects.
46
47

1 **Western Small-Footed Myotis**
2

3 The western small-footed myotis is widely distributed throughout the western United
4 States. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, this species is a year-round
5 resident in southern Nevada, where it occupies a wide variety of desert and nondesert habitats
6 including cliffs and rock outcrops, grasslands, shrubland, and mixed woodlands. The species
7 roosts in caves, mines, tunnels, beneath boulders or loose bark, buildings, and other man-made
8 structures. Nearest recorded occurrences are approximately 9 mi (14 km) south of the Gold Point
9 SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable foraging habitat
10 may occur on the SEZ, in the transmission corridor, and in portions of the area of indirect effects
11 (Table 11.6.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no
12 suitable roosting habitat within the SEZ or transmission corridor, but approximately 350 acres
13 (1.5 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially suitable roosting habitat
14 occurs in the area of indirect effects.
15

16
17 **11.6.12.1.5 State-Listed Species**
18

19 There are 8 species listed by the State of Nevada that may occur in the Gold Point SEZ
20 affected area or may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ (Table 11.6.12.1-1).
21 These state-listed species include the following: (1) plants: Tonopah pincushion cactus; (2) bird:
22 Swainson’s hawk; and (3) mammals: Brazilian free-tailed bat, fringed myotis, pale kangaroo
23 mouse, pallid bat, spotted bat, and Townsend’s big-eared bat. All of these species are protected
24 in the State of Nevada under NRS 501.110 or NRS 527. Of these state-listed species, only the
25 pale kangaroo mouse has not been previously discussed and is described in the remainder of this
26 section. Additional life history information for these species is provided in Appendix J.
27

28 The pale kangaroo mouse is a rodent endemic to southwestern Nevada and southeastern
29 California. This species inhabits fine sands in alkali sink and desert scrub habitats dominated by
30 shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) or big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). The species often
31 burrows in areas of soft windblown sand piled at the bases of shrubs. Although the pale kangaroo
32 mouse is not known to occur in the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ, the species is known to
33 occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada, and potentially suitable habitat may occur on the SEZ,
34 transmission corridor, and throughout portions of the area of indirect effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1).
35

36
37 **11.6.12.1.6 Rare Species**
38

39 There are 19 rare species (i.e., state rank of S1 or S2 in the State of Nevada or a species
40 of concern by the State of Nevada or the USFWS) that may be affected by solar energy
41 development on the Gold Point SEZ (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Of these species, five—all plants—
42 have not been previously discussed: Bullfrog Hills sweetpea, Clokey paintbrush, Panamint
43 Mountains bedstraw, squalid milkvetch, and weasel phacelia. The habitats and known
44 occurrences of these species relative to the SEZ are shown in Table 11.6.12.1-1. Additional
45 life history information for these species is provided in Appendix J.
46
47

1 **11.6.12.2 Impacts**
2

3 The potential for impacts on special status species from utility-scale solar energy
4 development within the proposed Gold Point SEZ is presented in this section. The types of
5 impacts that special status species could incur from construction and operation of utility-scale
6 solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.4.
7

8 The assessment of impacts on special status species is based on available information
9 on the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.6.12.1, following the
10 analysis approach described in Appendix M. It is assumed that, prior to development, surveys
11 would be conducted to determine the presence of special status species and their habitats in and
12 near areas where ground-disturbing activities would occur. Additional NEPA assessments,
13 ESA consultations, and coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to
14 address project-specific impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could
15 result in additional required actions to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts on special status
16 species (see Section 11.6.12.3).
17

18 Solar energy development within the Gold Point SEZ could affect a variety of habitats
19 (see Sections 11.6.9 and 11.6.10). Impacts on these habitats could in turn affect special status
20 species that are dependent on those habitats. As discussed in Section 11.6.12.1, this approach to
21 identifying the species that could occur in the affected area probably overestimates the number of
22 species that actually occur in the affected area, and may therefore overestimate impacts on some
23 special status species. Based on NNHP records, there are no special status species known to
24 occur within the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ. There are no groundwater-dependent
25 species within the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ based upon NNHP records, information
26 provided by the USFWS (Stout 2009), and the evaluation of groundwater resources within the
27 SEZ region (Section 11.6.9).
28

29 Impacts on special status species could occur during all phases of development
30 (construction, operation, and decommissioning and reclamation) of a utility-scale solar energy
31 project within the SEZ. Construction and operation activities could result in short- or long-term
32 impacts on individuals and their habitats, especially if these activities are sited in areas where
33 special status species are known to or could occur. As presented in Section 11.6.1.2, a 22-mi
34 (35-km) long transmission corridor is assumed to be needed to serve solar facilities within this
35 SEZ. No new access road development is assumed to be needed because of the proximity of
36 State Route 774 adjacent to the eastern boundary of the SEZ.
37

38 Direct impacts would result from habitat destruction or modification. It is assumed that
39 direct impacts would occur only within the SEZ and the transmission line ROW where ground-
40 disturbing activities are expected to occur. Indirect impacts could result from surface water and
41 sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental
42 spills, harassment, and lighting. No ground-disturbing activities associated with project
43 development are anticipated to occur within the area of indirect effects. Decommissioning of
44 facilities and reclamation of disturbed areas after operations cease could result in short-term
45 negative impacts on individuals and habitats adjacent to project areas, but long-term benefits

1 would accrue if original land contours and native plant communities were restored in previously
2 disturbed areas.

3
4 The successful implementation of programmatic design features (discussed in Appendix A,
5 Section A.2.2) would reduce direct impacts on some special status species, especially those that
6 depend on habitat types that can be relatively easy to avoid (e.g., washes and playas). Indirect
7 impacts on special status species could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing
8 programmatic design features, especially those engineering controls that would reduce runoff,
9 sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust.

10 11 12 ***11.6.12.2.1 Impacts on Species Listed under the ESA***

13
14 On the basis of information provided by the NNHP and the USFWS (Stout 2009) and
15 on availability of potentially suitable habitats, there are no species listed under the ESA that
16 may be affected by solar energy development on the Gold Point SEZ. According to SWReGAP
17 and USGS habitat suitability models, potentially suitable habitat for the desert tortoise, a
18 species listed as threatened under the ESA, does not occur within the affected area of the Gold
19 Point SEZ.

20 21 22 ***11.6.12.2.2 Impacts on Species That Are Candidates for Listing under the ESA***

23
24 The greater sage-grouse is the only ESA candidate species that could occur in the
25 affected area of the Gold Point SEZ, based upon information provided by the NNHP
26 (NDCNR 2004) and the SWReGAP (USGS 2007). This species is known to occur in
27 Esmeralda County, Nevada, and potentially suitable year-round sagebrush habitat is
28 expected to occur in portions of the affected area (Figure 11.6.12.1-1). According to the
29 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, suitable habitat for this species is not expected to occur
30 on the SEZ. However, approximately 50 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the
31 assumed transmission corridor may be directly affected by construction and operations
32 (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents less than 0.1% of available suitable
33 habitat for the greater sage-grouse in the SEZ region. About 900 acres (4 km²) of suitable habitat
34 occurs in the area of potential indirect effects; this area represents about 0.3% of the available
35 suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.6.12.1-1).

36
37 The overall impact on the greater sage-grouse from construction, operation, and
38 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
39 small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of direct
40 effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
41 implementation of programmatic design features alone may not be sufficient to reduce impacts to
42 negligible levels, because it may not be possible to avoid all potentially suitable sagebrush
43 habitats in the area of direct effects.

44
45 Efforts to mitigate the impacts of solar energy development on the greater sage-grouse
46 should be developed in coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW following the *Strategic*

1 *Plan for Management of Sage Grouse* (UDWR 2002) and *Guidelines to Manage Sage Grouse*
2 *Populations and Their Habitats* (Connelly et al. 2000). Impacts could be reduced by conducting
3 pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats (especially
4 active leks and suitable nesting areas) in the areas of direct effects. If avoidance or minimization
5 is not feasible, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate
6 direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement
7 of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. Any
8 mitigation plans should be developed in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW.

11 ***11.6.12.2.3 Impacts on Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA***

13 On the basis of information provided by the NNHP and the USFWS (Stout 2009) and on
14 availability of potentially suitable habitats, there are no species under review for ESA listing that
15 may be affected by solar energy facilities on the Gold Point SEZ.

18 ***11.6.12.2.4 Impacts on BLM-Designated Sensitive Species***

20 BLM-designated sensitive species that may be affected by solar energy development
21 on the Gold Point SEZ and are not previously discussed as ESA-listed (Section 11.6.12.2.1),
22 candidates for ESA listing (Section 11.6.12.2.2), or under review for ESA listing
23 (Section 11.6.12.2.3) are discussed below.

26 **Eastwood Milkweed**

28 According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable habitats do not occur
29 in the SEZ or transmission corridor; however, these suitable habitats may occur within the area
30 of indirect effects (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Although SWReGAP did not map any wash habitat on the
31 SEZ, there appear to be numerous washes that could provide habitat for this species on the SEZ,
32 in the transmission corridor, and in the area of indirect effects, including Jackson Wash and its
33 tributaries. The area of these washes has not been quantified, but they could be affected by
34 construction and operations of solar energy development on the SEZ (Table 11.6.12.1-1). About
35 420 acres (1.5 km²) of potentially suitable mapped habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects;
36 this area represents about 1.1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region
37 (Table 11.6.12.1-1).

39 Impacts of solar energy development in the Gold Point SEZ on the Eastwood milkweed
40 cannot be determined without quantification of the amount of potentially suitable wash habitat in
41 the area of direct effects, but is expected to be small given the unquantified, but apparently large
42 amount of wash habitat in the SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features
43 is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

45 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to wash habitat in the area of direct effects could
46 reduce direct impacts on the Eastwood milkweed. In addition, pre-disturbance surveys and

1 avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects could reduce
2 impacts. If avoidance or minimization is not feasible, plants could be translocated from the area
3 of direct effects to protected areas that would not be affected directly or indirectly by future
4 development. Alternatively, or in combination with translocation, a compensatory mitigation
5 plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats.
6 Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable
7 habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy
8 that used one or more of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of
9 development.

12 **Holmgren Lupine**

14 The Holmgren lupine is not known to occur in the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ.
15 According to the SWReGAP land cover model, potentially suitable sagebrush and pinyon-
16 juniper woodland habitats do not occur on the SEZ. However, approximately 10 acres
17 (<0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission corridor could be directly affected
18 by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents less than
19 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 27,300 acres (110 km²) of
20 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 1.8%
21 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.6.12.1-1).

23 The overall impact on the Holmgren lupine from construction, operation, and
24 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
25 small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of direct
26 effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
27 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
28 impacts to negligible levels.

30 Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to sagebrush habitat in the transmission line corridor
31 could reduce direct impacts on the Holmgren lupine. In addition, impacts could be reduced with
32 the implementation of the mitigation options described previously for the Eastwood milkweed.
33 The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be determined by
34 conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

37 **Tonopah Pincushion Cactus**

39 The Tonopah pincushion cactus is not known to occur in the affected area of the Gold
40 Point SEZ; however, approximately 3,850 acres (16 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the
41 SEZ and 30 acres (0.1 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission corridor could be
42 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area
43 represents 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 88,600 acres (559 km²)
44 of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about
45 3.7% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.6.12.1-1).

1 The overall impact on the Tonopah pincushion cactus from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
3 small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of direct
4 effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
5 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
6 impacts to negligible levels.

7
8 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats to mitigate impacts on the Tonopah
9 pincushion cactus is not feasible, because potentially suitable shrubland is widespread
10 throughout the area of direct effects. However, impacts could be reduced with the
11 implementation of programmatic design features and the mitigation options described
12 previously for the Eastwood milkweed. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic
13 design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species
14 and its habitat on the SEZ.

15 16 17 **Ferruginous Hawk**

18
19 The ferruginous hawk is a winter resident in the Gold Point SEZ region and is known to
20 occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model,
21 approximately 200 acres (0.8 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and 225 acres
22 (0.9 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission corridor could be directly affected by
23 construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents less than
24 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 28,100 acres (114 km²) of
25 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 3.6%
26 of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.6.12.1-1).

27
28 The overall impact on the ferruginous hawk from construction, operation, and
29 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
30 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
31 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
32 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
33 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging
34 habitat (shrublands) is not feasible, because suitable foraging habitat (shrublands) is widespread
35 in the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the affected area.

36 37 38 **Prairie Falcon**

39
40 The prairie falcon is a year-round resident in the Gold Point SEZ region, and potentially
41 suitable foraging and nesting habitat is expected to occur in the affected area. Approximately
42 4,500 acres (18 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and 500 acres (2 km²) of
43 potentially suitable habitat within the transmission corridor could be directly affected by
44 construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents 0.2% of
45 potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 81,350 acres (329 km²) of potentially
46 suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 3.4% of the

1 potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Most of this area could serve
2 as foraging habitat (open shrublands). On the basis of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially
3 suitable nesting habitat (cliffs and rock outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ. However,
4 approximately 350 acres (1.5 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially
5 suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
6

7 The overall impact on the prairie falcon from construction, operation, and
8 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
9 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
10 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
11 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
12 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging
13 habitat (shrublands) is not feasible, because suitable foraging habitat (shrublands) is widespread
14 in the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the affected area.
15

16 **Swainson's Hawk**

17
18
19 The Swainson's hawk is a summer breeding resident within the Gold Point SEZ region
20 and is known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat
21 suitability model, suitable habitat for this species does not occur on the SEZ. However,
22 approximately 50 acres (0.2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat within the transmission corridor
23 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects
24 area represents less than 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
25 15,200 acres (62 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects;
26 this area represents about 1.1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region
27 (Table 11.6.12.1-1). On the basis of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable nesting
28 habitat (solitary trees) does not occur on the SEZ or within the transmission corridor. However,
29 approximately 80 acres (0.3 km²) of woodland habitat (pinyon-juniper) that may be potentially
30 suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
31

32 The overall impact on the Swainson's hawk from construction, operation, and
33 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
34 small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of direct
35 effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region. The
36 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
37 impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of direct impacts on foraging habitat
38 (shrublands) is not feasible, because suitable foraging habitat (shrublands) is widespread in the
39 area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the affected area.
40

41 **Western Burrowing Owl**

42
43
44 The western burrowing owl is a summer breeding resident within the Gold Point SEZ
45 region and is known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat
46 suitability model, approximately 4,625 acres (19 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ

1 and 650 acres (3 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission corridor could be
2 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area
3 represents about 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 97,000 acres
4 (393 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
5 about 3.1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Most of this
6 area could serve as foraging and nesting habitat (shrublands). The abundance of burrows suitable
7 for nesting on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects has not been determined.
8

9 The overall impact on the western burrowing owl from construction, operation, and
10 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
11 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat for this species in
12 the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging and nesting
13 habitat in the region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be
14 sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
15

16 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible way to mitigate impacts on
17 the western burrowing owl, because potentially suitable shrubland habitats are widespread
18 throughout the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
19 Impacts on the western burrowing owl could be reduced by implementing programmatic design
20 features, conducting pre-disturbance surveys, and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to
21 occupied burrows and habitat on the SEZ. If avoidance or minimization is not feasible, a
22 compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects.
23 Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable
24 habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy
25 that uses one or both of these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of
26 development. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should be
27 determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat within the area
28 of direct effects.
29
30

31 **Brazilian Free-Tailed Bat**

32

33 The Brazilian free-tailed bat is a year-round resident within the Gold Point SEZ region
34 and is known to occur approximately 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ. According to the
35 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 4,800 acres (19 km²) of potentially suitable
36 habitat on the SEZ and 590 acres (2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission
37 corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This
38 direct effects area represents 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
39 83,500 acres (338 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
40 area represents about 3.1% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.6.12.1-1).
41 Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by
42 desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially
43 suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or transmission
44 corridor, but about 350 acres (1.5 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area
45 of indirect effects.
46

1 The overall impact on the Brazilian free-tailed bat from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
3 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
4 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
5 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
6 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
7 foraging habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the
8 area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

11 **Fringed Myotis**

13 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident within the Gold Point SEZ region and is
14 known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability
15 model, approximately 4,700 acres (19 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ and
16 620 acres (2.5 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission corridor could be directly
17 affected by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents
18 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 88,200 acres (357 km²) of
19 potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.9%
20 of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Most of the potentially suitable
21 habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by desert shrubland. On the basis of an
22 evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable roost habitat (buildings and caves)
23 does not occur on the SEZ or in the transmission corridor, but about 350 acres (1.5 km²) of
24 potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects.

26 The overall impact on the fringed myotis from construction, operation, and
27 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
28 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
29 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
30 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
31 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
32 foraging habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the
33 area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

36 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

38 The Nelson's bighorn sheep occurs within the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ, but
39 suitable range habitat is not expected to occur on the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat
40 suitability model; however, approximately 150 acres (0.6 km²) of potentially suitable habitat
41 within the transmission corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table
42 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area represents less than 0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in
43 the SEZ region. About 24,100 acres (98 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
44 indirect effects; this area represents about 2.6% of the available suitable habitat in the region
45 (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Despite the apparent lack of suitable habitat on the SEZ, the Nelson's
46 bighorn sheep may utilize portions of the SEZ as a migratory corridor between range habitats.

1 The overall impact on the Nelson's bighorn sheep from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
3 small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of direct
4 effects represents less than 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
5 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
6 impacts on this species to negligible levels.

7
8 Direct impacts on the Nelson's bighorn sheep could be reduced to small or negligible
9 levels by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to
10 occupied habitats and important movement corridors within the area of direct effects. If
11 avoidance or minimization is not feasible, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed
12 and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the
13 protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats
14 lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that uses one or both of these options
15 could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development. The need for mitigation
16 should first be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat
17 within the area of direct effects.

18 19 20 **Pallid Bat**

21
22 The pallid bat is a year-round resident within the Gold Point SEZ region and is known to
23 occur approximately 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat
24 suitability model, approximately 4,550 acres (18 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ
25 and 575 acres (2.5 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission corridor could be
26 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area
27 represents 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 83,175 acres (337 km²)
28 of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about
29 3.2% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Most of the potentially
30 suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by desert shrubland. On the
31 basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable roost habitat (caves and
32 crevices) does not occur on the SEZ or in the transmission corridor, but about 350 acres
33 (1.5 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects.

34
35 The overall impact on pallid bat from construction, operation, and decommissioning of
36 utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered small, because the
37 amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of direct effects
38 represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region. The
39 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
40 impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging
41 habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the area of
42 direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

43 44 45 **Silver-Haired Bat**

46
47 The silver-haired bat is a year-round resident within the Gold Point SEZ region and is
48 known to occur approximately 15 mi (25 km) west of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP

1 habitat suitability model, approximately 4,600 acres (19 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on
2 the SEZ and 580 acres (2.5 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission corridor could
3 be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area
4 represents 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 83,200 acres (337 km²)
5 of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about
6 3.2% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Most of the potentially
7 suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by desert shrubland. On the
8 basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable roost habitat
9 (woodlands) does not occur on the SEZ or in the transmission corridor, but about 80 acres
10 (0.3 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects.

11
12 The overall impact on the silver-haired bat from construction, operation, and
13 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
14 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
15 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
16 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
17 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
18 foraging habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout
19 the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

20 21 22 **Spotted Bat**

23
24 The spotted bat is a year-round resident within the Gold Point SEZ region and is known
25 to occur approximately 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ. According to the SWReGAP habitat
26 suitability model, approximately 4,700 acres (19 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ
27 and 550 acres (2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission corridor could be
28 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area
29 represents 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 76,750 acres (311 km²)
30 of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about
31 3.2% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Most of the potentially
32 suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by desert shrubland. On the
33 basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable roost habitat (caves and
34 crevices) does not occur on the SEZ or transmission corridor, but about 350 acres (1.5 km²) of
35 potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects.

36
37 The overall impact on the spotted bat from construction, operation, and decommissioning
38 of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered small, because the
39 amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of direct effects
40 represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region. The
41 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
42 impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging
43 habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the area of
44 direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

1 **Townsend’s Big-Eared Bat**

2
3 The Townsend’s big-eared bat is a year-round resident within the Gold Point SEZ
4 region and is known to occur approximately 8 mi (13 km) west of the SEZ. According to the
5 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 4,600 acres (19 km²) of potentially suitable
6 habitat on the SEZ and 450 acres (2 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission
7 corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This
8 direct effects area represents 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
9 68,550 acres (277 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
10 area represents about 2.9% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.6.12.1-1).
11 Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by
12 desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially
13 suitable roost habitat (caves and rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or in the
14 transmission corridor, but about 350 acres (1.5 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may
15 occur in the area of indirect effects.

16
17 The overall impact on the Townsend’s big-eared bat from construction, operation, and
18 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
19 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
20 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
21 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
22 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
23 foraging habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout
24 the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.

25
26
27 **Western Small-Footed Myotis**

28
29 The western small-footed myotis is a year-round resident within the Gold Point SEZ
30 region and is known to occur approximately 9 mi (14 km) south of the SEZ. According to the
31 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, approximately 4,800 acres (19 km²) of potentially suitable
32 habitat on the SEZ and 650 acres (2.5 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission
33 corridor could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This
34 direct impact area represents 0.2% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About
35 97,950 acres (396 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
36 area represents about 2.9% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.6.12.1-1).
37 Most of the potentially suitable habitat in the affected area is foraging habitat represented by
38 desert shrubland. On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially
39 suitable roost habitat (rocky cliffs and outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ or in the transmission
40 corridor, but about 350 acres (1.5 km²) of potentially suitable roost habitat may occur in the area
41 of indirect effects.

42
43 The overall impact on the western small-footed myotis from construction, operation, and
44 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is considered
45 small, because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of
46 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.

1 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
2 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
3 foraging habitats is not feasible, because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout
4 the area of direct effects and readily available in other portions of the SEZ region.
5
6

7 ***11.6.12.2.5 Impacts on State-Listed Species***

8

9 There are eight species listed by the State of Nevada that may occur in the Gold Point
10 SEZ affected area or that may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ
11 (Table 11.6.12.1-1). Of these species, only the pale kangaroo mouse has not been previously
12 discussed. Impacts on this species are discussed below.
13

14 The pale kangaroo mouse is known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada, although it is
15 not known to occur in the affected area of the Gold Point SEZ. According to the SWReGAP
16 habitat suitability model, approximately 4,700 acres (19 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on
17 the SEZ and 200 acres (0.8 km²) of potentially suitable habitat in the transmission corridor could
18 be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.6.12.1-1). This direct effects area
19 represents 0.4% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 50,500 acres (204 km²)
20 of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about
21 4.0% of the available suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.6.12.1-1).
22

23 The overall impact on the pale kangaroo mouse from construction, operation, and
24 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Gold Point SEZ is
25 considered small, because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
26 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
27 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
28 impacts on this species to negligible levels.
29

30 Direct impacts on the pale kangaroo mouse could be further reduced by conducting
31 pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding occupied habitats within the area of direct effects. If
32 avoidance or minimization is not feasible, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed
33 and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the
34 protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats
35 lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that uses one or both of these options
36 could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development. The need for mitigation
37 should first be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat
38 within the area of direct effects.
39

40 ***11.6.12.2.6 Impacts on Rare Species***

41

42 There are 19 rare species (state rank of S1 or S2 in Nevada or a species of concern by the
43 State of Nevada or the USFWS) that may be affected by solar energy development on the Gold
44 Point SEZ. Five species—all plants—have not been previously discussed: Bullfrog Hills
45 sweetpea, Clokey paintbrush, Panamint Mountains bedstraw, squalid milkvetch, and weasel
46

1 phacelia. Impacts and potentially applicable mitigation measures (if necessary) for each of these
2 species is provided in Table 11.6.12.1-1. Additional life history information is provided in
3 Appendix J.
4
5

6 **11.6.12.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

7

8 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
9 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects of utility-scale solar
10 energy development on special status species. While some SEZ-specific design features are best
11 established when specific project details are being considered, some design features can be
12 identified at this time, including the following:
13

- 14 • Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the SEZ to determine the
15 presence and abundance of special status species, including those identified in
16 Table 11.6.12.1-1; disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be
17 avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing
18 impacts on occupied habitats is not possible, translocation of individuals from
19 areas of direct effects or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on
20 occupied habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy
21 for special status species that used one or more of these options to offset the
22 impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the
23 appropriate federal and state agencies.
24
- 25 • Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to desert wash and playa habitats within
26 the area of direct effects could reduce or eliminate impacts on the Eastwood
27 milkweed.
28
- 29 • Avoiding or minimizing disturbance to sagebrush habitat within the area of
30 direct effects could reduce or eliminate impacts on the Holmgren lupine.
31
- 32 • Coordination with the USFWS and the NDOW should be conducted for the
33 greater sage-grouse—a candidate species for listing under the ESA.
34 Coordination would identify an appropriate survey protocol and mitigation
35 requirements, which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or
36 compensation.
37
- 38 • Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the
39 affected area should be avoided or minimized. This can be accomplished by
40 identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary
41 protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and the
42 NDOW.
43

44 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to required
45 programmatic design features, impacts on the special status and rare species could be reduced.
46
47

1 **11.6.13 Air Quality and Climate**

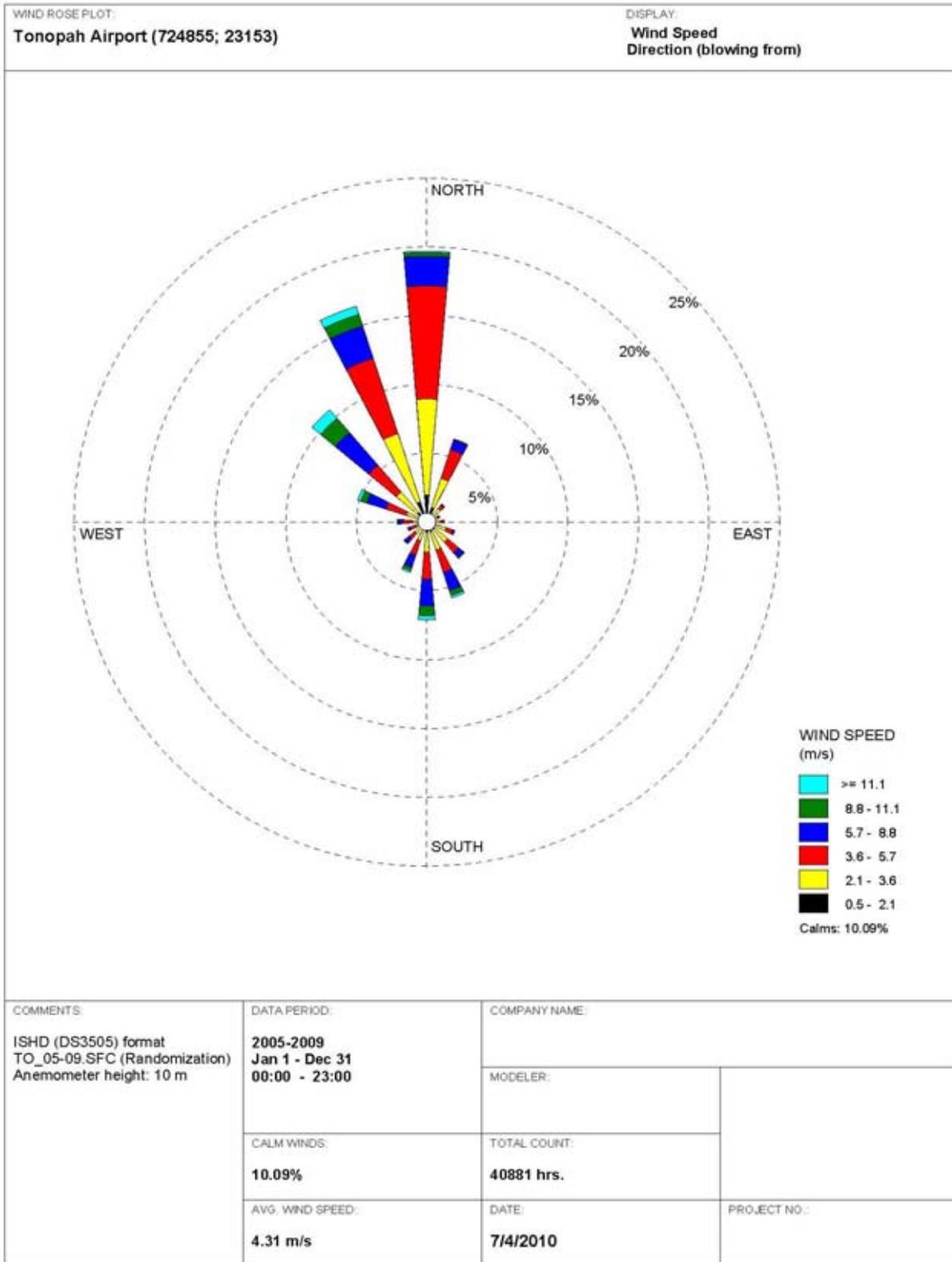
2
3
4 **11.6.13.1 Affected Environment**

5
6
7 **11.6.13.1.1 Climate**

8
9 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in the southern portion of Esmeralda County in
10 southwestern Nevada. Nevada lies on the eastern lee side of the Sierra Nevada Range, which
11 markedly influences the climate of the state under the prevailing westerlies (NCDC 2010a). In
12 addition, the mountains east and north of Nevada act as barriers to the cold arctic air masses, thus
13 making long periods of extremely cold weather uncommon. The SEZ lies at an average elevation
14 of about 4,960 ft (1,512 m) in the southwestern portion of the Great Basin Desert, which has a
15 high desert climate marked by pleasant weather (mild winters and warm summers) with large
16 daily temperature swings due to dry air, scant precipitation, low relative humidity, and abundant
17 sunshine. Meteorological data collected at the Tonopah Airport, about 45 mi (72 km) north-
18 northeast of the Gold Point SEZ boundary, and at Goldfield, about 20 mi (32 km) north-
19 northeast, are summarized below.

20
21 A wind rose from the Tonopah Airport, taken at a level of 33 ft (10 m), for the 5-year
22 period 2005 to 2009 is presented in Figure 11.6.13.1-1 (NCDC 2010b). During this period, the
23 annual average wind speed at the airport was about 9.6 mph (4.3 m/s), with the prevailing wind
24 direction from the north (about 19.7% of the time) and secondarily from the north-northwest
25 (about 16.4% of the time). The northerly wind component predominates, with about 46.7% of
26 wind directions from the northwest clockwise to the north. Winds blew more frequently from
27 the north every month throughout the year except January and April, when wind blew more
28 frequently from the north-northwest. Wind speeds categorized as calm (less than 1.1 mph
29 [0.5 m/s]) occurred frequently (about 10% of the time) because of the stable conditions caused
30 by strong radiative cooling from late night to sunrise. Average wind speeds were relatively
31 uniform by season: they were highest in spring at 11.2 mph (5.0 m/s), lower in summer and fall
32 at 9.2 mph (4.1 m/s), and lowest in winter at 9.0 mph (4.0 m/s).

33
34 For the period 1906 to 2009, the annual average temperature at Goldfield was 51.4°F
35 (10.8°C) (WRCC 2010e). January was the coldest month, with an average minimum temperature
36 of 20.3°F (-6.5°C), and July was the warmest, with an average maximum of 89.6°F (32.0°C). In
37 the summer, daytime maximum temperatures higher than 90°F (32.2°C) are common, and
38 minimums are in the 50s. The minimum temperatures recorded were below freezing ($\leq 32^\circ\text{F}$
39 [0°C]) throughout the year except July and August (with a peak of about 29 days in January and
40 December), and subzero temperatures were recorded about 1.5 days per year during winter
41 months. During the same period, the highest temperature, 108°F (42.2°C), was reached in July
42 1906 and the lowest, -23°F (-30.6°C), in January 1937. In a typical year, about 36 days had a
43 maximum temperature of at least 90°F (32.2°C), while about 146 days had minimum
44 temperatures at or below freezing.



1

2

3

FIGURE 11.6.13.1-1 Wind Rose at 33 ft (10 m) at Tonopah Airport, Nevada, 2005 to 2009
(Source: NCDC 2010b)

1 Along with prevailing westerlies, Pacific air masses lose most of their moisture on the
2 windward side of the Sierra Nevada Range parallel to Nevada’s western boundary with
3 California. Thus, leeward areas such as the region around Gold Point SEZ experience a lack of
4 precipitation (NCDC 2010a). For 1906 to 2009, annual precipitation at Goldfield averaged about
5 6.06 in. (15.4 cm) (WRCC 2010e). On average, 29 days annually have measurable precipitation
6 (0.01 in. [0.025 cm] or higher). Precipitation is relatively evenly distributed by season, although
7 it is slightly higher in winter and spring than in summer and fall. Snow falls as early as October
8 and continues as late as May; most of the snow falls from December to March. The annual
9 average snowfall at Goldfield is about 17.8 in. (45.2 cm).

10
11 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is far from major water bodies (more than 240 mi
12 [386 km] to the Pacific Ocean). Severe weather events, such as severe thunderstorms
13 and tornadoes, are rare in Esmeralda County, which encompasses the Gold Point SEZ
14 (NCDC 2010c).

15
16 In Nevada, flooding could occur from melting of heavy snowpack. On occasion, heavy
17 summer thunderstorms also cause flooding of local streams, usually in sparsely populated
18 mountainous areas, but they are seldom destructive (NCDC 2010a). Since 1997, four flash floods
19 have been reported in Esmeralda County, two of which occurred about 10 mi (16 km) from the
20 SEZ and one of which caused minor property damage.

21
22 In Esmeralda County, no hail storms have been reported (NCDC 2010c). Forty-two high
23 wind events have been reported since 1999. Events with a maximum wind speed of up to
24 127 mph (57 m/s) can occur any month of the year, with peaks in March and June; they have
25 caused no deaths or injuries but some property damage (NCDC 2010c). In addition, one
26 thunderstorm wind event with a maximum wind speed of 52 mph (23 m/s) was reported in 2010,
27 which caused minor property damage.

28
29 No dust storms have been reported in Esmeralda County (NCDC 2010c). However, the
30 ground surface of the SEZ is covered primarily with sandy loams, gravelly sandy loams, and
31 gravelly loams, which have a relatively moderate dust storm potential. High winds can trigger
32 large amounts of blowing dust in areas of Esmeralda County that have dry and loose soils with
33 sparse vegetation. Dust storms can deteriorate air quality and visibility and may have adverse
34 effects on health, particularly for people with asthma or other respiratory problems.

35
36 Hurricanes and tropical storms formed off the coast of Central America and Mexico
37 weaken over the cold waters off the California coast. Accordingly, hurricanes never hit Nevada,
38 but one tropical depression has passed within 100 mi (160 km) of the proposed Gold Point SEZ
39 (CSC 2010). Historically, only one tornado was reported in 1982 in Esmeralda County
40 (NCDC 2010c). However, the tornado occurred far from the SEZ, was relatively weak (i.e., F0
41 on the Fujita tornado scale), and did not cause deaths, injuries, or property damage.

1 **11.6.13.1.2 Existing Air Emissions**

2
3 Esmeralda County has a few industrial emission sources
4 related to minerals and mining, but their emissions are relatively
5 small. All industrial sources are located far from the proposed
6 Gold Point SEZ. Because of the sparse population, only a
7 handful of major roads, such as U.S. 6, U.S. 95, and several
8 State Routes (264, 265, 266, 773, and 774) are present in
9 Esmeralda County. Thus, onroad mobile source emissions are
10 not substantial. Data on annual emissions of criteria pollutants
11 and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in Esmeralda County
12 are presented in Table 11.6.13.1-1 for 2002 (WRAP 2009).
13 Emission data are classified into six source categories: point,
14 area, onroad mobile, nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire
15 (wildfires, prescribed fires, agricultural fires, structural fires). In
16 2002, point sources were major contributors to total emissions
17 of SO₂ (about 78%). Biogenic sources (i.e., vegetation—
18 including trees, plants, and crops—and soils) that release
19 naturally occurring emissions primarily contributed to NO_x
20 and CO emissions (about 62% and 64%, respectively) and
21 accounted for most of the VOC emissions (about 99%). Area
22 sources were major contributors to total emissions of PM₁₀
23 (about 96%) and PM_{2.5} (about 91%), and secondary
24 contributors to SO₂ emissions (about 20%). Onroad sources
25 were secondary contributors to NO_x and CO emissions (about
26 30% and 35%, respectively). In Esmeralda County, nonroad
27 sources were minor contributors to criteria pollutants and
28 VOCs. (Fire emissions were not estimated in Esmeralda County
29 in 2002.)

30
31 In 2005, Nevada produced about 56.3 MMt of *gross*⁵
32 carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_{2e})⁶ emissions, which is about 0.8% of total U.S. GHG emissions
33 in that year (NDEP 2008). Gross GHG emissions in Nevada increased by about 65% from 1990
34 to 2005 because of Nevada’s rapid population growth, compared to 16.3% growth in U.S. GHG
35 emissions during the same period. In 2005, electrical generation (48%) and transportation (30%)
36 were the primary contributors to gross GHG emission sources in Nevada. Fuel use in the
37 residential, commercial, and industrial sectors combined accounted for about 12% of total state
38 emissions. Nevada’s *net* emissions were about 51.3 MMt CO_{2e}, considering carbon sinks from
39 forestry activities and agricultural soils throughout the state. The EPA (2009a) also estimated

TABLE 11.6.13.1-1 Annual Emissions of Criteria Pollutants and VOCs in Esmeralda County, Nevada, Encompassing the Proposed Gold Point SEZ, 2002^a

Pollutant ^b	Emissions (tons/yr) ^c
SO ₂	106
NO _x	1,116
CO	13,832
VOCs	59,144
PM ₁₀	937
PM _{2.5}	202

^a Includes point, area, onroad and nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire emissions.

^b Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 μm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 μm; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; and VOCs = volatile organic compounds.

^c To convert tons to kilograms, multiply by 907.

Source: WRAP (2009).

⁵ Excluding GHG emissions removed as a result of forestry and other land uses and excluding GHG emissions associated with exported electricity.

⁶ A measure used to compare the emissions from various GHGs on the basis of their global warming potential, defined as the cumulative radiative forcing effects of a gas over a specified time horizon resulting from the emission of a unit mass of gas relative to a reference gas, CO₂. The CO_{2e} for a gas is derived by multiplying the mass of the gas by the associated global warming potential.

1 2005 emissions in Nevada. Its estimate of CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion was
2 49.6 MMt, which was comparable to the state's estimate. Electric power generation and
3 transportation accounted for about 52.7% and 33.6% of the CO₂ emissions total, respectively,
4 while the residential, commercial, and industrial sectors accounted for the remainder (about
5 13.7%).

6 7 **11.6.13.1.3 Air Quality** 8

9 The EPA set NAAQS for six criteria pollutants (EPA 2010a): SO₂, NO₂, CO, O₃, PM
10 (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and Pb. Nevada has its own SAAQS, which are generally similar to the
11 NAAQS but with some differences (NAC 445B.22097). In addition, Nevada has set standards
12 for 1-hour H₂S, which are not addressed by the NAAQS. The NAAQS and Nevada SAAQS for
13 criteria pollutants are presented in Table 11.6.13.1-2.
14

15 Esmeralda County is located administratively in the Nevada Intrastate AQCR, along with
16 10 other counties in Nevada. Not included are Las Vegas Intrastate AQCR, including Clark
17 County only, which encompasses Las Vegas; and Northwest Nevada Intrastate AQCR, including
18 five northwest counties, which encompasses Reno. Currently, the area surrounding the proposed
19 SEZ is designated as being in unclassifiable/attainment of NAAQS for all criteria pollutants
20 (Title 40, Part 81, Section 329 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* [40 CFR 81.329]).
21

22 Because of Esmeralda County's low population density, it has no significant emission
23 sources of its own and only minor mobile emissions along major highways. Accordingly,
24 ambient air quality in Esmeralda County is relatively good. No ambient air-monitoring stations
25 are located in Esmeralda County. To characterize ambient air quality around the SEZ, one
26 monitoring station in Clark County was chosen as being representative of a rural environment:
27 Jean, about 156 mi (251 km) southeast of the SEZ. The Jean station is located upwind of the Las
28 Vegas area but to some extent its air quality is influenced by transport of air pollutants from the
29 South Coast Air Basin, which includes Los Angeles, along with prevailing westerlies and nearby
30 highway traffic on I-15 (about 1.6 mi [2.6 km] away). Ambient concentrations of NO₂, O₃,
31 PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5} are recorded at Jean. The East Sahara Avenue station, which is on the outskirts
32 of Las Vegas, has only one SO₂ monitor in the area. The CO concentrations at the East Tonopah
33 Avenue station in Las Vegas, which is the farthest downwind of Las Vegas among CO
34 monitoring stations, were presented. No Pb measurements have been made in the State of
35 Nevada because of low Pb concentration levels after the phase-out of leaded gasoline. The
36 background concentrations of criteria pollutants at these stations for the period 2004 to 2008 are
37 presented in Table 11.6.13.1-2 (EPA 2010b). Monitored concentration levels at either station
38 were lower than their respective standards (up to 44%), except O₃, which approaches the 1-hour
39 NAAQS/SAAQS and exceeds the 8-hour NAAQS. Except for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, ambient
40 concentrations around the SEZ are anticipated to be lower than those presented in the table,
41 which are mostly associated with industrial activities and road traffic in and around urban areas,
42 However, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} might be either higher or lower, as their concentrations in arid non-
43 urbanized areas may be influenced by windblown dust or agricultural activities.
44

45 The PSD regulations (see 40 CFR 52.21), which are designed to limit the growth of air
46 pollution in clean areas, apply to a major new source or modification of an existing major

TABLE 11.6.13.1-2 NAAQS, SAAQS, and Background Concentration Levels Representative of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ in Esmeralda County, Nevada, 2004 to 2008

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	NAAQS	SAAQS	Background Concentration Level	
				Concentration ^{b,c}	Measurement Location, Year ^d
SO ₂	1-hour	75 ppb ^e	NA ^f	NA	NA
	3-hour	0.5 ppm	0.5 ppm	0.009 ppm (1.8%)	Las Vegas, 2005
	24-hour	0.14 ppm	0.14 ppm	0.008 ppm (5.7%)	Las Vegas, 2005
	Annual	0.030 ppm	0.030 ppm	0.006 ppm (20%)	Las Vegas, 2005
NO ₂	1-hour	100 ppb ^g	NA	NA	NA
	Annual	0.053 ppm	0.053 ppm	0.004 ppm (7.5%)	Jean, 2007
CO	1-hour	35 ppm	35 ppm	5.7 ppm (16%)	Las Vegas, 2004
	8-hour	9 ppm	9 ppm	3.9 ppm (43%)	Las Vegas, 2005
O ₃	1-hour	0.12 ppm ^h	0.12 ppm	0.098 ppm (82%)	Jean, 2005
	8-hour	0.075 ppm	NA	0.083 ppm (111%)	Jean, 2007
PM ₁₀	24-hour	150 µg/m ³	150 µg/m ³	66 µg/m ³ (44%)	Jean, 2008
	Annual	NA	50 µg/m ³	17 µg/m ³ (34%)	Jean, 2005
PM _{2.5}	24-hour	35 µg/m ³	NA	12.9 µg/m ³ (37%)	Jean, 2008
	Annual	15.0 µg/m ³	NA	4.9 µg/m ³ (33%)	Jean, 2008
Pb	Calendar quarter	1.5 µg/m ³	1.5 µg/m ³	NA	NA
	Rolling 3-month	0.15 µg/m ³ ⁱ	NA	NA	NA

^a Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO₂ = nitrogen dioxide; O₃ = ozone; Pb = lead; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 µm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 µm; and SO₂ = sulfur dioxide.

^b Monitored concentrations are the second-highest for all averaging times less than or equal to 24-hour averages, except fourth-highest daily maximum for 8-hour O₃ and the 98th percentile for 24-hour PM_{2.5} and arithmetic mean for annual SO₂, NO₂, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}.

^c Values in parentheses are background concentration levels as a percentage of NAAQS or SAAQS, respectively. Calculation of 1-hour SO₂ and NO₂ to NAAQS was not made, because no measurement data based on new NAAQS are available.

^d All air monitoring stations listed are located in Clark County.

^e Effective August 23, 2010.

^f NA = not applicable or not available.

^g Effective April 12, 2010.

^h The EPA revoked the 1-hour O₃ standard in all areas, although some areas have continuing obligations under that standard (“anti-backsliding”).

ⁱ Effective January 12, 2009.

Sources: EPA (2010a,b); NAC 445B.22097.

1 source within an attainment or unclassified area (see Section 4.11.2.3). As a matter of policy,
2 EPA recommends that the permitting authority notify the Federal Land Managers when a
3 proposed PSD source would locate within 62 mi (100 km) of a sensitive Class I area. Several
4 Class I areas are located around the Gold Point SEZ, two of which are situated within 62 mi
5 (100 km): John Muir WA and Kings Canyon NP in California (40 CFR 81.405), about 58 mi
6 (93 km) west and about 61 mi (98 km) west-southwest, respectively, of the proposed Gold Point
7 SEZ. These Class I areas are not located downwind of prevailing winds at the Gold Point SEZ
8 (Figure 11.6.13.1-1). The next nearest Class I areas in California include Sequoia NP, Ansel
9 Adams WA, and Kaiser WA, which are about 71 mi (115 km) southwest, 84 mi (135 km) west-
10 northwest, and 93 mi (150 km) west of the Gold Point SEZ, respectively.
11
12

13 **11.6.13.2 Impacts**

14
15 Potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with a solar project would be of
16 most concern during the construction phase. Impacts on ambient air quality from fugitive dust
17 emissions resulting from soil disturbances are anticipated, but they would be of short duration.
18 During the operations phase, only a few sources with generally low levels of emissions would
19 exist for any of the four types of solar technologies evaluated. A solar facility would either not
20 burn fossil fuels or burn only small amounts during operation. (For facilities using HTFs, fuel
21 could be used to maintain the temperature of the HTFs for more efficient daily start-up.)
22 Conversely, use of solar facilities to generate electricity could displace air emissions that would
23 otherwise be released from fossil fuel power plants.
24

25 Air quality impacts shared by all solar technologies are discussed in detail in
26 Section 5.11.1, and technology-specific impacts are discussed in Section 5.11.2. Impacts specific
27 to the proposed Gold Point SEZ are presented in the following sections. Any such impacts would
28 be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design features described in
29 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the application of any additional mitigation measures.
30 Section 11.6.13.3, below, identifies SEZ-specific design features of particular relevance to the
31 Gold Point SEZ.
32

33 **11.6.13.2.1 Construction**

34
35
36 The Gold Point SEZ site has a relatively flat terrain; thus, only a minimum number of site
37 preparation activities, perhaps with no large-scale earthmoving operations, would be required.
38 However, fugitive dust emissions from soil disturbances during the entire construction phase
39 would be a major concern because of the large areas that would be disturbed in a region that
40 experiences windblown dust problems. Fugitive dusts, which are released near ground level,
41 typically have more localized impacts than similar emissions from an elevated stack with
42 additional plume rise induced by buoyancy and momentum effects.
43
44
45

1 **Methods and Assumptions**

2
3 Air quality modeling for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions associated with construction
4 activities was performed by using the EPA-recommended AERMOD model (EPA 2009b).
5 Details for emissions estimation, the description of AERMOD, input data processing procedures,
6 and modeling assumption are described in Appendix M, Section M.13. Estimated air
7 concentrations were compared with the applicable NAAQS/SAAQS levels at the site boundaries
8 and nearby communities and with PSD increment levels at nearby Class I areas.⁷ However, no
9 receptors were modeled for PSD analysis at the nearest Class I area, John Muir WA in
10 California, because this area is about 58 mi (93 km) from the SEZ, which is more than the
11 maximum modeling distance of 31 mi (50 km) for the AERMOD. Rather, several regularly
12 spaced receptors in the direction of the John Muir WA in California were selected as surrogates
13 for the PSD analysis. For the Gold Point SEZ, the modeling was conducted based on the
14 following assumptions and input:

- 15 • Uniformly distributed emissions of 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) in the southern
16 portion of the SEZ, close to the nearest residences near Gold Point,
17
- 18 • Surface hourly meteorological data from the Tonopah Airport⁸ and upper air
19 sounding data from the Mercury/Desert Rock Airport for the 2005 to 2009
20 period, and
21
- 22 • A regularly spaced receptor grid over a modeling domain of 62 × 62 mi
23 (100 km × 100 km) centered on the proposed SEZ, and additional discrete
24 receptors at the SEZ boundaries.
25
26
27

28 **Results**

29
30 The modeling results for concentration increments and total concentrations (modeled plus
31 background concentrations) for both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} that would result from construction-related
32 fugitive emissions are summarized in Table 11.6.13.2-1. Maximum 24-hour PM₁₀ concentration
33 increments modeled to occur at the site boundaries would be an estimated 465 µg/m³, which far
34 exceeds the relevant standard level of 150 µg/m³. Total 24-hour PM₁₀ concentrations of
35 531 µg/m³ would also exceed the standard level at the SEZ boundary. However, high PM₁₀

7 To provide a quantitative assessment, the modeled air impacts of construction were compared to the NAAQS/SAAQS levels and the PSD Class I increment levels. Although the Clean Air Act exempts construction activities from PSD requirements, a comparison with the Class I increment levels was used to quantify potential impacts. Only monitored data can be used to determine the attainment status. Modeled data are used to assess potential problems and as a consideration in the permitting process.

8 The number of missing hours at the Tonopah Airport amounts to about 17.6% of the total hours, which may not be acceptable for regulatory applications because that percentage exceeds the 10% limit defined by the EPA. However, because the wind patterns at Tonopah Airport are more representative of wind at the Gold Point SEZ than the wind patterns at other airports (which have more complete data but are located in different topographic features), the former values were used for the screening analysis.

TABLE 11.6.13.2-1 Maximum Air Quality Impacts from Emissions Associated with Construction Activities for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	Rank ^b	Concentration ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)				Percentage of NAAQS/SAAQS	
			Maximum Increment ^b	Background ^c	Total	NAAQS/SAAQS	Increment	Total
PM ₁₀	24 hours	H6H	465	66.0	531	150	310	354
	Annual	– ^d	68.3	17.0	85.3	50	137	171
PM _{2.5}	24 hours	H8H	27.8	12.9	40.7	35	79	116
	Annual	–	6.8	4.9	11.8	15.0	46	78

^a PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 2.5 \mu\text{m}$; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 10 \mu\text{m}$.

^b Concentrations for attainment demonstration are presented. H6H = highest of the sixth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. H8H = highest of the multiyear average of the eighth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. For the annual average, multiyear averages of annual means over the 5-year period are presented. Maximum concentrations are predicted to occur at the site boundaries.

^c See Table 11.6.13.1-2.

^d A dash indicates not applicable.

1
2
3 concentrations would be limited to the immediate areas surrounding the SEZ boundary and
4 would decrease quickly with distance. Predicted maximum 24-hour PM₁₀ concentration
5 increments would be about 15 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at Gold Point (closest town, about 2 mi [3 km] south of the
6 SEZ), about 3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at Lida, and about 2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ or less at Goldfield and Silver Peak. Annual
7 average modeled concentration increments and total concentrations (increment plus background)
8 for PM₁₀ at the SEZ boundary would be about 68.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 85.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, respectively, both of
9 which are higher than the SAAQS level of 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Annual PM₁₀ increments would be much
10 lower, about 2.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at Gold Point, about 0.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at Lida, and less than 0.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at
11 Goldfield and Silver Peak. Total 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentrations would be 40.7 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at the SEZ
12 boundary, which is higher than the NAAQS level of 35 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$; modeled increments contribute
13 about two times the amount of background concentration to this total. The total annual average
14 PM_{2.5} concentration would be 11.8 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which is lower than the NAAQS level of 15.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.
15 At Gold Point, predicted maximum 24-hour and annual PM_{2.5} concentration increments would
16 be about 1.0 and 0.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, respectively.

17
18 Predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ concentration increments at the surrogate receptors
19 for the nearest Class I Area—John Muir WA, California—would be about 4.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and
20 0.06 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, or 51% and 1.5% of the PSD increments for the Class I area, respectively. These
21 surrogate receptors are more than 28 mi (46 km) from the John Muir WA, and thus, predicted
22 concentrations in John Muir WA would be lower than the above values (about 27% of the PSD
23 increments for 24-hour PM₁₀), considering the same decay ratio with distance.

24

1 In conclusion, predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ and 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentration
2 levels could exceed the standard levels at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding
3 areas during the construction of solar facilities. To reduce potential impacts on ambient air
4 quality and in compliance with programmatic design features, aggressive dust control measures
5 would be used. Potential air quality impacts on nearby communities would be much lower.
6 Annual PM_{2.5} concentration levels are predicted to be lower than the standard level. Modeling
7 indicates that emissions from construction activities are not anticipated to exceed Class I PSD
8 PM₁₀ increments at the nearest federal Class I area (John Muir WA in California). Construction
9 activities are not subject to the PSD program, and the comparison provides only a screen for
10 gauging the magnitude of the impact. Accordingly, it is anticipated that impacts of construction
11 activities on ambient air quality would be moderate and temporary.

12
13 Emissions from the engine exhaust from heavy construction equipment and vehicles have
14 the potential to cause impacts on AQRVs (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at the nearby
15 federal Class I areas. However, SO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be very low, because
16 programmatic design features would require ultra-low-sulfur fuel with a sulfur content of
17 15 ppm. NO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be primary contributors to potential impacts
18 on AQRVs. Construction-related emissions are temporary in nature and thus would cause some
19 unavoidable but short-term impacts.

20
21 Transmission lines within a designated ROW would be constructed to connect to the
22 nearest regional grid. A regional 120-kV transmission line is located about 22 mi (35 km) from
23 the proposed Gold Point SEZ; thus, construction of a transmission line over this relatively long
24 distance would likely be needed. Construction activities would result in fugitive dust emissions
25 from soil disturbance and engine exhaust emissions from heavy equipment and vehicles.
26 Construction time for the transmission line could be about 2 years. However, the site
27 of construction along the transmission line ROW would move continuously, so no particular area
28 would be exposed to air emissions for a prolonged period. Therefore, potential air quality
29 impacts on nearby residences along the transmission line ROW, if any, would be minor and
30 temporary in nature.

31 32 33 ***11.6.13.2.2 Operations***

34
35 Emission sources associated with the operation of a solar facility would include auxiliary
36 boilers; vehicle (commuter, visitor, support, and delivery) traffic; maintenance (e.g., mirror
37 cleaning and repair and replacement of damaged mirrors); and drift from cooling towers for the
38 parabolic trough or power-tower technology, if wet cooling was implemented (drift constitutes
39 low-level PM emissions).

40
41 The type of emission sources caused by and offset by operation of a solar facility are
42 discussed in Section M.13.4 of Appendix M.

43
44 Estimates of potential air emissions displaced by solar project development at the
45 Gold Point SEZ are presented in Table 11.6.13.2-2. Total power generation capacity ranging
46 from 428 to 770 MW is estimated for the Gold Point SEZ for various solar technologies

TABLE 11.6.13.2-2 Annual Emissions from Combustion-Related Power Generation Avoided by Full Solar Development of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Area Size (acres)	Capacity (MW) ^a	Power Generation (GWh/yr) ^b	Emissions Displaced (tons/yr; 10 ³ tons/yr for CO ₂) ^c			
			SO ₂	NO _x	Hg	CO ₂
4,810	428–770	749–1,348	1,057–1,902	906–1,632	0.006–0.011	582–1,047
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in Nevada ^d			2.0–3.6%	2.0–3.6%	2.0–3.6%	2.0–3.6%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in Nevada ^e			1.6–2.9%	0.60–1.1%	– ^f	1.1–1.9%
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in the six-state study area ^d			0.42–0.76%	0.25–0.44%	0.21–0.37%	0.22–0.40%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in the six-state study area ^e			0.22–0.40%	0.03–0.06%	–	0.07–0.13%

^a It is assumed that the SEZ would eventually have development on 80% of the lands and that a range of 5 acres (0.020 km²) per MW (for parabolic trough technology) to 9 acres (0.036 km²) per MW (power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies) would be required.

^b A capacity factor of 20% was assumed.

^c Composite combustion-related emission factors for SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ of 2.82, 2.42, 1.6 × 10⁻⁵, and 1,553 lb/MWh, respectively, were used for the State of Nevada.

^d Emission data for all air pollutants are for 2005.

^e Emission data for SO₂ and NO_x are for 2002, while those for CO₂ are for 2005.

^f A dash indicates not estimated.

Sources: EPA (2009a,c); WRAP (2009).

1
2
3 (see Section 11.6.2). The estimated amount of emissions avoided for the solar technologies
4 evaluated depends only on the megawatts of conventional fossil fuel-generated power displaced,
5 because a composite emission factor per megawatt-hour of power by conventional technologies
6 is assumed (EPA 2009c). It is estimated that if the Gold Point SEZ eventually had development
7 on 80% of its land, emissions avoided could range from 2.0 to 3.6% of total emissions of SO₂,
8 NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ from electric power systems in the State of Nevada (EPA 2009c). Avoided
9 emissions could be up to 0.76% of total emissions from electric power systems in the six-state
10 study area. When compared to all source categories, power production from the same solar
11 facilities could displace up to 2.9% of SO₂, 1.1% of NO_x, and 1.9% of CO₂ emissions in the
12 State of Nevada (EPA 2009a; WRAP 2009). These emissions could be up to 0.40% of total
13 emissions from all source categories in the six-state study area. Power generation from fossil
14 fuel-fired power plants accounts for about 93% of the total electric power generated in Nevada
15 (EPA 2009c). The contribution of natural gas combustion is about 47%, followed by that of coal

1 combustion at about 45%. Thus, solar facilities built in the Gold Point SEZ could displace
2 relatively more fossil fuel emissions than those built in other states that rely less on fossil fuel-
3 generated power.
4

5 As discussed in Section 5.11.1.5, the operation of associated transmission lines would
6 generate some air pollutants from activities such as periodic site inspections and maintenance.
7 However, these activities would occur infrequently, and the amount of emissions would be small.
8 In addition, transmission lines could produce minute amounts of O₃ and its precursor NO_x
9 associated with corona discharge (i.e., the breakdown of air near high-voltage conductors),
10 which is most noticeable for high-voltage lines during rain or very humid conditions. Since the
11 proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in an arid desert environment, these emissions would be
12 small, and potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with transmission lines would be
13 negligible, considering the infrequent occurrences and small amount of emissions from corona
14 discharges.
15

16 ***11.6.13.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation*** 17

18 As discussed in Section 5.11.1.4, decommissioning/reclamation activities are similar to
19 construction activities but occur on a more limited scale and are of shorter duration. Potential
20 impacts on ambient air quality would be correspondingly smaller than those from construction
21 activities. Decommissioning activities would last for a short period, and their potential impacts
22 would be moderate and temporary. The same mitigation measures adopted during the
23 construction phase would also be implemented during the decommissioning phase
24 (Section 5.11.6).
25
26

27 **11.6.13.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness** 28

29 No SEZ-specific design features are required. Limiting dust generation during
30 construction and operations at the proposed Gold Point SEZ (such as increased watering
31 frequency or road paving or treatment) is a required design feature under BLM's Solar Energy
32 Program. These extensive fugitive dust control measures would keep off-site PM levels as low as
33 possible during construction.
34
35
36

1 **11.6.14 Visual Resources**

2
3
4 **11.6.14.1 Affected Environment**

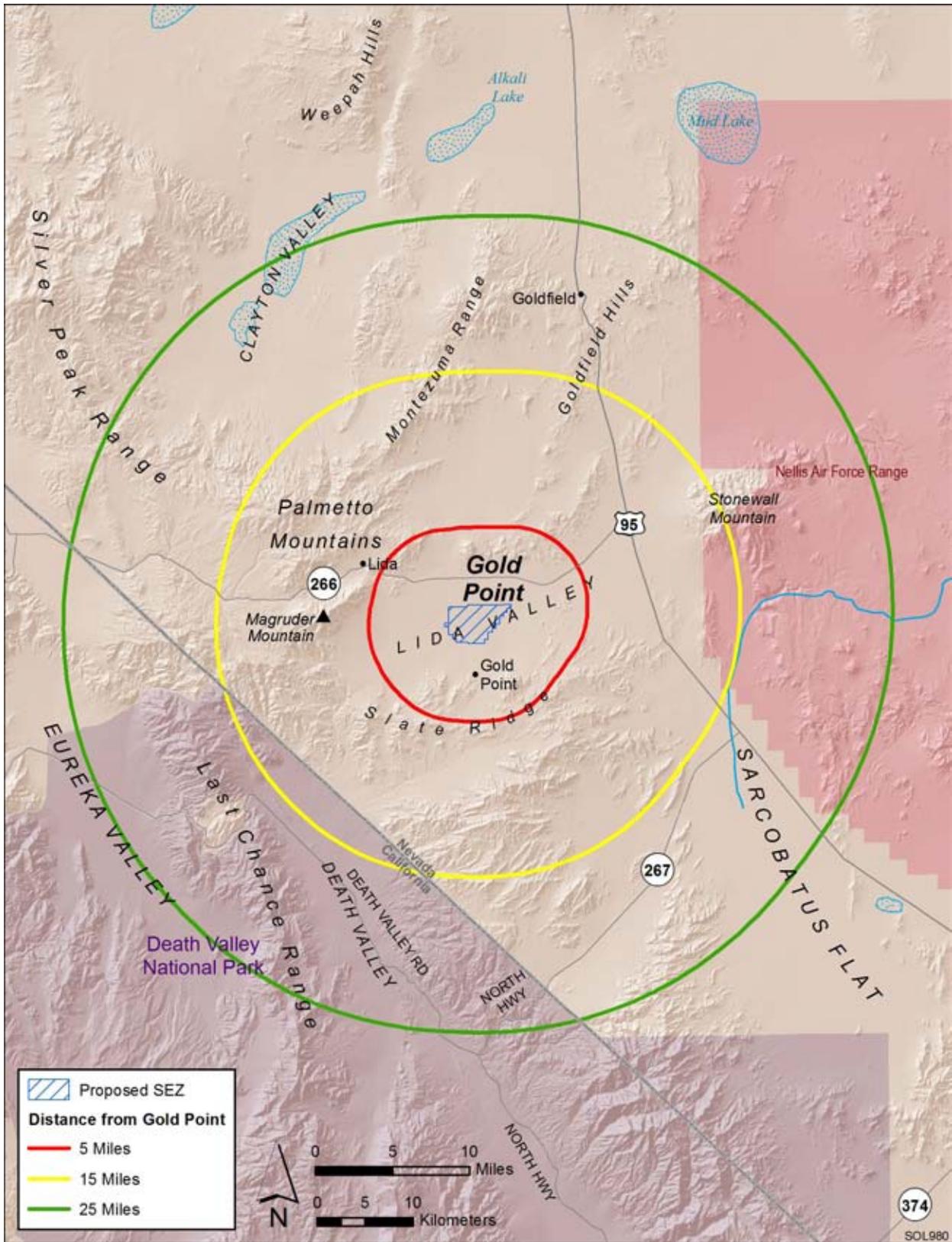
5
6 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in Esmeralda County in southwestern Nevada.
7 The SEZ occupies 4,810 acres (19.47 km²) within Lida Valley. It extends about 2.5 mi (4.0 km)
8 north-south and is about 4.0 mi (6.4 km) wide. The SEZ ranges in elevation from 4,840 ft
9 (1,475 m) in the northeastern portion to 5,050 ft (1,539 m) in the northwestern portion.

10
11 The SEZ is within the Central Basin and Range Level III ecoregion, which consists of
12 northerly trending fault-block ranges and intervening drier basins. Valleys, lower slopes, and
13 alluvial fans are either shrub- and grass-covered or shrub-covered. Higher elevation mountain
14 slopes support woodland, mountain brush, and scattered forests. The land is used primarily for
15 grazing, with some irrigated cropland in valleys near mountain water sources. Gold Point SEZ is
16 located within the Tonopah Basin Level IV ecoregion, which is a transition between the Great
17 Basin and the more southerly Mojave Desert. It is typified by broad, nearly flat to rolling valleys
18 containing lake plains, scattered hills, alluvial fans, bajadas, sand dunes, and hot springs.
19 Ephemeral washes occur. Surface water comes from springs and sporadic foothill precipitation
20 events, but is generally scarce (Bryce et al. 2003).

21
22 The SEZ occupies a narrow northeast-to-southwest trending valley surrounded by
23 mountains. Although scenic quality within the SEZ itself is low, the nearby mountains add
24 substantially to the overall visual qualities within the SEZ viewshed. Magruder Mountain
25 (elevation 9,044 ft [2,756 m]), located west of the SEZ, is sacred to the Timbisha Shoshone.
26 Mt. Jackson at 6,411 ft (1,954 m) is north of the SEZ. The mountain slopes and peaks
27 surrounding the SEZ generally are visually pristine. The SEZ and surrounding mountain ranges
28 are shown in Figure 11.6.14.1-1.

29
30 The SEZ is flat to slightly sloping, with the strong horizon line and surrounding mountain
31 ranges being the dominant visual features. There is very little topographic relief, with playas
32 occurring in the northeast portion of the SEZ, and washes that slope downward slightly from
33 southwest to northeast. The surrounding mountains are generally a muted brown, with white and
34 dark accents in some areas; more distant mountains appear blue to purple. In contrast, pink, tan,
35 and gray gravels dominate the desert floor, which is sparsely dotted with the subtle greens,
36 browns, and grays of vegetation. No permanent surface water is present within the SEZ.

37
38 Vegetation is generally sparse in much of the SEZ, with widely spaced shrubs growing
39 on more or less barren gravel flats. Vegetation within the SEZ is predominantly scrubland, with
40 shadscale, greasewood, and winterfat dominating the desert floor. Small Joshua trees add short
41 vertical accents and color contrasts that add visual interest to portions of the SEZ. During an
42 August 2009 site visit, the vegetation presented a range of muted greens, grays, and browns, with
43 medium to coarse textures. Visual interest is generally low.



1

2 **FIGURE 11.6.14.1-1 Proposed Gold Point SEZ and Surrounding Lands**

1 Other than roads, transmission lines, and the very small community of Gold Point visible
2 south of the SEZ, the area is relatively free of cultural modifications that would detract from the
3 scenic qualities of the landscape. Upslope roads provide a noticeable line contrast in the
4 landscape.

5
6 The general lack of topographic relief, water, and physical variety results in low scenic
7 value within the SEZ itself; however, because of the flatness of the landscape, the lack of trees,
8 and the breadth of the open desert, the SEZ presents a vast panoramic landscape with sweeping
9 views of the surrounding mountains that add significantly to the scenic values within the SEZ
10 viewshed. In general, the mountains appear to be devoid of vegetation, and their varied and
11 irregular forms and muted brown colors provide visual contrasts to the strong horizontal line,
12 particularly when viewed from nearby locations within the SEZ. Panoramic views of the SEZ
13 are shown in Figures 11.6.14.1-2, 11.6.14.1-3, and 11.6.14.1-4.

14
15 The BLM conducted a visual resource inventory (VRI) for the SEZ and surrounding
16 lands in 2010; however, the VRI was not completed in time for the new data to be included in the
17 draft PEIS. The new VRI data will be incorporated into the analyses presented in the final PEIS.
18 The VRI evaluates BLM-administered lands on the basis of scenic quality; sensitivity level, in
19 terms of public concern for preservation of scenic values in the evaluated lands; and distance
20 from travel routes or KOPs. Based on these three factors, BLM-administered lands are placed
21 into one of four VRI Classes, which represent the relative value of the visual resources. Class I
22 and II are the most valued; Class III represents a moderate value; and Class IV represents the
23 least value. Class I is reserved for specially designated areas, such as national wildernesses and
24 other congressionally and administratively designated areas where decisions have been made to
25 preserve a natural landscape. Class II is the highest rating for lands without special designation.
26 More information about VRI methodology is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource*
27 *Inventory*, BLM Manual Handbook 8410-1 (BLM 1986a).

28
29 The Tonopah Resource Management Plan (BLM 1997) indicates that the SEZ and
30 surrounding area is managed as VRM Class IV, which permits major modification of the existing
31 character of the landscape. More information about the BLM VRM program is presented in
32 Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Management*, BLM Manual Handbook 8400 (BLM 1984).

33 34 35 **11.6.14.2 Impacts**

36
37 The potential for impacts from utility-scale solar energy development on visual resources
38 within the proposed Gold Point SEZ and surrounding lands, as well as the impacts of related
39 projects (e.g., access roads and transmission lines) outside of the SEZ, is presented in this
40 section.

41
42 Site-specific impact assessment is needed to systematically and thoroughly assess visual
43 impact levels for a particular project. Without precise information about the location of a project
44 and a relatively complete and accurate description of its major components and their layout, it is
45 not possible to assess precisely the visual impacts associated with the facility. However, if the
46 general nature and location of a facility are known, a more generalized assessment of potential

1



2

FIGURE 11.6.14.1-2 Approximately 120° Panoramic View of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ from Northwest Corner of the SEZ Facing Southeast, with Mount Dunfee and Slate Ridge in Background

3

4

5

6



7

FIGURE 11.6.14.1-3 Approximately 180° Panoramic View of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ from Southwestern Portion of SEZ Facing Northeast, with Magruder Mountain at Left, Mt. Jackson and Mt. Jackson Ridge at Right

8

9

10

11



12

FIGURE 11.6.14.1-4 Approximately 120° Panoramic View of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ from Southeastern Edge of SEZ Facing West-Southwest, with Slate Ridge at Left, Last Chance Mountains at Far Background Center, and Magruder Mountain at Right

13

1 visual impacts can be made by describing the range of expected visual changes and discussing
2 contrasts typically associated with these changes. In addition, a general analysis can identify
3 sensitive resources that may be at risk if a future project is sited in a particular area. Detailed
4 information about the methodology employed for the visual impact assessment used in this
5 PEIS, including assumptions and limitations, is presented in Appendix M.

6
7 *Potential Glint and Glare Impacts.* Similarly, the nature and magnitude of potential glint-
8 and glare-related visual impacts for a given solar facility is highly dependent on viewer position,
9 sun angle, the nature of the reflective surface and its orientation relative to the sun and the
10 viewer, atmospheric conditions and other variables. The determination of potential impacts from
11 glint and glare from solar facilities within a given proposed SEZ would require precise
12 knowledge of these variables, and is not possible given the scope of the PEIS. Therefore, the
13 following analysis does not describe or suggest potential contrast levels arising from glint and
14 glare for facilities that might be developed within the SEZ; however, it should be assumed that
15 glint and glare are possible visual impacts from *any* utility-scale solar facility, regardless of size,
16 landscape setting, or technology type. The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could
17 potentially cause large though temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities.
18 The visual contrast levels projected for sensitive visual resource areas discussed in the following
19 analysis do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these effects would be
20 incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be conducted for
21 specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more information about potential
22 glint and glare impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy facilities, see Section 5.12 of
23 this PEIS.

24 25 26 ***11.6.14.2.1 Impacts on the Proposed Gold Point SEZ***

27
28 Some or all of the SEZ could be developed for one or more utility-scale solar energy
29 projects, utilizing one or more of the solar energy technologies described in Appendix F.
30 Because of the industrial nature and large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities, large visual
31 impacts on the SEZ would occur as a result of their construction, operation, and
32 decommissioning. In addition, large impacts could occur at solar facilities incorporating highly
33 reflective surfaces or major light-emitting components (solar dish, parabolic trough, and power
34 tower technologies), with lesser impacts associated with reflective surfaces expected from
35 PV facilities. These impacts would be expected to involve major modification of the existing
36 character of the landscape and would likely dominate the views nearby. Additional, and
37 potentially large impacts could occur as a result of the construction, operation, and
38 decommissioning of related facilities, such as access roads and electric transmission lines. While
39 the primary visual impacts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ would
40 occur during daylight hours, lighting required for utility-scale solar energy facilities would be a
41 potential source of visual impacts at night, both within the SEZ and on surrounding lands.

42
43 Common and technology-specific visual impacts from utility-scale solar energy
44 development, as well as impacts associated with electric transmission lines, are discussed in
45 Section 5.12 of this PEIS. Impacts would last throughout construction, operation, and
46 decommissioning, and some impacts could continue after project decommissioning. Visual

1 impacts resulting from solar energy development in the SEZ would be in addition to impacts
2 from solar energy development and other development that may occur on other public or private
3 lands within the SEZ viewshed. For discussion of cumulative impacts, see Section 11.6.22.4.13
4 of this PEIS.

5
6 The changes described above would be expected to be consistent with BLM VRM
7 objectives for VRM Class IV, as seen from nearby KOPs. As noted above, the lands that include
8 the SEZ are currently managed as VRM Class IV. More information about impact determination
9 using the BLM VRM program is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Contrast*
10 *Rating*, BLM Manual Handbook 8431-1 (BLM 1986b).

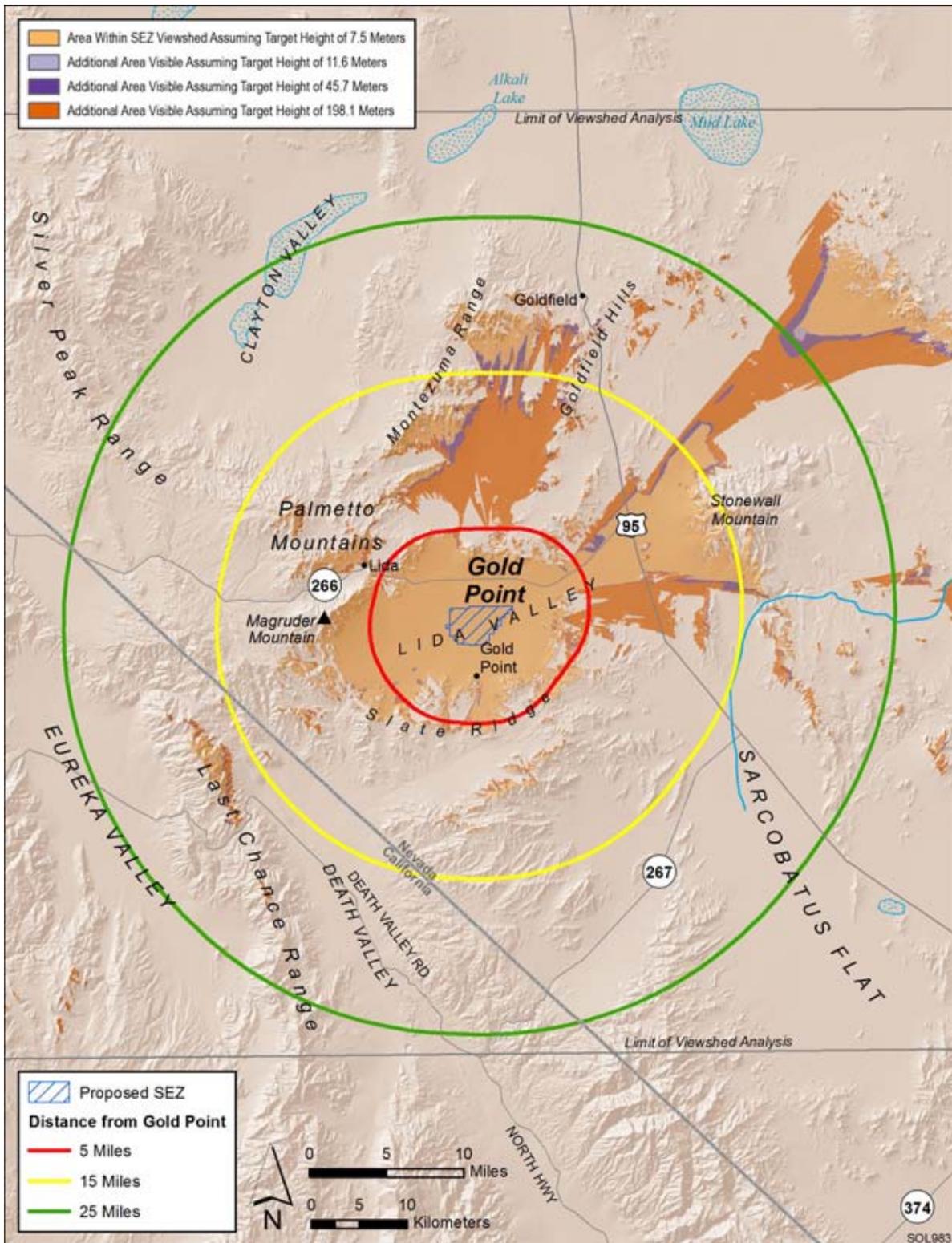
11
12 Implementation of the programmatic design features intended to reduce visual impacts
13 (described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would be expected to reduce visual impacts associated
14 with utility-scale solar energy development within the SEZ; however, the degree of effectiveness
15 of these design features could be assessed only at the site- and project-specific level. Given the
16 large scale, reflective surfaces, and strong regular geometry of utility-scale solar energy facilities
17 and the lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities
18 away from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive viewing areas would be the primary
19 means of mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other visual impact mitigation measures
20 would generally be limited, but would be important to reduce visual contrasts to the greatest
21 extent possible.

22 23 24 ***11.6.14.2.2 Impacts on Lands Surrounding the Proposed Gold Point SEZ***

25
26 Because of the large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat,
27 open nature of the proposed SEZ, lands outside the SEZ would be subjected to visual impacts
28 related to construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities.
29 The affected areas and extent of impacts would depend on a number of visibility factors and
30 viewer distance (for a detailed discussion of visibility and related factors, see Section 5.12).
31 A key component in determining impact levels is the intervisibility between the project and
32 potentially affected lands; if topography, vegetation, or structures screen the project from viewer
33 locations, there is no impact.

34
35 Preliminary viewshed analyses were conducted to identify which lands surrounding the
36 proposed SEZ would have views of solar facilities in at least some portion of the SEZ
37 (see Appendix M for information on the assumptions and limitations of the methods used).
38 Four viewshed analyses were conducted, assuming four different heights representative of
39 project components associated with potential solar energy technologies: PV and parabolic trough
40 arrays (24.6 ft [7.5 m]), solar dishes and power blocks for CSP technologies (38 ft [11.6 m]),
41 transmission towers and short solar power towers (150 ft [45.7 m]), and tall solar power towers
42 (650 ft [198.1 m]). Viewshed maps for the SEZ for all four solar technology heights are
43 presented in Appendix N.

44
45 Figure 11.6.14.2-1 shows the combined results of the viewshed analyses for all four solar
46 technologies. The colored segments indicate areas with clear lines of sight to one or more areas



1

2 **FIGURE 11.6.14.2-1 Viewshed Analyses for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ and Surrounding**
 3 **Lands, Assuming Solar Technology Heights of 24.6 ft (7.5 m), 38 ft (11.6 m), 150 ft (45.7 m),**
 4 **and 650 ft (198.1 m) (shaded areas indicate lands from which solar development within the**
 5 **SEZ could be visible)**

1 within the SEZ and from which solar facilities within these areas of the SEZ would be expected
2 to be visible, assuming the absence of screening vegetation or structures and adequate lighting
3 and other atmospheric conditions. The light brown areas are locations from which PV and
4 parabolic trough arrays located in the SEZ could be visible. Solar dishes and power blocks for
5 CSP technologies would be visible from the areas shaded in light brown and the additional areas
6 shaded in light purple. Transmission towers and short solar power towers would be visible from
7 the areas shaded light brown, light purple, and the additional areas shaded in dark purple. Power
8 tower facilities located in the SEZ could be visible from areas shaded light brown, light purple,
9 dark purple, and at least the upper portions of power tower receivers could be visible from the
10 additional areas shaded in medium brown.

11
12 For the following visual impact discussion, the tall solar power tower (650 ft [198.1 m])
13 and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds are shown in the figures and
14 discussed in the text. These heights represent the maximum and minimum landscape visibility
15 for solar energy technologies analyzed in this PEIS. Viewsheds for solar dish and CSP
16 technology power blocks (38 ft [11.6 m]) and for transmission towers and short solar power
17 towers (150 ft [45.7 m]) are presented in Appendix N. The visibility of these facilities would fall
18 between that for tall power towers and PV and parabolic trough arrays.

19 20 21 **Impacts on Selected Federal-, State-, and BLM-Designated Sensitive Visual** 22 **Resource Areas**

23
24 Figure 11.6.14.2-2 shows the results of a GIS analysis that overlays selected federal,
25 state, and BLM-designated sensitive visual resource areas onto the combined tall solar power
26 tower (650 ft [198.1 m]) and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds to
27 illustrate which of these sensitive visual resource areas would have views of solar facilities
28 within the SEZ and therefore potentially would be subject to visual impacts from those facilities.
29 Distance zones that correspond with BLM's VRM system-specified foreground-middleground
30 distance (5 mi [8 km]), background distance (15 mi [24 km]), and a 25-mi (40-km) distance zone
31 also are shown to indicate the effect of distance from the SEZ on impact levels, which are highly
32 dependent on distance.

33
34 The scenic resources included in the analyses were as follows:

- 35
36 • National Parks, National Monuments, National Recreation Areas, National
37 Preserves, National Wildlife Refuges, National Reserves, National
38 Conservation Areas, National Historic Sites;
- 39
40 • Congressionally authorized Wilderness Areas;
- 41
42 • Wilderness Study Areas;
- 43
44 • National Wild and Scenic Rivers;
- 45
46 • Congressionally authorized Wild and Scenic Study Rivers;

- National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails;
- National Historic Landmarks and National Natural Landmarks;
- All-American Roads, National Scenic Byways, State Scenic Highways; and BLM- and USFS-designated scenic highways/byways;
- BLM-designated Special Recreation Management Areas; and
- ACECs designated because of outstanding scenic qualities.

Potential impacts on specific sensitive resource areas visible from and within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Gold Point SEZ are discussed below. The results of this analysis are also summarized in Table 11.6.14.2-1. Further discussion of impacts on these areas is presented in Sections 11.6.3 (Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics) and Section 11.6.17 (Cultural Resources) of this PEIS.

TABLE 11.6.14.2-1 Selected Potentially Affected Sensitive Visual Resources within a 25-mi (40-km) Viewshed of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ, Assuming a Target Height of 650 ft (198.1 m)

Feature Type	Feature Name (Total Acreage) ^a	Feature Area ^b		
		Visible within 5 mi	Visible between	
			5 and 15 mi	15 and 25 mi
National Park	Death Valley (3,397,062 acres)	0 acres	67 acres (0.002%)	3,747 acres (0.1%)
National Conservation Area	California Desert (25,919,319 acres)	0 acres	67 acres (0.0003%)	4,198 acres (0.02%)
Was	Death Valley (3,074,256 acres)	0 acres	67 acres (0.002%)	3,707 acres (0.1%)
WSAs	Pigeon Spring (3,651 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	8 acres (0.2%)
	Queer Mountain (85,294 acres)	0 acres	1,276 acres (2%)	0 acres
SRMA	Fish Lake Valley (196,811 acres)	0 acres	0 acres	460 acres (0.2%)

^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^b Percentage of total feature viewable.

1 The following visual impact analysis describes *visual contrast levels* rather than *visual*
2 *impact levels*. *Visual contrasts* are changes in the landscape as seen by viewers, including
3 changes in the forms, lines, colors, and textures of objects seen in the landscape. A measure of
4 *visual impact* includes potential human reactions to the visual contrasts arising from a
5 development activity, based on viewer characteristics, including attitudes and values,
6 expectations, and other characteristics that that are viewer- and situation-specific. Accurate
7 assessment of visual impacts requires knowledge of the potential types and numbers of viewers
8 for a given development and their characteristics and expectations; specific locations where the
9 project might be viewed from; and other variables that were not available or not feasible to
10 incorporate in the PEIS analysis. These variables would be incorporated into a future site-and
11 project-specific assessment that would be conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar
12 energy projects. For more discussion of visual contrasts and impacts, see Section 5.12 of the
13 PEIS.

14 15 16 ***National Park***

- 17
18 • *Death Valley*. Death Valley NP is located in California, about 13 mi (21 km)
19 southwest of the SEZ at the point of closest approach. The vast Death Valley
20 NP is a popular winter hiking area. The Death Valley NP contains paved roads
21 popular for scenic driving and biking, several miles of hiking trails, and four-
22 wheel drive roads. There are campgrounds, and backcountry camping is
23 allowed. Death Valley NP has some of the darkest night skies in the country
24 (NPS 2010), and they are considered an important part of the national park
25 visitor experience. Stargazing is popular year round, as are bird watching
26 and viewing spring wildflowers. Most of the park's services and facilities, as
27 well as most recreational use, are in the central and northeastern portions of
28 the park.
29
30

GOOGLE EARTH™ VISUALIZATIONS

The visual impact analysis discussion in this section utilizes three-dimensional Google Earth™ perspective visualizations of hypothetical solar facilities placed within the SEZ. The visualizations include simplified wireframe models of a hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed at various locations within the SEZ as visual aids for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of utility-scale solar facilities. The visualizations are intended to show the apparent size, distance, and configuration of the SEZ, as well as the apparent size of a typical utility-scale solar power tower project and its relationship to the surrounding landscape, as viewed from potentially sensitive visual resource areas within the viewshed of the SEZ.

The visualizations are not intended to be realistic simulations of the actual appearance of the landscape or of proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. The placement of models within the SEZ did not reflect any actual planned or proposed projects within the SEZ, and did not take into account engineering or other constraints that would affect the siting or choice of facilities for this particular SEZ. The number of facility models placed in the SEZ does not reflect the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, but it should be noted that the discussion of expected visual contrast levels does account for the 80% development scenario. A solar power tower was chosen for the models because the unique height characteristics of power tower facilities make their visual impact potential extend beyond other solar technology types.

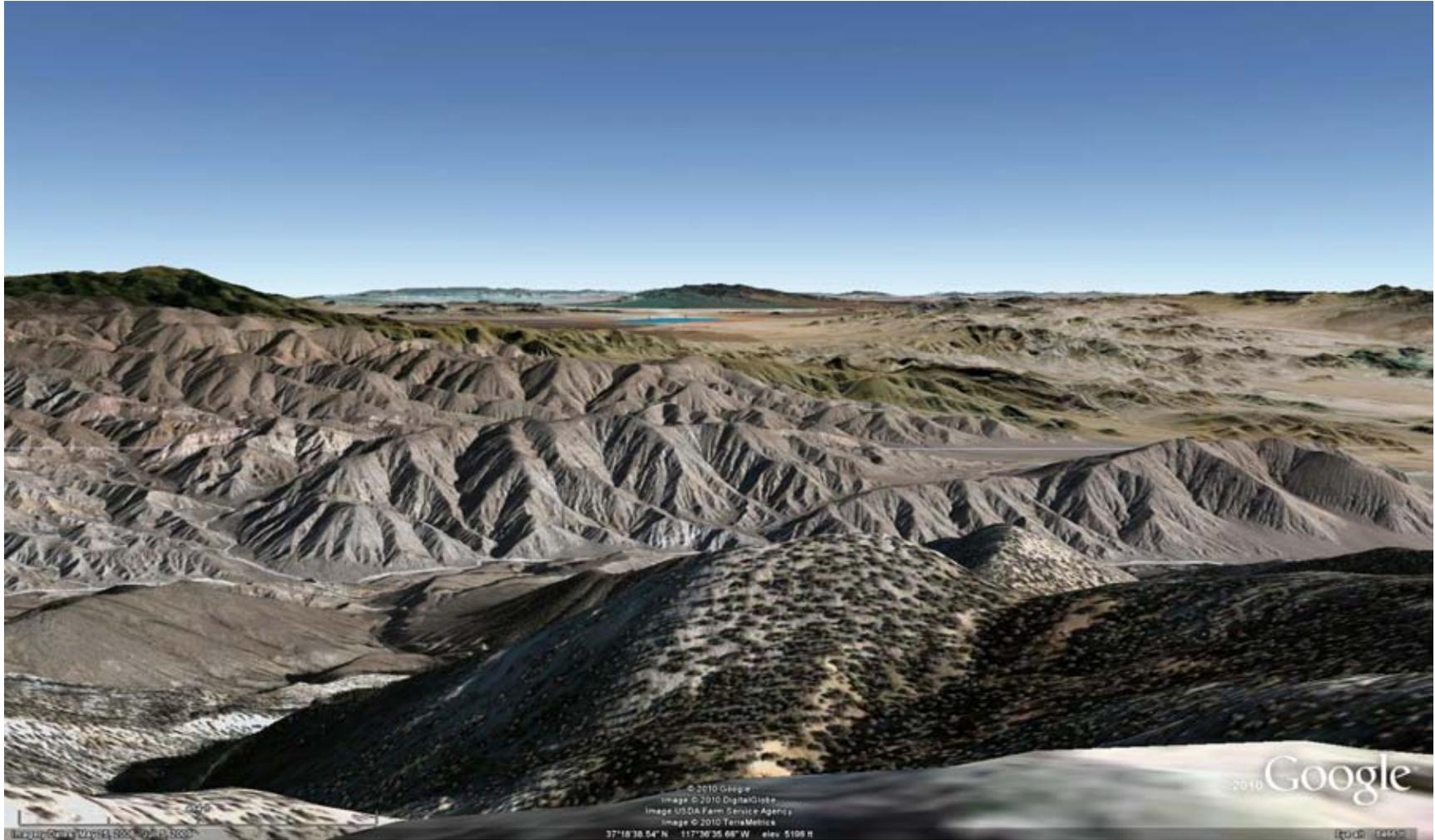
1 Solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible from the summits and
2 northeast-facing slopes of higher peaks of the Last Chance Range within the
3 NP. Visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ would primarily be from the
4 area surrounding Last Chance Mountain, at about 16 to 18 mi (23 to 26 km)
5 from the SEZ. These areas include about 3,814 acres (15.4 km²) in the 650-ft
6 (198.1-m) viewshed, or 0.1% of the total NP acreage, and 2,213 acres
7 (9.0 km²) in the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed, or 0.07% of the total Death Valley
8 NP acreage. Areas of Death Valley NP within the SEZ 25-mi (40 km)
9 viewshed extend from 14 mi (23 km) to around 21 mi (34 km) from the
10 southwestern boundary of the SEZ. Additional areas of the NP are within the
11 SEZ viewshed beyond 30 mi (48 km) from the SEZ.
12

13 For about one-third of the area in the NP within the SEZ 25-mi (40-km)
14 viewshed, visibility would be restricted to taller solar facility components,
15 such as transmission towers and power towers. Furthermore, most of the area
16 has scattered vegetation, and views of the SEZ could therefore be subject to
17 screening. Three additional areas with visibility exist at distances from 14 to
18 21 mi (23 to 34 km) from the SEZ, but the largest of these areas is less than
19 200 acres (0.81 km²) in size, and in these smaller areas, visibility would be
20 limited to the upper portions of tall power towers in the SEZ.
21

22 In the area around Last Chance Mountain, some viewpoints would have clear
23 views of the SEZ, but the SEZ would occupy only a very small part of the
24 horizontal field of view, and the vertical viewing angle would be very low,
25 despite the elevated viewpoints. Figure 11.6.14.2-3 is a Google Earth
26 visualization of the SEZ as seen from near the summit of Last Chance
27 Mountain in Death Valley NP, about 18 mi (29 km) from the southwest corner
28 of the SEZ. The visualization includes simplified wireframe models of a
29 hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed within the
30 SEZ as a visual aide for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of
31 utility-scale solar facilities.
32

33 The receiver towers depicted in the visualization are properly scaled models
34 of a 459-ft (140-m) power tower with an 867-acre (3.5-km²) field of 12-ft
35 (3.7-m) heliostats, each representing about 100 MW of electric generating
36 capacity. One group of two models was placed in the SEZ for this and other
37 visualizations shown in this section of the PEIS. In the visualization, the SEZ
38 area is depicted in orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
39

40 The viewpoint in the visualization is about 3,500 ft (1,070 m) higher in
41 elevation than the SEZ. The visualization suggests that from this elevated
42 viewpoint, the tops of collector arrays within the SEZ would likely be visible,
43 but the angle of view would be low because of the 18-mi (29-km) distance to
44 the SEZ. The SEZ and solar facilities within it would occupy a very small
45 portion of the horizontal field of view.
46



1

2 **FIGURE 11.6.14.2-3 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with**
3 **Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Last Chance Mountain in Death Valley NP (also California Desert Conservation Area and**
4 **Death Valley WA)**

5

1 If power towers were present within the SEZ, they would be visible as points
2 of light against a backdrop of the valley floor. At night, if more than 200 ft
3 (61 m) tall, power towers would have hazard navigation lights that could
4 potentially be visible from this location. The lights could be red flashing lights
5 or red or white strobe lights, and the light could be visible from this
6 viewpoint, and could attract visual attention, especially given the dark night
7 skies typical in the remote location of the SEZ. Depending on project location
8 within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and their designs, and other
9 visibility factors, weak visual contrasts from solar energy development within
10 the SEZ could be expected at this location.

11
12 The summit of Last Chance Mountain is the highest-elevation viewpoint in
13 Death Valley NP within the 25-mi (40-km) viewshed of the SEZ. Other
14 viewpoints in the NP that are within the 25-mi (40 km) SEZ viewshed are at
15 about the same distance from the SEZ, but would be lower in elevation and
16 would therefore be subject to similar or slightly lower contrast levels from
17 solar development within the SEZ, particularly given that in some of the areas,
18 visibility would be limited to taller solar facilities, thereby reducing impact. In
19 general, visual contrast levels arising from solar facilities within the SEZ
20 would not be expected to exceed weak levels for viewpoints within Death
21 Valley NP.

22 23 24 ***National Conservation Area***

- 25
- 26 • *California Desert.* The California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) is a
27 26-million-acre (105,000-km²) parcel of land in southern California
28 designated by Congress in 1976 through the Federal Land Policy and
29 Management Act. About 10 million acres (40,000 km²) of the CDCA is
30 administered by the BLM.

31
32 The CDCA management plan (BLM 1999) notes the “superb” variety of
33 scenic values in the CDCA and lists scenic resources as needing management
34 to preserve their value for future generations. The CDCA management plan
35 divides CDCA lands into multiple-use classes based on management
36 objectives. The class designations govern the type and degree of land use
37 actions allowed within the areas defined by class boundaries. All land use
38 actions and resource-management activities on public lands within a multiple-
39 use class delineation must meet the guidelines given for that class.

40
41 CDCA land within the viewshed of the Gold Point SEZ is within Death
42 Valley NP. Portions of the CDCA within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed for
43 the Gold Point SEZ include about 4,265 acres (17.3 km²), or 0.02% of the
44 total CDCA acreage. Portions of the CDCA within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m)
45 viewshed encompass about 2,221 acres (9.0 km²), or 0.009% of the total
46 CDCA acreage. Areas of the CDCA within the SEZ 25-mi (40 km) viewshed

1 extend from 14 mi (23 km) to around 21 mi (34 km) from the southwestern
2 boundary of the SEZ. Additional areas of the CDCA are within the SEZ
3 viewshed beyond 30 mi (48 km) from the SEZ.
4

5 Death Valley NP is located entirely within the CDCA, and the portions of the
6 CDCA within the 25-mi (40-km) viewshed of the SEZ are identical to those
7 within the NP. Expected visual contrast levels for the CDCA are the same as
8 those expected for the NP, as described above.
9

10 ***Wilderness Area***

- 11 • *Death Valley.* Death Valley WA is a 3,074,256-acre (12,441-km²)
12 congressionally designated WA located 13 mi (21 km) southwest of the SEZ.
13 It is the largest area of designated National Park wilderness within the
14 contiguous United States (NPS 2010). Within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar
15 energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible from portions of the WA
16 (about 3,774 acres [15.3 km²], or 0.1% of the total WA acreage, in the 650-ft
17 [198.1-m] viewshed, and 2,210 acres [8.9 km²], or 0.1% of the total WA
18 acreage, in the 25-ft [7.5-m] viewshed). The visible area of the Death Valley
19 NP extends from 14 mi (23 km) to beyond 25 mi (40 km) from the
20 southwestern boundary of the SEZ.
21
22

23
24 Death Valley WA is located entirely within Death Valley NP, and the portions
25 of the WA within the 25-mi (40 km) viewshed of the SEZ are identical to
26 those within the NP. Expected visual contrast levels for the WA are the same
27 as those expected for the NP, as described above.
28
29

30 ***Wilderness Study Areas***

- 31 • *Pigeon Spring.* Pigeon Spring Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is a 3,651-acre
32 (14.8-km²) WSA located 15 mi (24 km) west of the SEZ. Within 25 mi
33 (40 km) of the SEZ, solar energy facilities within the SEZ could be visible
34 from about 8 acres (0.03 km²), or 0.2% of the total WSA acreage, in the
35 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed. None of the WSA is visible within the 25-ft
36 (7.5-m) viewshed. The visible area of the WSA is about 16 mi (26 km) from
37 the western boundary of the SEZ.
38
39

40 The receivers and upper portions of sufficiently tall power towers placed in
41 the far southern portion of the SEZ could potentially be visible from a very
42 small portion of the WSA. This portion of the WSA is wooded, and trees
43 would likely partially or completely block the view of solar facilities within
44 the SEZ. If operating power towers were visible in this portion of the SEZ,
45 they would be visible as points of light just above the intervening mountains.
46 At night, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, power towers would have hazard

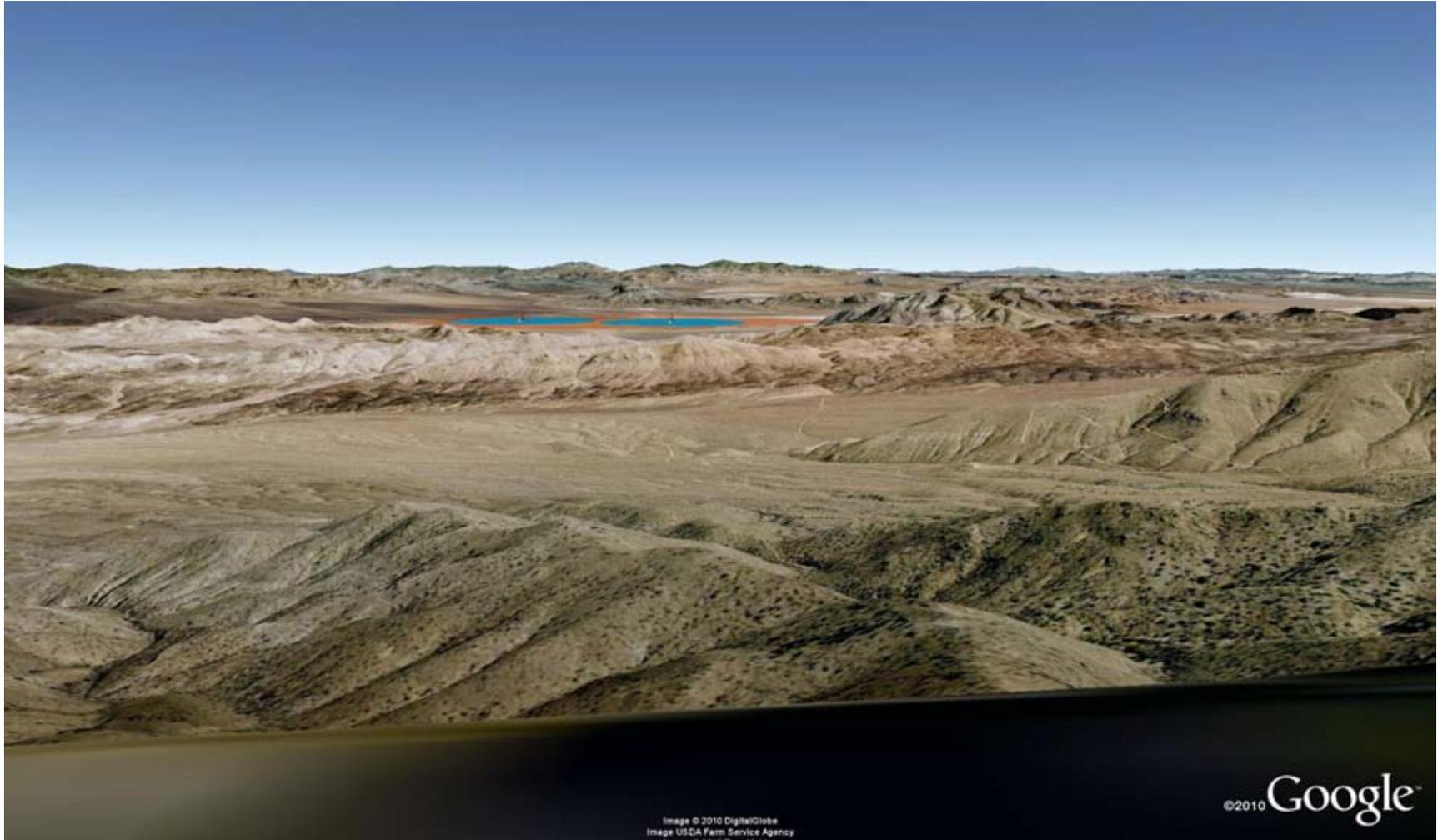
1 navigation lights that could potentially be visible from this location. The lights
2 could be red flashing lights or red or white strobe lights, and the light could
3 potentially be visible from the WSA. Expected visual impacts on the WSA
4 would be minimal.

- 5
6 • *Queer Mountain.* Queer Mountain WSA is an 85,294-acre (345.2-km²)
7 wilderness study area located 7.0 mi (11.3 km) south of the SEZ. Within
8 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ, solar energy facilities within the SEZ could be
9 visible from local summits and north-facing slopes of Gold Mountain and
10 some ridges west of Gold Mountain. Portions of the WSA within the SEZ
11 25-mi (40 km) viewshed include about 1,276 acres (5.2 km²), or 2% of the
12 total WSA acreage, in the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed and 522 acres (2.1 km²),
13 or 1% of the total WSA acreage, in the 25-ft (7.5-m) viewshed. The visible
14 area of the WSA is about 8.7 to 12 mi (14 to 19 km) from the southern
15 boundary of the SEZ.

16
17 From the highest peaks and ridges in those portions of the WSA that have
18 views of the SEZ, the ridges of Slate Ridge generally screen at least some of
19 the SEZ from view; however, from some viewpoints, most of the SEZ would
20 be visible, and the SEZ would occupy a moderate amount of the horizontal
21 field of view. Although the vertical angle of view is low, it is high enough that
22 the tops of collector/reflector arrays within the SEZ would likely be visible.
23 From these very high-elevation viewpoints, visual contrast levels from solar
24 facilities could potentially reach moderate levels, but for lower elevation
25 viewpoints, weak levels of visual contrast would be expected.

26
27 Figure 11.6.14.2-4 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from the
28 summit of Gold Mountain in the WSA, about 10 mi (16 km) directly south of
29 the SEZ. The viewpoint in the visualization is about 3,000 ft (900 m) higher in
30 elevation than the SEZ. Solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen in a
31 band just above the top of Slate Ridge.

32
33 The visualization suggests that from this elevated viewpoint, the tops of
34 collector/reflector arrays within the SEZ would likely be visible, which would
35 increase the apparent size of the collector/reflector arrays and would make the
36 strong regular geometry of the arrays more apparent. The SEZ and solar
37 facilities within it would occupy a moderate portion of the horizontal field of
38 view. If power towers were present within the SEZ, the receivers could be
39 visible as bright points of light against a backdrop of the valley floor. They
40 would be likely to attract visual attention and likely could not be missed by
41 casual viewers. At night, sufficiently tall power towers could have red or
42 white flashing hazard lights that would be visible from Gold Mountain, and
43 they would likely attract attention given the dark night skies typical of the
44 area. Other lighting associated with solar facilities in the SEZ could be visible
45 as well. Depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar
46 facilities and their designs, and other visibility factors, moderate visual



1

2 **FIGURE 11.6.14.2-4 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with**
3 **Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Gold Mountain in Queer Mountain WSA**

4

1 contrasts from solar energy development within the SEZ could be expected at this
2 location.

3
4 The summit of Gold Mountain is the highest-elevation viewpoint in the WSA within
5 the 25-mi (40-km) viewshed of the SEZ. Other viewpoints in the WSA that are within
6 the 25-mi (40 km) SEZ viewshed are at about the same distance or slightly less
7 distant from the SEZ, but would be lower in elevation. These viewpoints would
8 therefore be subject to similar or lower contrast levels from solar development within
9 the SEZ, particularly given that in some of the areas, visibility would be limited to
10 taller solar facilities, thereby reducing impact. In general, moderate levels of visual
11 contrast would be expected for some high-elevation viewpoints in the WSA, with
12 weaker contrasts expected for lower elevation viewpoints in the WSA.

13 14 15 ***Special Recreation Management Area***

- 16
17 • *Fish Lake Valley*—The Fish Lake Valley SRMA is a BLM-designated SRMA
18 located in California that contains two separate areas. The portion of the
19 SRMA that is within the viewshed of Gold Point SEZ is located 17 mi
20 (28 km) southwest of the SEZ at the point of closest approach. The total
21 acreage of the SRMA is 196,811 acres (796.5 km²).

22
23 The area of the SRMA within the 650-ft (198.1-m) viewshed of the SEZ
24 includes 460 acres (1.9 km²), or 0.2% of the total SRMA acreage. The area of
25 the SRMA within the 24.6-ft (7.5-m) viewshed of the SEZ includes 12 acres
26 (0.05 km²), or 0.006% of the total SRMA acreage. The visible area extends
27 from 16 mi (26 km) from the southwestern boundary of the SEZ to 19 mi
28 (31 km) into the SRMA.

29
30 As shown in Figure 11.6.14.2-2, visibility of solar facilities within the SEZ
31 would be limited to a very small area of the SRMA, and visibility of low
32 height facilities, such as PV panels or trough arrays, would be limited to
33 12 acres (0.05 km²) within the SRMA. Areas within the 25-mi (40-km)
34 viewshed of the SEZ include the summits and northeast-facing slopes of peaks
35 in the Last Chance Range in the SRMA. Views of the SEZ from the SRMA
36 are nearly completely screened by mountains and ridges between the SRMA
37 and the SEZ, including Slate Ridge. Because of the very limited visibility of
38 the SEZ and the long distance to the SEZ (17 mi [28 km]), under the 80%
39 development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, expected visual contrast levels
40 would be minimal for viewpoints within the SRMA.

41
42 Additional scenic resources exist at the national, state, and local levels, and impacts may
43 occur on both federal and nonfederal lands, including sensitive traditional cultural properties
44 important to Tribes. In addition to the resource types and specific resources analyzed in this
45 PEIS, future site-specific NEPA analyses would include state and local parks, recreation areas,
46 other sensitive visual resources, and communities close enough to the proposed project to be

1 affected by visual impacts. Selected other lands and resources are included in the discussion
2 below.

3
4 In addition to impacts associated with the solar energy facilities themselves, sensitive
5 visual resources could be affected by other facilities that would be built and operated in
6 conjunction with the solar facilities. With respect to visual impacts, the most important
7 associated facilities would be access roads and transmission lines, the precise location of which
8 cannot be determined until a specific solar energy project is proposed. The nearest large
9 transmission line is 22 mi (35 km) from the SEZ, and the construction of new transmission
10 facilities would be required both within and outside the SEZ. Depending on their location and
11 visibility, these new facilities could potentially cause large additional visual impacts to the
12 sensitive visual resource areas and sensitive viewing areas listed above, as well as other areas not
13 listed above.

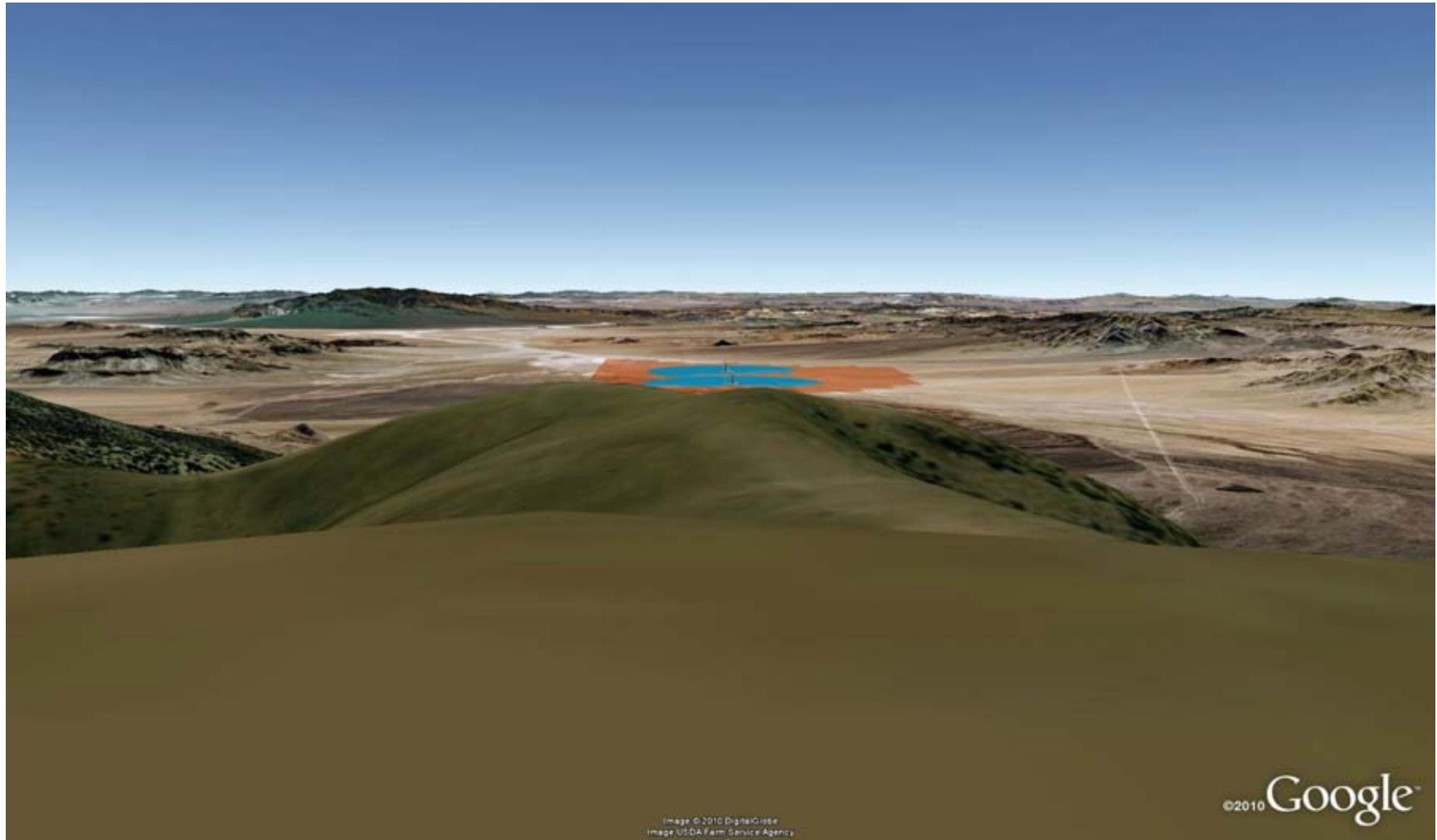
14 15 16 **Impacts on Selected Other Lands and Resources**

17
18
19 ***Magruder Mountain.*** Magruder Mountain (elevation 9,044 ft [2,756 m]), located 5 to
20 10 mi (8 to 16 km) west of the SEZ, is sacred to the Timbisha Shoshone. The summit of the
21 mountain is about 4,000 ft (1,200 m) higher in elevation than the SEZ, and where vegetation and
22 intervening terrain do not provide screening, there are commanding views of the SEZ.

23
24 Figure 11.6.14.2-5 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from the main peak
25 of Magruder Mountain, about 8 mi (13 km) due west of the SEZ, facing east. The visualization
26 suggests that from this elevated viewpoint, solar facilities within the SEZ would be in full view.
27 The tops of solar facilities within the SEZ would be visible, which would reveal their size and
28 the strong regular geometry of the solar collector/reflector arrays. These views would tend to
29 increase visual contrasts with the natural appearing surroundings. In general, the SEZ would
30 occupy only a small portion of the horizontal field of view, but for some viewpoints on the
31 northeastern portion of Magruder Mountain, the SEZ is close enough that it would occupy a
32 moderate amount of the horizontal field of view.

33
34 The receivers of operating power towers within the SEZ would be visible and would
35 likely appear as bright point or non-point (i.e., having a visible cylindrical or rectangular surface)
36 light sources atop discernable tower structures. The lights would likely attract visual attention. At
37 night, sufficiently tall power towers could have red or white flashing hazard lights that would be
38 visible from Magruder Mountain. These lights would likely attract attention, given the dark night
39 skies typical of the area. Other lighting associated with solar facilities in the SEZ could be visible
40 as well.

41
42 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, depending on the type,
43 number, sizes, and layouts of solar facilities within the SEZ, moderate visual contrasts would be
44 expected for this viewpoint. In general, higher contrast levels of contrast would be expected for
45 viewpoints on the eastern portions of the mountain, as they would be somewhat closer to the
46 SEZ, and lower contrast levels would be expected for viewpoints farther west on the mountain.



1

2

3

FIGURE 11.6.14.2-5 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from Magruder Mountain West of the SEZ

1 Lower visual contrast levels would also be expected at lower-elevation viewpoints on the
2 mountain, both because the vertical angle of view to the SEZ would be lower (tending to reduce
3 visual contrast levels) and because in many areas the lower slopes of the mountain are vegetated,
4 and some screening of the SEZ by vegetation would be expected. Overall, under the 80%
5 development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, moderate visual contrast levels would be expected
6 for viewpoints on Magruder Mountain.
7
8

9 ***U.S. Highway 95.*** About 10 mi (16 km) of U.S. 95 are within the SEZ viewshed at a
10 distance of 9 to 10.5 mi (14.5 to 16.9 km). The AADT value for U.S. 95 in the vicinity of the
11 SEZ was about 1,900 in 2009 (NV DOT 2010).
12

13 Solar facilities would be viewed perpendicular to the direction of travel in both
14 directions, along the narrow axis of both the SEZ and the narrow Lida Valley. For northbound
15 travelers on U.S. 95, solar facilities within the SEZ could first come into view just north of
16 Stonewall Pass. For about 4 mi (7 km) (about 3½ minutes at highway speeds), only the upper
17 portions of sufficiently tall power towers could be seen. However, just after crossing the
18 Esmeralda-Nye county line, low-height solar facilities within the SEZ could come into view,
19 depending on their location within the SEZ. Low-height facilities would remain in view for
20 about 5 mi (8 km) (about 4 minutes at highway speeds), after which taller solar facilities might
21 be visible for about 1 more mile (1.6 km).
22

23 For those portions of U.S. 95 within the viewshed of the SEZ, the elevation of the
24 roadway is 200 to 300 ft (60 to 90 m) lower than the SEZ, hence the vertical angle of view to the
25 SEZ is extremely low. The SEZ would occupy a small portion of the horizontal field of view.
26 While the receivers of operating power towers within the SEZ could appear as bright points of
27 light at a distance of 10 mi (16 km), in general, because of the small apparent size of the SEZ and
28 the very low angle of view, under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, visual
29 contrast levels from solar facilities within the SEZ would not be expected to exceed weak levels
30 for travelers on U.S. 95.
31

32 Southbound travelers on U.S. 95 would have a generally similar visual experience, but
33 the order would be reversed; that is, solar facilities within the SEZ would first come into view
34 about 6 mi (10 km) north of the county line, and disappear from view shortly before travelers
35 reached Stonewall Pass. Visual contrast levels would be similar to those observed by northbound
36 travelers.
37
38

39 ***State Route 266.*** As shown in Figure 11.6.14.2-2, within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ,
40 about 18 mi (29 km) of State Route 266 are within the SEZ viewshed at distances from 2 to
41 9.5 mi (3.2 to 15.3 km). The AADT value for State Route 266 in the vicinity of the SEZ was
42 about 210 vehicles in 2009 (NV DOT 2010).
43

44 From both directions, the road first directly approaches the SEZ but then parallels the
45 SEZ's northern boundary at a distance of about 2 mi (3 km). For westbound travelers on State
46 Route 266, solar facilities within the SEZ could be in view at the junction of State Route 266

1 with U.S. 95, about 10 mi (16 km) northeast of the SEZ's northeast corner. The elevation of the
2 roadway is lower than the SEZ but would gradually increase to that of the SEZ as travelers
3 approached the SEZ. Regardless of elevation, the angle of view would be very low, causing the
4 collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities within the SEZ to be viewed on edge, causing them to
5 appear as thin lines at the western horizon. The edge-on view would conceal much of the arrays'
6 strong regular geometry, reduce their apparent size, and cause them to appear to repeat the strong
7 line of the horizon, all of which would tend to reduce their visual contrast. However, taller
8 ancillary facilities, such as cooling towers, buildings, transmission components, and plumes (if
9 present), would likely be visible above the collector/reflector arrays. These elements could add
10 noticeable form, line, and color contrasts, which would increase as travelers approached the SEZ.
11 The receivers of operating power towers within the SEZ would likely appear as bright or very
12 bright light sources against the backdrop of Slate Ridge west of the SEZ. At night, sufficiently
13 tall power towers could have red or white flashing hazard lighting that would be visible for
14 many miles and would likely be visually conspicuous in the dark sky conditions of this remote
15 location. Other lighting associated with solar facilities within the SEZ could be visible and
16 would add increasing visual contrast as travelers approached the SEZ. In general, as travelers
17 approached the SEZ, expected visual contrast levels from solar facilities within the SEZ would
18 rise from weak to strong levels. The approach to the SEZ is a little more than 9 mi (15 km), and
19 would take about 8 minutes at highway speeds.

20
21 By the time westbound travelers reached that part of State Route 266 north of the SEZ,
22 visual contrast levels from solar facilities within the SEZ under the 80% development scenario
23 would likely have risen to strong levels. Figure 11.6.14.2-6 is a Google Earth perspective
24 visualization of the SEZ as seen from State Route 266 about 1.7 mi (2.8 km) north of the SEZ,
25 facing south toward two power tower models 2.8 mi (4.5 km) south of the viewpoint. The
26 visualization suggests that from this location, solar facilities would be in full view, and the SEZ
27 would occupy nearly the entire horizontal field of view. Solar facilities located within the closest
28 portions of the SEZ would strongly attract visual attention and would likely dominate the view
29 toward the south. The viewpoint from the road is about 60 ft (20 m) higher in elevation than the
30 nearest part of the SEZ, so solar collector arrays would be seen nearly edge-on and would repeat
31 the horizontal line of the plain in which the SEZ is situated. This would tend to reduce visual line
32 contrast somewhat. Ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission towers, cooling towers
33 and plumes (if present), would likely be visible projecting above the collector/reflector arrays.
34 Their forms, lines, colors, and reflective properties could contrast strongly with the horizontal
35 collector/reflector arrays and surrounding mostly natural-appearing landscape.

36
37 The receivers of operating power towers within the SEZ would likely appear as brilliant
38 white non-point light sources atop towers whose structural details could be visible. At night,
39 sufficiently tall power towers would have red or white flashing lights that would likely strongly
40 attract visual attention in the dark night sky typical of the area.

41
42 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in this PEIS, solar facilities within the
43 SEZ to the south would likely dominate views on State Route 266 within a few miles of the SEZ,
44 and would be expected to cause strong levels of visual contrast. Moderate to weak levels of
45 visual contrasts would be expected for viewpoints on State Route 266 farther from the SEZ.

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FIGURE 11.6.14.2-6 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Model, as Seen from State Route 266 Directly North of the SEZ

1 Eastbound travelers on State Route 266 would experience the same visual contrast levels
2 as westbound travelers, but because the eastbound travelers would enter the viewshed after
3 leaving Lida Canyon much closer to the SEZ (about 4 mi [6 km]) than westbound travelers,
4 contrast levels from solar facilities within the SEZ would reach strong levels much faster than for
5 westbound travelers. The total time solar facilities would be in view in the general direction of
6 travel would also be shorter, as eastbound travelers would approach and pass the SEZ more
7 quickly than westbound travelers.
8
9

10 **Community of Gold Point.** As shown in Figure 11.6.14.2-1, the community of Gold
11 Point is less than 2 mi (3.2 km) directly south of the SEZ. Because of the proximity of the SEZ
12 and the slightly elevated viewpoints within Gold Point, solar facilities within the SEZ would be
13 expected to dominate views to the north from Gold Point, creating strong visual contrasts. A site
14 visit in August 2009 indicated largely open views of the proposed SEZ from Gold Point.
15 However, from some viewpoints in the community, at least partial screening of solar facilities
16 within the SEZ would occur, due to slight variations in topography or structures. A detailed
17 future site-specific NEPA analysis would be required to determine visibility precisely.
18

19 From the community of Gold Point, the SEZ would occupy nearly the entire horizontal
20 field of view looking north, because views from Gold Point toward the SEZ would be
21 perpendicular to the long axis of the SEZ and also because of the relatively short distance to the
22 SEZ. The elevation of Gold Point is about 400 ft (120 m) higher than the SEZ, so although the
23 vertical angle of view would be low, the tops of collector/reflector arrays of solar facilities within
24 the SEZ would likely be visible, tending to increase their contrasts with the surrounding natural-
25 appearing landscape. The structural details of facility components could be visible, with taller
26 solar facility components and plumes projecting above the collector/reflector arrays. Depending
27 on their location within the SEZ, operating power tower receivers in the closest portions of the
28 SEZ would likely be seen as brilliant white non-point light sources against either the backdrop of
29 the Lida Valley floor or the Mt. Jackson Ridge north of the SEZ. Also, under certain viewing
30 conditions, sunlight on dust particles in the air might result in the appearance of light streaming
31 down from the tower(s). At night, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, power towers would have
32 hazard navigation lights that could potentially be visible from this location. The lights could be
33 red flashing lights or red or white strobe lights, and the lights would likely be very conspicuous
34 from Gold Point, given the dark night skies found in the area. Other lighting associated with
35 solar facilities would likely be visible as well. Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in
36 this PEIS, strong levels of visual contrast would be expected to result from solar energy
37 development within the SEZ, as seen from unscreened viewpoints within the community of
38 Gold Point.
39

40 **Other Impacts.** In addition to the impacts described for the resource areas above, nearby
41 residents and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities
42 located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) from
43 their residences, or as they travel area roads. The range of impacts experienced would be highly
44 dependent on viewer location, project types, locations, sizes, and layouts, as well as the presence
45 of screening, but under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, from some
46 locations, strong visual contrasts from solar development within the SEZ could potentially
47 be observed.
48

1 ***11.6.14.2.3 Summary of Visual Resource Impacts for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ***
2

3 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, the SEZ would contain
4 multiple solar facilities utilizing differing solar technologies, as well as a variety of roads and
5 ancillary facilities. The array of facilities could create a visually complex landscape that would
6 contrast strongly with the strongly horizontal landscape of the flat valley in which the SEZ is
7 located. Large visual impacts on the SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed would
8 be associated with solar energy development within the proposed Gold Point SEZ because of
9 major modification of the character of the existing landscape. Potential exists for additional
10 impacts from construction and operation of transmission lines and access roads within and
11 outside the SEZ.
12

13 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, utility-scale solar energy
14 development within the proposed Gold Point SEZ is likely to result in moderate visual contrasts
15 for some viewpoints within the Queer Mountain WSA, which is within 7 mi (11 km) of the SEZ
16 at the point of closest approach. Moderate visual contrast levels would also be expected for
17 viewpoints on Macgruder Mountain. Minimal to weak visual contrasts would be expected for
18 some viewpoints within other sensitive visual resource areas within the SEZ 25-mi (40-km)
19 viewshed.
20

21 Residents of the community of Gold Point would likely experience strong visual contrasts
22 from solar energy development within the SEZ. About 18 mi (29 km) of State Route 266 are
23 within the SEZ viewshed at distances of 2 to 9.5 mi (3.2 to 15.3 km) from the SEZ. Travelers on
24 State Route 266 could be subjected to strong visual contrasts from solar energy development
25 within the SEZ. Visitors to the area, workers, and residents of the community of Gold Point may
26 experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any
27 associated access roads and transmission lines) as they travel other area roads.
28
29

30 **11.6.14.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
31

32 No SEZ-specific design features have been identified to protect visual resources for the
33 proposed Gold Point SEZ. As noted in Section 5.12, the presence and operation of large-scale
34 solar energy facilities and equipment would introduce major visual changes into non-
35 industrialized landscapes and could create strong visual contrasts in line, form, color, and texture
36 that could not easily be mitigated substantially. Implementation of programmatic design features
37 intended to reduce visual impacts (described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would be expected
38 to reduce visual impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy development within the SEZ;
39 however, the degree of effectiveness of these design features could be assessed only at the site-
40 and project-specific level. Given the large scale, reflective surfaces, strong regular geometry of
41 utility-scale solar energy facilities, and the lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the
42 SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities away from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive
43 viewing areas is the primary means of mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other
44 visual impact mitigation measures would generally be limited.
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1 **11.6.15 Acoustic Environment**

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4 **11.6.15.1 Affected Environment**

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6 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in the southern portion of Esmeralda County in
7 southwestern Nevada. Neither the State of Nevada nor Esmeralda County has established
8 quantitative noise-limit regulations applicable to solar energy development.
9

10 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is in an undeveloped area, the overall character of which is
11 rural. U.S. 95 runs north–south as close as 9 mi (14 km) east of the SEZ. State Route 266 runs
12 east–west less than 2 mi (3 km) north of the SEZ, while State Route 774 runs along the SEZ’s
13 eastern boundary as close as 0.25 mi (0.4 km). Lida Road runs along the SEZ’s western
14 boundary as close as 300 ft (91 m). Several dirt roads run through the SEZ. No railroad line
15 exists around the SEZ. The nearest airport is Lida Junction Airport, which is located about 9 mi
16 (14.5 km) east-northeast of the SEZ. Other nearby airport includes Goldfield Airport, about
17 21 mi (34 km) north-northeast of the SEZ. There are no agricultural activities in and around the
18 SEZ, but cattle grazing seems to occur within the SEZ. No industrial activities other than small-
19 scale mining are located around the SEZ. No significant recreational land use exists within the
20 SEZ. No sensitive receptors (e.g., residences, hospitals, schools, or nursing homes) exist close
21 to the proposed Gold Point SEZ. The nearest residences (squatters) lie about 2 mi (3 km) south
22 of the SEZ near Gold Point, which is a well-preserved ghost town and point of interest for many
23 tourists. Noise sources around the SEZ include road traffic, aircraft flyover, cattle grazing, and
24 road traffic related to tourism around Gold Point. To date, no environmental noise survey has
25 been conducted around the proposed Gold Point SEZ. On the basis of the population density, the
26 day–night average noise level (L_{dn} or DNL) is estimated to be 17 dBA for Esmeralda County,
27 well below the 33 to 47 dBA L_{dn} range level typical of a rural area (Eldred 1982; Miller 2002).⁹
28
29

30 **11.6.15.2 Impacts**

31
32 Potential noise impacts associated with solar projects in the Gold Point SEZ would
33 occur during all phases of the projects. During the construction phase, potential noise impacts
34 associated with operation of heavy equipment and vehicular traffic on the nearest residences
35 (about 2 mi [3 km] to the south of the SEZ boundary) would be anticipated, albeit of short
36 duration. During the operations phase, potential impacts on the nearest residences would be
37 anticipated, depending on the solar technologies employed. Noise impacts shared by all solar
38 technologies are discussed in detail in Section 5.13.1, and technology-specific impacts are
39 presented in Section 5.13.2. Impacts specific to the proposed Gold Point SEZ are presented in
40 this section. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
41 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the
42 applications of any additional SEZ-specific design features (see Section 11.6.15.3 below). This

⁹ Rural and undeveloped areas have sound levels in the range of 33 to 47 dBA as L_{dn} (Eldred 1982). Typically, the nighttime level is 10 dBA lower than daytime level, and it can be interpreted as 33 to 47 dBA (mean 40 dBA) during the daytime hours and 23 to 37 dBA (mean 30 dBA) during nighttime hours.

1 section primarily addresses potential noise impacts on humans, although potential impacts on
2 wildlife at nearby sensitive areas are discussed. Additional discussion on potential noise impacts
3 on wildlife is presented in Section 5.10.2.
4

6 **11.6.15.2.1 Construction**

7

8 The proposed Gold Point SEZ has a relatively flat terrain; thus, minimal site preparation
9 activities would be required, and associated noise levels would be lower than those during
10 general construction (e.g., erecting building structures and installing equipment, piping, and
11 electrical).
12

13 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, the highest construction noise
14 levels would occur at the power block area, where key components (e.g., steam turbine/
15 generator) needed to generate electricity are located; a maximum of 95 dBA at a distance of
16 50 ft (15 m) is assumed, if impact equipment such as pile drivers or rock drills is not being used.
17 Typically, the power block area is located in the center of the solar facility, at a distance of more
18 than 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from the facility boundary. Noise levels from construction of the solar array
19 would be lower than 95 dBA. When geometric spreading and ground effects are considered, as
20 explained in Section 4.13.1, noise levels would attenuate to about 40 dBA at a distance of
21 1.2 mi (1.9 km) from the power block area. This noise level is typical of daytime mean rural
22 background levels. In addition, mid- and high-frequency noise from construction activities is
23 significantly attenuated by atmospheric absorption under the low-humidity conditions typical of
24 an arid desert environment, and by temperature lapse conditions typical of daytime hours; thus,
25 noise attenuation to a 40-dBA level would occur at distances somewhat shorter than 1.2 mi
26 (1.9 km). If a 10-hour daytime work schedule is considered, the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA
27 L_{dn} for residential areas (EPA 1974) would occur about 1,200 ft (370 m) from the power block
28 area, which would be well within the facility boundary. For construction activities occurring
29 near the residences closest to the southern SEZ boundary, estimated noise levels at the nearest
30 residences would be about 34 dBA¹⁰, which is lower than the typical daytime mean rural
31 background level of 40 dBA. In addition, an estimated 40 dBA L_{dn} ¹¹ at these residences (i.e., no
32 contribution from construction activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for
33 residential areas.
34

¹⁰ Due to the large difference in elevations between potential noise sources within the SEZ (about 4,960 ft [1,512 m] and receptors near Gold Point (5,400 ft [1,646 m]) located to the south, sound attenuation due to ground effects would likely be smaller as the source location moves north because the line-of-sight between them is higher above the ground. Without considering this effect, noise levels could be underestimated if the source location is located in the northern portion of the SEZ. It is possible that as a receptor moves farther north, the noise level would increase, depending on meteorological conditions. Accordingly, this elevation difference should be taken into account in refined noise calculations during the permitting process.

¹¹ For this analysis, background levels of 40 and 30 dBA for daytime and nighttime hours, respectively, are assumed, which result in a day-night average noise level (L_{dn}) of 40 dBA.

1 There are no specially designated areas within a 5-mi (8-km) range from the Gold Point
2 SEZ, which is the farthest distance that noise, except extremely loud noise, would be discernable.
3 Thus, noise impact analysis for nearby specially designated areas was not conducted.
4

5 Depending on soil conditions, pile driving might be required for installation of solar dish
6 engines. However, the pile drivers used, such as vibratory or sonic drivers, would be relatively
7 small and quiet, in contrast to the impulsive impact pile drivers frequently used at large-scale
8 construction sites. Potential impacts on the nearest residences would be anticipated to be
9 minimal, considering the distance to the nearest residences (about 2 mi [3 km] from the southern
10 SEZ boundary).
11

12 It is assumed that most construction activities would occur during the day, when noise is
13 better tolerated than at night because of the masking effects of background noise. In addition,
14 construction activities for a utility-scale facility are temporary in nature (typically a few years).
15 Construction within the proposed Gold Point SEZ would cause minimal unavoidable, but
16 localized, short-term noise impacts on neighboring communities.
17

18 Construction activities could result in various degrees of ground vibration, depending
19 on the equipment used and construction methods employed. All construction equipment causes
20 ground vibration to some degree, but activities that typically generate the most severe vibrations
21 are high-explosive detonations and impact pile driving. As is the case for noise, vibration would
22 diminish in strength with distance. For example, vibration levels at receptors beyond 140 ft
23 (43 m) from a large bulldozer (87 VdB at 25 ft [7.6 m]) would diminish below the threshold of
24 perception for humans, which is about 65 VdB (Hanson et al. 2006). During the construction
25 phase, no major construction equipment that can cause ground vibration would be used, and no
26 residences or sensitive structures are located in close proximity. Therefore, no adverse vibration
27 impacts are anticipated from construction activities, including pile driving for dish engines.
28

29 Transmission lines would be constructed within a designated ROW to connect to the
30 nearest regional power grid. A regional 120-kV transmission line is located about 22 mi (35 km)
31 from the proposed Gold Point SEZ; thus, construction of a transmission line over this relatively
32 long distance would be needed to connect to the regional grid. For construction of transmission
33 lines, noise sources and their noise levels might be similar to construction noise sources at an
34 industrial facility of a comparable size. Transmission line construction for the Gold Point SEZ
35 could be performed in about 2 years. However, the area under construction along the
36 transmission line ROW would move continuously, so no particular area would be exposed to
37 noise for a prolonged period. Therefore, potential noise impacts on nearby residences along the
38 transmission line ROW, if any, would be minor and temporary in nature.
39

40 41 **11.6.15.2.2 Operations** 42

43 Noise sources common to all or most types of solar technologies include equipment
44 motion from solar tracking, maintenance and repair activities (e.g., washing mirrors or replacing
45 broken mirrors) at the solar array area; commuter/visitor/support/delivery traffic within and
46 around the solar facility; and control/administrative buildings, warehouses, and other auxiliary

1 buildings/structures. Diesel-fired emergency power generators and firewater pump engines
2 would be additional sources of noise, but their operations would be limited to several hours per
3 month (for preventive maintenance testing).
4

5 With respect to the main solar energy technologies, noise-generating activities in the
6 PV solar array area would be minimal, related mainly to solar tracking, if used. On the other
7 hand, dish engine technology, which employs collector and converter devices in a single unit,
8 generally has the strongest noise sources.
9

10 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, most noise sources during
11 operations would be in the power block area, including the turbine generator (typically in an
12 enclosure), pumps, boilers, and dry- or wet-cooling systems. The power block is typically
13 located in the center of the facility. On the basis of a 250-MW parabolic trough facility with a
14 cooling tower (Beacon Solar, LLC 2008), simple noise modeling indicates that noise levels
15 around the power block would be more than 85 dBA, but about 51 dBA at the facility boundary,
16 about 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from the power block area. For a facility located near the southern SEZ
17 boundary, the predicted noise level would be about 36 dBA at the nearest residences, located
18 about 2 mi (3 km) from the SEZ boundary, which is below the typical daytime mean rural
19 background level of 40 dBA. If TES were not used (i.e., if the operation were limited to daytime,
20 12 hours only¹²), the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA (as L_{dn} for residential areas) would occur at
21 about 1,370 ft (420 m) from the power block area, and thus, would not be exceeded outside of
22 the proposed SEZ boundary. At the nearest residences, about 41 dBA L_{dn} (i.e., minimal
23 contribution from facility operation) would be estimated. This is well below the EPA guideline
24 of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. However, day–night average noise levels higher than those
25 estimated above by using simple noise modeling would be anticipated if TES were used during
26 nighttime hours, as explained below and in Section 4.13.1.
27

28 On a calm, clear night typical of the proposed Gold Point SEZ setting, the air temperature
29 would likely increase with height (temperature inversion), because of strong radiative cooling.
30 Such a temperature profile tends to focus noise downward toward the ground. There would be
31 little, if any, shadow zone¹³ within 1 or 2 mi (1.6 or 3 km) of the noise source in the presence of
32 a strong temperature inversion (Beranek 1988). In particular, such conditions add to the
33 effect of noise being more discernable during nighttime hours, when the background noise
34 levels are lowest. To estimate the day–night average noise level (L_{dn}), 6-hour nighttime
35 generation with TES is assumed after 12-hour daytime generation. For nighttime hours under
36 temperature inversion, 10 dB is added to noise levels estimated from the uniform atmosphere
37 (see Section 4.13.1). On the basis of these assumptions, the estimated nighttime noise level at the
38 nearest residences (about 2 mi [3.2 km] from the southern SEZ boundary) would be 46 dBA,
39 which is well above the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. The day–night
40 average noise level is estimated to be about 48 dBA L_{dn} , which is below the EPA guideline of
41 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. The assumptions are conservative in terms of operating hours,
42 and no credit was given to other attenuation mechanisms, so it is likely that noise levels would be

12 Maximum possible operating hours at the summer solstice, but limited to 7 to 8 hours at the winter solstice.

13 A shadow zone is defined as the region in which direct sound does not penetrate because of upward diffraction.

1 lower than 48 dBA L_{dn} at the nearest residences, even if TES were used at a solar facility.
2 Consequently, operating parabolic trough or power tower facilities using TES could result in
3 some adverse noise impacts on the nearest residences, depending on background noise levels
4 and meteorological conditions. In the permitting process, refined noise propagation modeling
5 considering topographical features might be warranted, along with measurement of background
6 noise levels.

7
8 The solar dish engine is unique among CSP technologies because it generates electricity
9 directly and does not require a power block. A single, large solar dish engine has relatively low
10 noise levels, but a solar facility might employ tens of thousands of dish engines, which would
11 cause high noise levels around such a facility. For example, the proposed 750-MW SES Solar
12 Two dish engine facility in California would employ as many as 30,000 dish engines
13 (SES Solar Two, LLC 2008). At the proposed Gold Point SEZ, on the basis of the assumption
14 of dish engine facilities of up to 428-MW total capacity (covering 80% of the total area, or
15 3,848 acres [15.6 km²]), up to 17,100 25-kW dish engines could be employed. For a large dish
16 engine facility, several hundred step-up transformers would be embedded in the dish engine solar
17 field, along with a substation; however, the noise from these sources would be masked by dish
18 engine noise.

19
20 The composite noise level of a single dish engine would be about 88 dBA at a distance of
21 3 ft (0.9 m) (SES Solar Two, LLC 2008). This noise level would be attenuated to about 40 dBA
22 (typical of the mean rural daytime environment) within 330 ft (100 m). However, the combined
23 noise level from tens of thousands of dish engines operating simultaneously would be high in the
24 immediate vicinity of the facility. For example, they would be about 48 dBA at 1.0 mi (1.6 km)
25 and 43 dBA at 2 mi (3 km) from the boundary of the square-shaped dish engine solar field; both
26 values are higher than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. However,
27 these levels would occur at somewhat shorter distances than the aforementioned distances,
28 considering noise attenuation by atmospheric absorption and temperature lapse during daytime
29 hours. To estimate noise levels at the nearest residences, it was assumed dish engines were
30 placed all over the Gold Point SEZ at intervals of 98 ft (30 m). Under these assumptions, the
31 estimated noise level at the nearest residences, about 2 mi (3.2 km) south of the SEZ boundary,
32 would be about 43 dBA, which is somewhat higher than the typical daytime mean rural
33 background level of 40 dBA. On the basis of 12-hr daytime operation, the estimated 43 dBA L_{dn}
34 at these residences is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. On the
35 basis of other noise attenuation mechanisms, noise levels at the nearest residences would be
36 lower than the values estimated above. However, noise from dish engines could cause adverse
37 impacts on the nearest residences, depending on background noise levels and meteorological
38 conditions. Thus, consideration of minimizing noise impacts is very important when siting dish
39 engine facilities. Direct mitigation of dish engine noise through noise control engineering could
40 also be considered.

41
42 During operations, no major ground-vibrating equipment would be used. In addition,
43 no sensitive structures are located close enough to the proposed Gold Point SEZ to experience
44 physical damage. Therefore, during operation of any solar facility, potential vibration impacts
45 on surrounding communities and vibration-sensitive structures would be negligible.
46

1 Transformer-generated humming noise and switchyard impulsive noises would be
2 generated during the operation of solar facilities. These noise sources would be located near the
3 power block area, typically near the center of a solar facility. Noise from these sources would
4 generally be limited within the facility boundary and not be heard at the nearest residences,
5 assuming a 2.5-mi (4.0-km) distance (at least 0.5 mi [0.8 km] to the facility boundary and 2 mi
6 [3.2 km] to the nearest residences). Accordingly, potential impacts of these noise sources on the
7 nearest residences would be minimal.

8
9 For impacts from transmission line corona discharge noise during rainfall events
10 (discussed in Section 5.13.1.5), the noise level at 50 ft (15 m) and 300 ft (91 m) from the
11 center of 230-kV transmission line towers would be about 39 and 31 dBA (Lee et al. 1996),
12 respectively, typical of daytime and nighttime mean background noise levels in rural
13 environments. Corona noise includes high-frequency components, considered to be more
14 annoying than low-frequency environmental noise. However, corona noise would not likely
15 cause impacts unless a residence was located nearby (e.g., within 500 ft [152 m] of a 230-kV
16 transmission line). The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in an arid desert environment, and
17 incidents of corona discharge are infrequent. Therefore, potential impacts on nearby residences
18 from corona noise along transmission lines within the SEZ would be negligible.

21 ***11.6.15.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation***

22
23 Decommissioning/reclamation requires many of the same procedures and equipment
24 used in traditional construction. Decommissioning/reclamation would include dismantling of
25 solar facilities and support facilities such as buildings/structures and mechanical/electrical
26 installations, disposal of debris, grading, and revegetation as needed. Activities for
27 decommissioning would be similar to those for construction, but more limited. Potential
28 noise impacts on surrounding communities would be correspondingly lower than those for
29 construction activities. Decommissioning activities would be of short duration, and their
30 potential impacts would be minimal and temporary in nature. The same mitigation measures
31 adopted during the construction phase could also be implemented during the decommissioning
32 phase.

33
34 Similarly, potential vibration impacts on surrounding communities and vibration-
35 sensitive structures during decommissioning of any solar facility would be lower than those
36 during construction and thus negligible.

39 **11.6.15.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

40
41 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
42 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for noise impacts from
43 development and operation of solar energy facilities. While some SEZ-specific design features
44 are best established when specific project details are being considered, measures that can be
45 identified at this time include the following:

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- Noise levels from cooling systems equipped with TES should be managed so that levels at the nearby residences to the south of the SEZ are kept within applicable guidelines. This could be accomplished in several ways, for example, through placing the power block approximately 1 to 2 mi (1.6 to 3 km) or more from residences, limiting operations to a few hours after sunset, and/or installing fan silencers.
- Dish engine facilities within the Gold Point SEZ should be located more than 1 to 2 mi (1.6 to 3 km) from the nearby residences. Direct noise control measures applied to individual dish engine systems could also be used to reduce noise impacts at nearby residences.

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1 **11.6.16 Paleontological Resources**

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4 **11.6.16.1 Affected Environment**

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6 The surficial geology of the proposed Gold Point SEZ is composed entirely of thick
7 alluvial deposits (more than 100 ft [30 m] thick), ranging in age from the Pliocene to Holocene.
8 In the absence of a PFYC map for Nevada, a preliminary classification of PFYC Class 2 is
9 assumed for the young Quaternary alluvial deposits, similar to that assumed for the Amargosa
10 Valley SEZ (Section 11.1.16; see Section 4.14 for a discussion of the PFYC system). Class 2
11 indicates a low potential for the occurrence of significant fossil material.
12

13
14 **11.6.16.2 Impacts**

15
16 Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely to occur in the
17 proposed Gold Point SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of the SEZ
18 is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted. If the geological deposits
19 are determined to be as described above and are classified as PFYC Class 2, further assessment
20 of paleontological resources in the SEZ is not likely to be necessary. Important resources could
21 exist; if identified, they would need to be managed on a case-by-case basis. Section 5.14
22 discusses the types of impacts that could occur on any significant paleontological resources
23 found within the proposed Gold Point SEZ. Impacts would be minimized through the
24 implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
25 Section A.2.2.

26 Indirect impacts on paleontological resources outside of the SEZ, such as through looting
27 or vandalism, are unknown but unlikely, because any such resources would be below the surface
28 and not readily accessed. Programmatic design features for controlling water runoff and
29 sedimentation would prevent erosion-related impacts on buried deposits outside of the SEZ.
30

31 Approximately 22 mi (35 km) of new transmission line is assessed in this PEIS.
32 Construction of this line would result in approximately 667 acres (2.7 km²) of disturbance. This
33 disturbance would occur in alluvial deposits as well as in residual materials developed in igneous
34 and metamorphic rock (preliminarily classified as PFYC Class 1) and in residual materials
35 developed in fine-grained sediments and in sedimentary rocks (preliminarily classified as PFYC
36 Class 3b), depending on the exact location of the corridor. For PFYC Class 1 areas that would be
37 crossed, there would be little or no potential for significant paleontological resources. For PFYC
38 Class 3b areas, with an unknown potential for containing paleontological material, impacts are
39 possible. A more detailed investigation of the residual sedimentary deposits is needed prior to
40 project approval. A paleontological survey will likely be needed following consultation with the
41 BLM. The appropriate course of action would be determined as established in BLM IM2008-009
42 (BLM 2007) and IM2009-011 (BLM 2008a). Impacts on paleontological resources related to the
43 creation of new corridors not assessed in this PEIS would be evaluated at the project-specific
44 level if new road or transmission construction or line upgrades are to occur.
45
46

1 **11.6.16.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic
4 design features as described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
5

6 The need for and the nature of any SEZ-specific design features would depend on the
7 results of future paleontological investigations; however, based on the current level of
8 information, a need for mitigation of areas potentially classified as PFYC Class 2 or lower is not
9 anticipated. For the transmission line corridor, mitigation may be necessary if significant
10 paleontological resources are encountered during the survey in PFYC Class 3b areas.
11

1 **11.6.17 Cultural Resources**

2
3
4 **11.6.17.1 Affected Environment**

5
6
7 **11.6.17.1.1 Prehistory**

8
9 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in the Lida Valley, within the basin and
10 range province in western Nevada. The earliest known use of the area was likely during the
11 Paleoindian Period, sometime between 12,000 and 10,000 B.P. Surface finds of Paleoindian
12 projectile points, the hallmark of the Clovis culture, have been found in the Big Smoky Valley,
13 35 mi (56 km) north of the SEZ, and in the Mojave Desert, 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the SEZ,
14 but no sites in the area with any stratigraphic context have been excavated. The Clovis culture
15 is characterized by the aforementioned fluted projectile points and a hunting and gathering
16 subsistence economy that followed migrating herds of Pleistocene mega fauna. The ephemeral
17 nature of Paleoindian sites in the southeastern Great Basin has given rise to the idea that
18 Paleoindians may have been inclined to subsist off of the lake and marsh habitats provided by the
19 ancient Pleistocene pluvial lakes that occupied a large portion of the Great Basin. Consequently,
20 the sites are difficult to find as they have been buried by the ebb and flow of the pluvial lakes.
21 This slightly later cultural material associated with the pluvial lake habitations is referred to as
22 the Western Pluvial Lakes Tradition, or Lake Mojave culture. The archaeological assemblage
23 associated with this cultural tradition is characterized by stemmed projectile points, leaf-shaped
24 bifaces, scrapers, crescents, and in some cases groundstone tools for milling plant material. Often
25 projectile points and tools were made from locally procured obsidian, sources of which are not
26 far from the proposed Gold Point SEZ—Montezuma Range, 15 mi (24 km) north of the SEZ,
27 Cave Spring, 35 mi (56 km) northwest of the SEZ, and Silver Peak, 50 mi (80 km) northwest of
28 the SEZ (Fowler and Madsen 1986; NROSL 2009).

29
30 The Early Archaic Period in the region began with the recession of most of the pluvial
31 lakes in the area, about 8,000 to 6,000 B.P., and extended until about 4,000 B.P. Archaic Period
32 groups likely congregated around marsh areas that were still extant, but also utilized the vast
33 caves in the mountains of the Great Basin. The settlement system in some areas was likely based
34 around a central base camp, with temporary camps located on the margins of their territory to
35 exploit resources that were not in the immediate vicinity of the base camp. Archaic groups would
36 sometimes perform communal hunts, especially antelope drives, in which antelope were herded
37 into a corral and then shot, and rabbit drives, in which large nets were used. Some of the key
38 Archaic Period sites in the Great Basin region are Gatecliff Shelter and Toquima Cave, near
39 Austin, Nevada, about 150 mi (241 km) north of the SEZ. The archaeological assemblage from
40 the Early Archaic Period maintains some cultural continuity with the previous period, consisting
41 of large notched Elko and Gatecliff points, leaf-shaped bifaces, scrapers, drills, graters, and
42 manos and metates. A site with an Elko point was identified within a 5-mi (8-km) radius of the
43 proposed Gold Point SEZ (Fowler and Madsen 1986; Neusius and Gross 2007; McGonagle and
44 Waski 1978).

1 The Middle Archaic Period, 4,000 to 1,500 B.P., is the time of the climatic shift known as
2 the Little Pluvial, a wetter and cooler climate that caused some of the pluvial lakes to re-fill. The
3 cultural material of this time period is similar to that of the Early Archaic, with an increased
4 concentration of millingsstones, mortars, and pestles and the appearance of normally perishable
5 items that become well preserved in the arid Great Basin climate, such as wicker baskets, split-
6 twig figurines, duck decoys, and woven sandals (Beck and Jones 2008).

7
8 In the vicinity of the proposed Gold Point SEZ, the Late Archaic Period began about
9 1,500 B.P. and extended until about 800 B.P. Major technological shifts occurred during this
10 period, evidenced by smaller projectile points that were more useful because groups began
11 using bow-and-arrow technology instead of the atlatl and dart technology. There were also
12 changes in subsistence techniques, particularly in the use of horticulture. Around A.D. 1000
13 Numic-speaking groups migrated into the region; however, the exact timing of these events is
14 unclear and is a subject for further research in the region. These Numic-speaking people were
15 the antecedents of the Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone, and the archaeological
16 assemblage associated with this time period consists of Desert Series projectile points,
17 brown-ware ceramics, unshaped manos and millingsstones, incised stones, mortars, pestles, and
18 shell beads. Contemporary Native Americans dispute the separation of periods between the
19 Late Archaic and Numic periods, because they believe that they have been in the area since
20 time immemorial, and see themselves as descendants of all prehistoric people, not just of
21 Numic derivation. The following section describes the cultural history of the time period in
22 greater detail.

23 24 25 ***11.6.17.1.2 Ethnohistory***

26
27 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in territory most often ascribed to the Western
28 Shoshone (Thomas et al. 1986), but is close to areas used jointly by the Western Shoshone and
29 the Owens Valley branch of the Northern Paiute. Both Shoshone and Paiute speakers lived
30 around modern Lida, 6 mi (10 km) northwest of the proposed SEZ, and Paiute families lived at
31 Pigeon Spring, 14 mi (23 km) west of the SEZ. The families based around Lida joined the Fish
32 Lake Valley Northern Paiute during the pine nut harvest near Pigeon Springs (Steward 1938).

33 34 35 **Western Shoshone**

36
37 The Western Shoshone are a group of ethnically similar Central Numic speakers
38 who traditionally occupied a swath of the central Great Basin stretching from Death Valley
39 in California through central Nevada and northwestern Utah to southeastern Idaho
40 (Thomas et al. 1986), lying primarily within the basin and range province of the Great Basin.
41 The Western Shoshone lived in small groups with rather fluid membership, usually identified
42 with the land on which they were based. Their subsistence base and lifestyle varied with the
43 resources within their traditional range. Groups often established stable base camps near reliable
44 water sources where they could grow crops. From these base camps, they would move seasonally
45 in a flexible round to exploit resources in the surrounding mountains and other areas as they
46 became available. They gathered a wide variety of plant resources, which they supplemented by

1 hunting and fishing (Stoffle et al. 1990; Crum 1994; Fowler 1986; Steward 1938). Pine nuts,
2 available in the mountains, were a storable staple. Pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep, and mule
3 deer were among the large game animals they hunted, but smaller game, including rodents, birds,
4 and, where available, fish, provided more of the protein in their diet. Groups varied in size and
5 composition with the season. The largest groups gathered for the pine nut harvest, which could
6 include a rabbit or antelope drive as well. Winter villages were usually close to stores of pine
7 nuts.

8
9 The Timbisha Shoshone are the proposed SEZ's closest Western Shoshone neighbors.
10 Recognized as a Tribe by the Federal Government in 1983, they remained landless until 2000
11 when the Timbisha Shoshone Homeland Act granted them lands within Death Valley National
12 Park and four parcels outside the park, including 3,000 acres (12 km²) outside Lida, Nevada,
13 about 6 mi (10 km) northwest of the SEZ. Additional information on the Western Shoshone may
14 be found in Section 11.1.17.1.2.

15 16 17 **Owens Valley Paiute**

18
19 The Owens Valley Paiute inhabit the valley of the Owens River that parallels the eastern
20 slope of the Sierra Nevada. They speak Mono, a Western Numic language, and are linguistically
21 closely tied to the Northern Paiute (Liljeblad and Fowler 1986). A brief description of the Owens
22 Valley Paiute is given in Section 11.1.17.1.2.

23 24 25 ***11.6.17.1.3 History***

26
27 The Great Basin was one of the last areas in the continental United States to be fully
28 explored. The harsh and rugged landscape deterred most European and American explorers until
29 the late eighteenth century. Several early explorers made their way into the southern portion of
30 Nevada by the late eighteenth century, but the area around the proposed Gold Point SEZ was not
31 explored by non-native people until about 1826. Fur trapping was a popular enterprise during
32 this time, and overzealous trappers were quickly depleting their supplies of furs as they moved
33 west in search of further materials. Peter Ogden of the Hudson's Bay Company and Jedidiah
34 Smith of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company were part of two different expeditions that entered
35 Nevada in 1827 and 1826, respectively. These men were seeking new beaver fields, Ogden took
36 a more northerly route through Elko, Pershing, and Humboldt Counties, and Smith entered
37 Nevada near Mesquite and traveled across the southern tip of Nevada into California. When he
38 entered California, Smith was detained by Mexican authorities, as he had entered Mexican
39 territory, and was ordered to go back the way from which he had come. However, he decided to
40 travel farther north into California, being the first non-native person to cross the Sierra Nevada
41 Mountains and entered Nevada just south of Lake Tahoe. From there he crossed the State of
42 Nevada and passed about 50 mi (80 km) north of the proposed Gold Point SEZ. Fur trapping
43 never became a lucrative enterprise in Nevada; however, these trailblazers paved the way for
44 later explorers and mappers, like John C. Frémont. Frémont, a member of the Topographical
45 Engineers, was commissioned to map and report on the Great Basin area in 1843 and 1844. The
46 results of his work gained wide circulation and were of great importance in understanding the

1 topography of the Great Basin, both for official use and by those moving westward to seek new
2 homes and fortunes. Frémont passed about 75 mi (121 km) north of the proposed Gold Point
3 SEZ, at the northern-most point of Esmeralda County, where it meets Mineral and Nye Counties.
4 Another fur trapping party, the Walker-Bonneville party, explored the region in 1833 to 1834.
5 This group also likely explored the lands north of the proposed Gold Point SEZ, on its way to
6 exploring large portions of the Yosemite Valley in California and the Great Basin (Elliott 1973).
7

8 Nevada and the Great Basin region have provided a corridor of travel for those seeking to
9 emigrate west. Several heavily traveled trails crossed the region, although none of these trails
10 passes particularly close to the proposed Gold Point SEZ. The Old Spanish Trail was an evolving
11 trail system generally established in the early nineteenth century, but tended to follow previously
12 established paths used by earlier explorers and Native Americans. The 2,700-mi (4,345-km)
13 network of trails passes through six states, beginning in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and ending in
14 Los Angeles, California. The closest portion of the congressionally designated Old Spanish
15 National Historic Trail is about 131 mi (211 km) south of the proposed Gold Point SEZ, as it
16 passes near Las Vegas, Nevada. Mormons also frequently used the Old Spanish Trail in
17 emigrating farther west to Nevada, Arizona, and California, and often the trail is referred to as
18 the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road. Other notable trails that crossed Nevada were the
19 California Trail, a trail that followed portions of the Oregon Trail and then broke off from that
20 trail and continued through the northern portion of Nevada along the Humbolt River, about
21 135 mi (217 km) north of the proposed Gold Point SEZ, until it reached California. The Pony
22 Express Trail, a mail route that connected Saint Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California,
23 entered Nevada, just northeast of Ely, and exited just south of Lake Tahoe, the closest portion
24 being about 145 mi (233 km) north of the SEZ (von Till Warren 1980).
25

26 With the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, closing out the
27 Mexican-American War, the area came under American control. In 1847, the first American
28 settlers arrived in the Great Basin, among them Mormon immigrants under the leadership of
29 Brigham Young, who settled in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. They sought to bring
30 the entire Great Basin under their control, establishing an independent State of Deseret. From
31 its center in Salt Lake City, the church sent out colonizers to establish agricultural communities
32 in surrounding valleys and missions to acquire natural resources such as minerals and timber.
33 Relying on irrigation to support their farms, the Mormons often settled in the same places as
34 the Native Americans had centuries before. The result was a scattering of planned agricultural
35 communities from northern Arizona to southern Idaho, and parts of Wyoming, Nevada, and
36 southern California. One of the first Mormon settlements in Nevada was a trading post, located
37 just north of Genoa, Nevada, about 166 mi (267 km) northwest of the SEZ. Established in 1850,
38 this trading post provided supplies for those traversing the California Trail.
39

40 Nevada's nickname is the "Silver State," for the 1859 Comstock Lode strike in Virginia
41 City, about 179 mi (288 km) northwest of the proposed Gold Point SEZ. This was the first major
42 silver discovery in the United States, and with the news of the strike, hopeful prospectors flocked
43 to the area in an effort to capitalize on the possible wealth under the surface of the earth. The
44 discovery of the Comstock Lode led to the creation of Virginia City and other nearby towns that
45 served the population influx. The population increase was so dramatic that in 1850 there were
46 fewer than a dozen non-native people in the State of Nevada; by 1860 there were 6,857; and by

1 1875 an estimated 75,000 people had migrated to the state. The Comstock Lode strike is
2 important to the history of Nevada, not only because of the population growth and significant
3 amount of money that was consequently brought to the area, but also because of several
4 technological innovations that were created and employed in the mines, namely, the use of
5 square-set timbering. This technique kept loose soil from collapsing on miners, a concept that
6 eventually was employed around the world in other mines (Paher 1970).

7
8 Mining for valuable deposits occurred in all regions of the State of Nevada, including in
9 the vicinity of the proposed Gold Point SEZ. The closest mine to the SEZ was the Gold Point
10 mine, just 2 mi (3 km) south of the SEZ. The Gold Point mine, originally called the Lime Mine,
11 was mined for its lime deposits. About 1908 the mine adopted the name Hornsilver, as that
12 became the more lucrative mineral for which to mine. More than 225 wooden buildings covered
13 the town, but by 1915 mining had slowed. The mine was purchased by another investor in 1922,
14 and in 1930 when more gold was mined than silver, the town changed its name to Gold Point. By
15 1942 mining operations ceased, and most of the town was abandoned when workers for the war
16 effort were needed. Other mines and small towns popped up in the mountains surrounding the
17 SEZ at Gold Mountain, 9 mi (14 km) south of the SEZ, Tule Canyon, 9 mi (14 km) west of the
18 SEZ, Lida, 7 mi (11 km) northwest of the SEZ, and Oriental, 10 mi (16 km) south of the SEZ.
19 Goldfield, about 20 mi (32 km) northeast of the SEZ, was one of the single most prosperous gold
20 strikes in the west. Initially discovered in 1902, the mining stampede to the Goldfield area began
21 in 1904, with the most lucrative years 1906 and 1907 producing about \$15 million in gold ore
22 (Paher 1970). The Goldfield Historic District is listed in the NRHP.

23
24 Nevada's desert-mountain landscape has made it a prime region for use by the
25 U.S. military for several decades. Beginning in October 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt
26 established the Las Vegas Bombing and Gunnery Range, a 3.5-million acre (14,164 km²) parcel
27 of land northwest of Las Vegas, near Indian Springs, Nevada, 107 mi (172 km) southeast of the
28 SEZ. At the start of the Cold War in 1948, the range was renamed Nellis Air Force Base. For the
29 next 41 years testing of nuclear weapons, as well as regular Air Force training missions, occurred
30 throughout the regions of the NTS. The proposed Gold Point SEZ does not fall within the
31 specific boundaries of the NTS and Range; the closest portion of the military installation is about
32 20 mi (36 km) east. However, the Air Force Base and associated ranges have affected the overall
33 history and context of the region.

34 35 36 ***11.6.17.1.4 Traditional Cultural Properties—Landscape***

37
38 The Native Americans whose historical homelands lie within the Great Basin have
39 traditionally tended to take a holistic view of the world. They tend to view the sacred and profane
40 as inextricably intertwined. Landscapes as a whole are often culturally important. Adverse
41 effects on one part damage the whole (Stoffle 2001). From their perspective, landscapes include
42 places of power. Among the most important such places are sources of water; peaks, mountains,
43 and elevated features; caves; distinctive rock formations; and panels of rock art. Places of power
44 are important to the religious beliefs of the Western Shoshone and Paiute. They may be sought
45 out for individual vision quests or healing. The view from such a point of power or the ability to
46 see from one important place to another can be an important element of its integrity (Stoffle and

1 Zedeño 2001b). Landscapes as a whole are often tied together by a network of culturally
2 important trails (Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a).

3
4 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in the Lida Valley between Mount Jackson, the
5 Jackson Ridge, Magruder Mountain, and Slate Ridge. Traditionally, Tribal camps in the area
6 were located near springs in the foothills or mountains. Those closest to the proposed SEZ were
7 clustered around Lida, in the area now included in the Timbisha Shoshone Reservation. Other
8 single-family camps with ties to the Lida group were located near springs in Tule Canyon, 10 mi
9 (16 km) southwest of the SEZ; Gold Mountain, 10 mi (16 km) south of the SEZ; Stonewall
10 Mountain, 16 mi (26 km) northeast; Montezuma Peak, 20 mi (33 km) north; and near Goldfield,
11 25 mi (40 km) northeast. Rockshelters near the mouth of Lida Canyon may have served as a
12 meeting place for these groups and retain cultural significance. These groups hunted game and
13 gathered plant resources in the surrounding hills. Plant or small game resources on the valley
14 floor would have been exploited in season as well. The Lida group managed the vegetation on
15 Magruder Mountain by selective burning to encourage the growth of preferred plants. They
16 traveled through Lida Valley to reach seasonally available resources on Stonewall Flat and in
17 Clayton Canyon near Gold Point (Steward 1938).

18
19 Mountain prominences are often culturally important landscape features and may be
20 places of power. Magruder Mountain is reported to have cultural significance for the Timbisha.
21 Project-specific investigations would need to establish cultural importance through consultation
22 with the relevant Native American Tribe(s). Mt. Grant, where the Northern Paiute believe their
23 ancestors emerged (Fowler et al. 1970), is 110 mi (177 km) northwest and is not likely to be
24 visible from the SEZ.

25 26 27 ***11.6.17.1.5 Cultural Surveys and Known Archaeological and Historical Resources***

28
29 In the proposed Gold Point SEZ, no surveys have been conducted, and consequently no
30 cultural resources have been identified. However, within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ, 18 surveys
31 have been conducted, resulting in the recording of 12 cultural resources. Nine of these sites are
32 prehistoric in nature, two are rockshelters, and seven are isolated flakes or lithic scatters. The
33 other three sites located within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ are historic resources (de Dufour 2009).
34 One of these sites is a mill site, and another is the Gold Point mining camp and associated
35 buildings, which has been determined to be eligible for listing in the NRHP. The other historic
36 site is an historic Native American meeting place and medicine making area, referred to as
37 “medicine rock.” Historic mining debris was also documented at the site.

38
39 The proposed Gold Point SEZ has potential to yield significant cultural resources,
40 especially those related to historical mining operations that took place in the vicinity of the
41 SEZ. Prehistoric resources are not as likely to be encountered in the vicinity of the SEZ.

42
43 The BLM has also designated several locations within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed
44 Gold Point SEZ as cultural resources that should be managed for conservation (BLM 1997);
45 these areas include significant petroglyph sites.

1 ***National Register of Historic Places***
2

3 There are no historic properties listed in the NRHP in the SEZ or within 5 mi (8 km) of
4 the SEZ. However, the Gold Point town site, 2 mi (3 km) south of the proposed Gold Point SEZ,
5 has been determined to be eligible for listing in the NRHP. The rockshelters mentioned above, if
6 grouped as a district with several other nearby sites, could be considered eligible for listing in the
7 NRHP as well.
8

9 The county of Esmeralda maintains only one property in the NRHP, the Goldfield
10 Historic District, about 21 mi (34 km) northeast of the proposed Gold Point SEZ. The only other
11 NRHP property in the vicinity of the SEZ is the Death Valley Scotty Historic District, 25 mi
12 (40 km) south of the SEZ in Inyo County, California.
13

14
15 **11.6.17.2 Impacts**
16

17 Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed Gold Point
18 SEZ; however, further investigation is needed, because no cultural resource surveys have been
19 conducted within the boundaries of the SEZ. The area around the proposed Gold Point SEZ has
20 the potential to provide significant resources related to historic mining operations. A cultural
21 resource survey of the entire APE, including consultation with Native American Tribes, would
22 first need to be conducted to identify archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and
23 traditional cultural properties, and an evaluation would need to follow to determine whether any
24 are eligible for listing in the NRHP as historic properties. Section 5.15 discusses the types of
25 effects that could occur on any significant cultural resources found within the proposed Gold
26 Point SEZ. Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic
27 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Programmatic design features assume
28 that the necessary surveys, evaluations, and consultations will occur. No traditional properties
29 have been identified to date within the vicinity of the SEZ.
30

31 Indirect impacts on cultural resources that result from erosion outside of the SEZ
32 boundary (including along ROWs) are unlikely, assuming programmatic design features to
33 reduce water runoff and sedimentation are implemented (as described in Appendix A,
34 Section A.2.2).
35

36 The Gold Point town site is in view of the SEZ. Depending on the full range of reasons
37 for its eligibility for listing in the NRHP, visual impacts on this property are likely as a result of
38 solar energy development in the valley below.
39

40 The nearest transmission line is about 22 mi (35 km) northeast of the proposed Gold
41 Point SEZ, and the construction of a new transmission line to connect to this one would result
42 in the disturbance of 667 acres (2.7 km²). Four sites that are potentially eligible for inclusion in
43 the NRHP and three additional sites that have not been evaluated for NRHP inclusion could
44 potentially be affected either directly or indirectly, depending on the exact location of the line.
45 One site is a multicomponent site consisting of multiple prehistoric lithic scatters, a circular rock
46 alignment, petroglyphs, historic shelters/lean-tos, and associated historic debris; another site is an

1 historic and modern dump associated with the town of Goldfield that could possibly be affected
2 with construction of the transmission line. A prehistoric campsite could also be affected by this
3 transmission line. Another site is a potentially eligible multicomponent site, made up of
4 petroglyphs, a lithic scatter, and an historic coyote trap. Visual impacts on the Goldfield Historic
5 District are also possible. Indirect impacts, such as vandalism or theft, could occur if significant
6 resources are close to the transmission ROW. The nearest access road is NV 774, and it runs
7 adjacent to the SEZ, so no further construction for access is anticipated assuming this road would
8 be used. Programmatic design features assume that the necessary surveys, evaluations, and
9 consultations for the ROWs will occur, as with the project footprint within the SEZ. Impacts on
10 cultural resources related to the creation of new corridors not assessed in this PEIS would be
11 evaluated at the project-specific level if new road or transmission construction or line upgrades
12 are to occur.
13
14

15 **11.6.17.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

16

17 Programmatic design features to mitigate adverse effects on significant cultural
18 resources, such as avoidance of significant sites and features, are provided in Appendix A,
19 Section A.2.2.
20

21 SEZ-specific design features would be determined in consultation with the Nevada SHPO
22 and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations. SEZ-specific design
23 features could include:
24

- 25 • Implementation of design features to address visual impacts discussed in
26 Section 11.6.14 and in the programmatic design features listed in Appendix A,
27 Section A.2.2, would help to mitigate visual impacts on the Gold Point town
28 site from development in the SEZ and on the Goldfield Historic District as a
29 result of transmission line construction.
30
31

1 **11.6.18 Native American Concerns**
2

3 Native Americans share many environmental and socioeconomic concerns with other
4 ethnic groups. This section focuses on concerns specific to Native Americans and to which
5 Native Americans bring a distinct perspective. For a discussion of issues of possible Native
6 American concern shared with the population as a whole, several sections in this PEIS should be
7 consulted. General topics of concern are addressed in Section 4.16. Specifically for the proposed
8 Gold Point SEZ, Section 11.6.17 discusses archaeological sites, historic structures, landscapes,
9 and traditional cultural properties; Section 11.6.8 discusses mineral resources; Section 11.6.9.1.3
10 discusses water rights and water use; Section 11.6.10 discusses plant species; Section 11.6.11
11 discusses wildlife species, including wildlife migration patterns; Section 11.6.13 discusses air
12 quality; Section 11.6.14 discusses visual resources; Sections 11.6.19 and 11.6.20 discuss
13 socioeconomics and environmental justice, respectively; and issues of human health and safety
14 are discussed in Section 5.21.
15

16
17 **11.6.18.1 Affected Environment**
18

19 The proposed Gold Point SEZ falls within the Tribal traditional use area generally
20 attributed to the Western Shoshone (Liljeblad and Fowler 1986) and is within the area
21 recognized as traditionally belonging to the Western Shoshone by the Indian Claims Commission
22 (Clemmer and Stewart 1986). Lying near the northwestern edge of Western Shoshone territory,
23 the SEZ was also accessible to the Owens Valley branch of the Northern Paiutes, who were
24 neighbors of and on friendly terms with the Western Shoshone (Steward 1938). All federally
25 recognized Tribes with Western Shoshone or Owens Valley Paiute roots have been contacted
26 and provided an opportunity to comment or consult regarding this PEIS. They are listed in
27 Table 11.6.18.1-1. Details of government-to-government consultation efforts are presented in
28 Chapter 14; a list of all federally recognized Tribes contacted for this PEIS is given in
29 Appendix K.
30

31
32 ***11.6.18.1.1 Territorial Boundaries***
33

34
35 **Western Shoshone**
36

37 The Western Shoshone traditionally occupied a swath of the central Great Basin
38 stretching from Death Valley in California through central Nevada and northwestern Utah
39 to southeastern Idaho (Thomas et al. 1986). The proposed Gold Point SEZ lies near the
40 northwestern periphery of the Shoshone traditional range, where Shoshone territory blends
41 into Owens Valley Paiute territory. The closest Western Shoshone reservation is that of the
42 Timbisha Shoshone. The Timbisha Shoshone Homeland Act of 2000 provided the Timbisha
43 with a discontinuous reservation that includes parcels of land at Furnace Creek in Death Valley
44 National Park; Death Valley Junction, California; Centennial, California; Scotty's Junction,
45 Nevada; and Lida, Nevada. The parcel near Lida is only 6 mi (10 km) northwest of the proposed
46 Gold Point SEZ.

TABLE 11.6.18.1-1 Federally Recognized Tribes with Traditional Ties to the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Tribe	Location	State
Benton Paiute-Shoshone Tribe	Benton	California
Big Pine Paiute Tribe	Big Pine	California
Bishop Paiute Tribe	Bishop	California
Bridgeport Indian Colony	Bridgeport	California
Duck Valley Shoshone-Paiute Tribes	Owyhee	Nevada
Duckwater Shoshone Tribe	Duckwater	Nevada
Ely Shoshone Tribe	Ely	Nevada
Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Tribe	Lone Pine	California
Reno-Sparks Indian Colony	Reno	Nevada
Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone	Elko	Nevada
Timbisha Shoshone Tribe	Death Valley	California
Yomba Shoshone Tribe	Austin	Nevada

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Owens Valley Paiutes

The Owens Valley Paiutes occupy five relatively small reservations within Owens Valley in Inyo and Mono Counties, California, west of the proposed SEZ. Their traditional use area ranged from the headwaters of the Owens River near Benton, California, southward to Owens Lake. They shared the shores of Owens Lake with Western Shoshone groups. The Indian Claims Commission placed Owens Valley within the traditional territory of the Northern Paiutes, with whom the Owens Valley Tribes are linked linguistically (Liljeblad and Fowler 1986; Clemmer and Stewart 1986; Royster 2008).

11.6.18.1.2 Plant Resources

Native Americans continue to make use of a wide range of indigenous plants for food, medicine, construction materials, and other uses. Although the proposed SEZ is sparsely vegetated, some species traditionally used by Native Americans have been observed or are possible in the proposed SEZ. The vegetation present at the proposed Gold Point SEZ is described in Section 11.6.10. In general, the vegetation consists of widely spaced low shrubs. The vegetation cover types present at the SEZ are all part of the Inter-mountain Basin series. Mixed Salt Desert Scrub dominates, but there are substantial areas of Greasewood Flat, smaller amounts of Playa, and a sprinkling of Semi-desert Shrub Steppe. The proposed transmission line corridor would extend from the proposed SEZ to Goldfield, crossing the Mount Jackson Ridge and following the line of the Goldfield Hills. At these somewhat higher elevations with rolling hills, Big Sagebrush Shrubland and Xeric Mixed Sagebrush Shrubland would be encountered. Plant species in these cover types have much in common with those found in the SEZ. They would include a wider variety of sagebrush, seed-bearing grasses, and possibly juniper trees (USGS 2005b). As shown in Table 11.6.18.1-2, there are some plants found in the SEZ and along the transmission corridor that have been traditionally used by Native Americans for food

TABLE 11.6.18.1-2 Plant Species Important to Native Americans Observed or Likely To Be Present in the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Food		
Basin wildrye	<i>Leymus cineris</i>	Possible
Beavertail prickly pear	<i>Opuntia basilaris</i>	Observed
Buckwheat	<i>Eriognum</i> spp.	Observed
Dropseed	<i>Sporobolus airoides</i>	Possible
Galleta	<i>Pleuraphis jamesii</i>	Possible
Joshua tree	<i>Yucca brevifolia</i>	Observed
Nevada bluegrass	<i>Poa Secunda</i>	Possible
Sagebrush	<i>Artemisia</i> spp.	Possible
Saltbush	<i>Atriplex</i> spp.	Observed
Spikerush	<i>Eleocharis palustris</i>	Possible
Wheatgrass	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>	Possible
Wolfberry	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	Possible
Medicine		
Mormon tea	<i>Ephedra nevadensis</i>	Possible
Saltbush	<i>Atriplex</i> spp.	Observed

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005b); Steward (1938); Fowler (1986).

1
2
3 and medicine (Steward 1938; Fowler 1986). However, project-specific analyses will be needed
4 to determine their presence at any proposed development site. The importance of any stand to
5 Native Americans must be determined in consultation with the affected Tribe(s). For this
6 proposed SEZ, the Timbisha are likely to be the most directly affected. Magruder Mountain,
7 on the western end of the valley, has traditionally been an important place for gathering plant
8 resources. Western Shoshone families living in the Lida area would burn the brush on its slopes
9 to create a better environment for preferred food plants including wheatgrass (Steward 1938).

10
11
12 **11.6.18.1.3 Other Resources**

13
14 Water is an essential prerequisite for life in the arid areas of the Great Basin. As a result,
15 it is a keystone of many desert cultures' religions. Desert cultures tend to consider all water
16 sacred and a purifying agent. Water sources are often associated with rock art. Springs are often
17 associated with powerful beings, and hot springs in particular figure prominently in Owens
18 Valley Paiute creation stories. Water sources are seen as connected; damage to one source
19 damages all (Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a). Tribes are also sensitive about the use of scarce local
20 water supplies for the benefit of distant communities and recommend that determination of
21 adequate water supplies be a primary consideration as to whether a site is suitable for the
22 development of a utility-scale solar energy facility (Moose 2009).

1 Wildlife likely to be found in the proposed Gold Point SEZ is described in
 2 Section 11.6.11. Species traditionally hunted by local Native Americans whose range includes
 3 the SEZ are listed in Table 11.6.18.1-3. Most of these are small animals and birds common
 4 throughout much of the great basin. Traditionally important large game animals include mule
 5 deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*), and pronghorn (*Antilocapra*
 6 *americana*) (Steward 1938). Pronghorn are possible, but not common, in Lida Valley. Bighorn
 7 sheep mostly occur farther north (BLM 1994). The proposed SEZ and transmission corridor are
 8 within the range of mule deer.

9
 10
 11 **11.6.18.2 Impacts**

12
 13 In the past, the Western Shoshone and Owens Valley Paiutes have expressed concern
 14 over project impacts on a variety of resources. They tend to take a holistic view of their
 15
 16

TABLE 11.6.18.1-3 Animal Species used by Native Americans as Food Whose Range Includes the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Mammals		
Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	All year
Black-tailed jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>	All year
Chipmunk	<i>Tamias</i> spp.	All year
Cottontail	<i>Silvilagus</i> spp.	All year
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	All year
Gray fox	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	All year
Kangaroo rat	<i>Dipodomys</i> spp.	All year
Kit fox	<i>Vulpes macotis</i>	All year
Mule deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	All year
Pocket mouse	<i>Perognathus</i> spp.	All year
Porcupine	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>	All year
White-tailed antelope squirrel	<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>	All year
Wood rat	<i>Neotoma</i> spp.	All year
Birds		
Burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicular</i>	Summer
Common raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	All year
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	Winter
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	All year
Great horned owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	All year
Northern mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	All year
Reptiles		
Western rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus viridis</i>	All year
Desert horned-lizard	<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>	All year

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005b); Steward (1938); Fowler (1986).

1 traditional homelands. For them, cultural and natural features are inextricably bound together.
2 Western distinctions between the sacred and the secular have no meaning in their traditional
3 worldview. Impacts on one part are seen as having ripple effects on the whole (Stoffle and
4 Zedeño 2001b). While no comments specific to the proposed Gold Point SEZ have been received
5 from Native American Tribes to date, the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley has
6 commented on the scope of the PEIS. The Tribe recommends that the BLM preserve undisturbed
7 lands intact and that recently disturbed lands, such as abandoned farm fields, rail yards, mines,
8 and airfields, be given primary consideration for solar energy development (Moose 2009).
9

10 Potential impacts on existing water supplies are also a primary concern (Moose 2009).
11 There are springs located throughout the hills that surround Lida Valley. Excessive drawdown
12 of groundwater for the construction and operation of solar energy facilities could reduce or
13 eliminate the flow from these culturally important resources.
14

15 During energy development projects in adjacent areas, other Great Basin Tribes have
16 expressed concern over adverse effects on a wide range of resources. Among these are
17 geophysical features and physical cultural remains. Known resources of this type in the area of
18 the proposed Gold Point SEZ are discussed in Section 11.6.17.1.4. Such places are often seen as
19 important because they are thought to be places of power. They are often the location of or have
20 ready access to a variety of plant, animal, and mineral resources (Stoffle et al. 1997). Resources
21 that Native Americans have identified as important include food plants, medicinal plants, plants
22 used in basketry, and plants used in construction; game animals and birds; and sources of clay,
23 salt, and pigments (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Those likely to be found within the proposed
24 Gold Point SEZ are discussed in Section 11.6.18.1.
25

26 In the past, the mountains and hills surrounding the Lida Valley have been the sites of
27 Western Shoshone camps and villages (Steward 1938; Thomas et al. 1986). The valley floor
28 where the SEZ would be located appears to have been a travel corridor, not a habitation area.
29 The valley floor is sparsely vegetated; however, food plants traditionally used by the Shoshone
30 have been observed there. It is likely that the Shoshone in the surrounding hills made seasonal
31 use of the flora on the valley floor. An early ethnography reported great quantities of wolfberries
32 (*Lycium* sp.) growing near Gold Point were gathered by local Tribal groups (Steward 1938).
33

34 The construction of solar energy facilities in the proposed SEZ will result in the
35 elimination of some plants traditionally used by Native Americans. Consultation with affected
36 Tribes will be necessary to determine whether or not traditional plant resources are present in
37 significant amounts at a proposed project site. Lida Valley is also within the range of a number
38 of traditional Native American game species. Construction of solar facilities will eliminate some
39 habitat for these species. For the most part, these species are common throughout the area (see
40 Section 11.6.11). Project-specific consultation with Western Shoshone and Northern Paiute
41 Tribes will be required to determine whether the resources present at the proposed SEZ are
42 significant.
43

44 As consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it
45 is possible that Native Americans will express concern over potential visual, acoustic, and other

1 effects of solar energy development within the SEZ on specific resources, including culturally
2 important landscapes.

3
4 Implementation of programmatic design features, as discussed in Appendix A, Section
5 A.2.2, should eliminate impacts on tribes' reserved water rights and the potential for
6 groundwater contamination issues.

9 **11.6.18.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

10
11 Programmatic design features that would address impacts of potential concern to Native
12 Americans, such as avoidance of sacred sites, water sources, and tribally important plant and
13 animal species are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Mitigation of impacts on
14 archaeological sites and traditional cultural properties is discussed in Section 11.6.17.3, in
15 addition to the programmatic design features for historic properties presented in Appendix A,
16 Section A.2.2.

17
18 The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features addressing issues of potential
19 concern would be determined during government-to-government consultation with affected
20 Tribes listed in Table 11.6.18.1-1.

1 **11.6.19 Socioeconomics**

2
3
4 **11.6.19.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section describes current socioeconomic conditions and local community services
7 within the ROI surrounding the proposed Gold Point SEZ. The ROI is a two-county area
8 comprising Esmeralda and Nye Counties in Nevada. It encompasses the area in which workers
9 are expected to spend most of their salaries and in which a portion of site purchases and
10 nonpayroll expenditures from the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the
11 proposed SEZ facility are expected to take place.
12

13
14 **11.6.19.1.1 ROI Employment**

15
16 In 2008, employment in the ROI stood at 16,484 (Table 11.6.19.1-1). Over the period
17 1999 to 2008, the annual average employment growth rate was 0.5% in Nye County and -2.7%
18 in Esmeralda County. At 0.4%, the growth rate in the ROI as a whole was lower than the average
19 rate for the entire state (2.7%).
20

21 In the ROI in 2006, the services sector provided the highest percentage of employment
22 at 47.6%, followed by wholesale and retail trade at 19.3%, with a smaller employment shares
23 held by construction (10.2%) and mining (8.3%) (Table 11.6.19.1-2).
24

25
26 **11.6.19.1.2 ROI Unemployment**

27
28 The average unemployment rate in Nye County over the period 1999 to 2008 was 6.9%,
29 higher than the 6.1% rate for Esmeralda County (Table 11.6.19.1-3). The average rate in the
30
31

TABLE 11.6.19.1-1 ROI Employment in the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Location	1999	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999–2008 (%)
Esmeralda County	590	448	-2.7
Nye County	15,325	16,036	0.5
ROI	15,915	16,484	0.4
Nevada	978,969	1,282,012	2.7

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a,b).

TABLE 11.6.19.1-2 2006 Employment by Sector in the ROI for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Industry	Esmeralda County		Nye County		ROI	
	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total
Agriculture ^a	10	7.0	325	3.6	335	3.7
Mining	10	7.0	750	8.3	760	8.3
Construction	10	7.0	925	10.2	935	10.2
Manufacturing	60	42.0	329	3.6	389	4.2
Transportation and public utilities	20	14.0	292	3.2	312	3.4
Wholesale and retail trade	60	42.0	1,714	19.0	1,774	19.3
Finance, insurance, and real estate	0	0.0	328	3.6	328	3.6
Services	30	21.0	4,340	48.1	4,370	47.6
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0
Total	143		9,029		9,172	

^a Agricultural employment includes 2007 data for hired farmworkers.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a); USDA (2009).

**TABLE 11.6.19.1-3 Unemployment Rates
in the ROI for the Proposed Gold Point
SEZ (%)**

Location	1999–2008	2008	2009 ^a
Esmeralda County	6.1	5.1	8.4
Nye County	6.9	9.7	14.3
ROI	6.9	9.6	14.2
Nevada	5.0	6.7	11.0

^a Rates for 2009 are the average for January through November.

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a–c).

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ROI as a whole over this period was 6.9%, higher than the average rate for Nevada (5.0%). Unemployment rates for the first 11 months of 2009 contrast with rates for 2008 as a whole; in Nye County, the unemployment rate increased to 14.3%, and in Esmeralda County to 8.4%. The average rates for the ROI (14.2%) and for Nevada as a whole (11.0%) were also higher during this period than the corresponding average rates for 2008.

10 **11.6.19.1.3 ROI Urban Population and Income**

11
12 There are no incorporated places in the ROI and, consequently, no urban population or
13 income.

14
15
16 **11.6.19.1.4 ROI Population**

17
18 Table 11.6.19.1-4 presents recent and projected populations in the ROI and for the state
19 as a whole. Population in the ROI stood at 44,839 in 2008, having grown at an average annual
20 rate of 3.7% since 2000. Growth rates for the ROI were higher than those for the entire state
21 (3.4%) over the same period. Only one of the two counties in the ROI experienced growth in
22 population between 2000 and 2008; population in Nye County grew at an annual rate of 3.9%,
23 while in Esmeralda County population fell at –4.6%. The ROI population is expected to increase
24 to 78,122 by 2021 and to 80,872 by 2023.

25
26
27 **11.6.19.1.5 ROI Income**

28
29 Total personal income in the ROI stood at \$1.4 billion in 2007 and has grown at an
30 annual average rate of 4.7% over the period 1998 to 2007 (Table 11.6.19.1-5). Per-capita income

TABLE 11.6.19.1-4 ROI Population for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Location	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000–2008 (%)	2021	2023
Esmeralda County	971	664	–4.6	1,387	1,420
Nye County	32,485	44,175	3.9	76,735	79,452
ROI	33,456	44,839	3.7	78,122	80,872
Nevada	1,998,257	2,615,772	3.4	3,675,890	3,779,745

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009d,e); Nevada State Demographers Office (2008).

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TABLE 11.6.19.1-5 ROI Personal Income for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Location	1998	2007	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1998–2007 (%)
Esmeralda County			
Total income (\$ billion 2008)	<0.05	<0.05	0.2
Per-capita income (\$)	26,781	41,370	4.4
Nye County			
Total income (\$ billion 2008)	0.9	1.4	4.8
Per-capita income (\$)	28,857	31,836	1.0
ROI			
Total income (\$ billion 2008)	0.9	1.4	4.7
Per-capita income (\$)	28,788	31,983	1.1
Nevada			
Total income (\$ billion 2008)	68.9	105.3	4.3
Per-capita income (\$)	37,188	41,022	1.0

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce (2009); U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009d,e).

3
4

1 also rose over the same period at a rate of 1.1%, increasing from \$28,788 to \$31,983. Per-capita
2 incomes were higher in Esmeralda County (\$41,370) than in Nye County (\$31,836) in 2007.
3 Growth rates in total personal income have been higher in Nye County than in Esmeralda
4 County. Personal income growth rates in the ROI (4.7%) were higher than the rate for Nevada
5 (4.3%), while per-capita income growth rates in the two counties were slightly lower (Esmeralda
6 County) or much lower (Nye County) than in Nevada as a whole (1.0%).
7

8 Median household income in 2006 to 2008 varied from \$42,275 in Nye County
9 to \$42,749 in Esmeralda County (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009c).
10

11 ***11.6.19.1.6 ROI Housing***

12
13
14 In 2007, more than 17,400 housing units were located in the two ROI counties, with
15 about 95% of these located in Nye County (Table 11.6.19.1-6). Owner-occupied units account
16 for about 72% of the occupied units in the two counties, with rental housing making up 28% of
17 the total. Vacancy rates in 2007 were 45.4% in Esmeralda County and 19.3% in Nye County;
18 with an overall vacancy rate of 20.6%. In 2007, 3,591 housing units in the ROI were vacant, of
19 which 1,014 are estimated to be rental units that would be available to construction workers.
20 There were 641 units in seasonal, recreational, or occasional use in the ROI at the time of the
21 2000 Census, with 9.5% of housing units in Esmeralda County and 3.5% in Nye County used for
22 seasonal or recreational purposes.
23

24 Housing stock in the ROI as a whole grew at an annual rate of 0.6% over the period
25 2000 to 2007, with 682 new units added (Table 11.6.19.1-6).
26

27 The median value of owner-occupied housing in 2006 to 2008 varied from \$75,600 in
28 Esmeralda County to \$122,100 in Nye County (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009f).
29
30

31 ***11.6.19.1.7 ROI Local Government Organizations***

32
33 The various local, county, and Tribal government organizations in the ROI are listed in
34 Table 11.6.19.1-7. Although there are no Tribal government located in the ROI, members
35 of other Tribal groups whose Tribal governments are located in adjacent counties or states reside
36 in the ROI.
37
38

39 ***11.6.19.1.8 ROI Community and Social Services***

40
41 This section describes educational, health-care, law enforcement, and firefighting
42 resources in the ROI.
43
44

45 **Schools**

46
47 In 2007, the two-county ROI had a total of 28 public and private elementary, middle, and
48 high schools (NCES 2009). Table 11.6.19.1-8 provides summary statistics for enrollment and

TABLE 11.6.19.1-6 Housing Characteristics in the ROI for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Parameter	2000	2007 ^a
Esmeralda County		
Owner-occupied	305	314
Rental	150	154
Vacant units	378	389
Seasonal and recreational use	79	NA ^b
Total units	833	857
Nye County		
Owner-occupied	10,167	9,630
Rental	3,142	3,760
Vacant units	2,625	3,202
Seasonal and recreational use	562	NA
Total units	15,934	16,592
ROI		
Owner-occupied	10,472	9,944
Rental	3,292	3,914
Vacant units	3,003	3,591
Seasonal and recreational use	641	NA
Total units	16,767	17,449

^a 2007 data for number of owner-occupied, rental, and vacant units for Esmeralda County and Nye County are not available; data are based on 2007 total housing units and 2000 data on housing tenure.

^b NA = data not available.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009g-i).

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TABLE 11.6.19.1-7 Local Government Organizations and Social Institutions in the ROI for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Governments	
<i>City</i>	
None	
<i>County</i>	
Esmeralda County	Nye County
<i>Tribal</i>	
None	

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b); U.S. Department of Interior (2010).

3

TABLE 11.6.19.1-8 School District Data in the ROI for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ, 2007

Location	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Student-Teacher Ratio	Level of Service ^a
Esmeralda County	77	8	9.6	11.6
Nye County	6,427	396	16.2	9.0
ROI	6,504	404	16.1	9.0

^a Number of teachers per 1,000 population.

Source: NCES (2009).

1
2
3 educational staffing and two indices of educational quality—student-teacher ratios and levels of
4 service (number of teachers per 1,000 population). The student-teacher ratio in Nye County
5 schools (16.2) is higher than that in Esmeralda County schools (9.6), while the level of service
6 is higher in Esmeralda County (11.6) than elsewhere in the ROI, where there are fewer teachers
7 per 1,000 population.
8
9

10 **Health Care**

11
12 The total number of physicians in Nye County is 41, while the number of physicians per
13 1,000 population is 0.9. No data are available for Esmeralda County (Table 11.6.19.1-9).
14
15

16 **Public Safety**

17
18 Several state, county, and local police departments provide law enforcement in the
19 ROI (Table 11.6.19.1-10). Esmeralda County has 10 officers and would provide law enforcement
20
21

TABLE 11.6.19.1-9 Physicians in the Proposed Gold Point SEZ ROI, 2007

Location	Number of Primary Care Physicians	Level of Service ^a
Esmeralda County	0	--
Nye County	41	0.9
ROI	41	0.9

^a Number of physicians per 1,000 population.

Source: AMA (2009).

22

TABLE 11.6.19.1-10 Public Safety Employment in the Proposed Gold Point SEZ ROI

Location	Number of Police Officers ^a	Level of Service ^b	Number of Firefighters ^c	Level of Service
Esmeralda County	10	14.5	0	0.0
Nye County	104	2.4	82	1.9
ROI	114	2.6	82	1.8

^a 2007 data.

^b Number per 1,000 population.

^c 2008 data; number does not include volunteers.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2008); Fire Departments Network (2009).

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2
3 services to the SEZ; there are 104 officers in Nye County. Levels of service of police protection
4 are 14.5 officers per 1,000 population in Esmeralda County and 2.4 in Nye County. Currently,
5 there are 114 professional firefighters in the ROI (Table 11.6.19.1-10).
6
7

8 **11.6.19.1.9 ROI Social Structure and Social Change**

9
10 Community social structures and other forms of social organization within the ROI are
11 related to various factors, including historical development, major economic activities and
12 sources of employment, income levels, race and ethnicity, and forms of local political
13 organization. Although an analysis of the character of community social structures is beyond the
14 scope of the current programmatic analysis, project-level NEPA analyses would include a
15 description of ROI social structures, contributing factors, their uniqueness, and consequently, the
16 susceptibility of local communities to various forms of social disruption and social change.
17

18 Various energy development studies have suggested that once the annual growth in
19 population in smaller rural communities is between 5 and 15%, alcoholism, depression, suicide,
20 social conflict, divorce, and delinquency would increase and levels of community satisfaction
21 would deteriorate (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996). Data on violent crime and property crime rates and
22 on alcoholism and illicit drug use, mental health, and divorce, which might be used as indicators
23 of social change, are presented in Tables 11.6.19.1-11 and 11.6.19.1.12, respectively.
24

25 Some variation in the level of crime exists across the ROI, with a higher rate of violent
26 crime in Esmeralda County (4.5 crimes per 1,000 population) than in Nye County (2.8)
27 (Table 11.6.19.1-11). Property-related crime rates are higher in Nye County (20.2) than in
28 Esmeralda County (15.1); overall crime rates in Nye County (23.0) were higher than in
29 Esmeralda County (19.6).
30

TABLE 11.6.19.1-11 County and ROI Crime Rates for the Proposed Gold Point SEZ^a

Location	Violent Crime ^b		Property Crime ^c		All Crime	
	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate
Esmeralda County	3	4.5	10	15.1	13	19.6
Nye County	124	2.8	892	20.2	1,016	23.0
ROI	127	2.8	902	20.1	1,029	22.9

^a Rates are the number of crimes per 1,000 population.

^b Violent crime includes murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

^c Property crime includes burglary, larceny, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2009a,b).

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TABLE 11.6.19.1-12 Alcoholism, Drug Use, Mental Health, and Divorce in the Proposed Gold Point SEZ ROI^a

Geographic Area	Alcoholism ^a	Illicit Drug Use ^a	Mental Health ^b	Divorce ^c
Nevada Rural (includes Esmeralda County and Nye County)	8.0	2.7	9.5	NA ^d
Nevada				6.5

^a Data for alcoholism and drug use represent percentage of the population over 12 years of age with dependence or abuse of alcohol, illicit drugs. Data are averages for 2004 to 2006.

^b Data for mental health represent percentage of the population over 18 years of age suffering from serious psychological distress. Data are averages for 2002 to 2004.

^c Divorce rates are the number of divorces per 1,000 population. Data are for 2007.

^d NA = data not available.

Sources: SAMHSA (2009); CDC (2009).

3
4
5

1 Data on other measures of social change—alcoholism, illicit drug use, and mental
 2 health—are not available at the county level and thus are presented for the SAMHSA region
 3 in which the ROI is located (Table 11.6.19.1-12).
 4
 5

6 **11.6.19.1.10 ROI Recreation**
 7

8 Various areas in the vicinity of the proposed Gold Point Mountain SEZ are used for
 9 recreational purposes, with natural, ecological, and cultural resources in the ROI attracting
 10 visitors for a range of activities, including hunting, fishing, boating, canoeing, wildlife watching,
 11 camping, hiking, horseback riding, mountain climbing, and sightseeing. These activities are
 12 discussed in Section 11.6.5.
 13

14 Because information the number of visitors using state and federal lands for recreational
 15 activities is not available from the various administering agencies, the value of recreational
 16 resources in these areas, based solely on the number of recorded visitors, is likely to be an
 17 underestimation. In addition to visitation rates, the economic valuation of certain natural
 18 resources can also be assessed in terms of the potential recreational destination for current and
 19 future users, that is, their nonmarket value (see Section 5.17.1.1.1).
 20

21 Another method of assessing recreational use is to estimate the economic impact of the
 22 various recreational activities supported by natural resources on public land in the vicinity of the
 23 proposed solar development, by identifying sectors in the economy in which expenditures on
 24 recreational activities occur. Not all activities in these sectors are directly related to recreation on
 25 state and federal lands, with some activity occurring on private land (e.g., dude ranches, golf
 26 courses, bowling alleys, and movie theaters). Expenditures associated with recreational activities
 27 formed an important part of the economy of the ROI. In 2007, 1,617 people were employed in
 28 the ROI in the various sectors identified as recreation-related, constituting 9.5% of total ROI
 29 employment (Table 11.6.19.1-13). Recreation spending also produced more than \$35.4 million in
 30
 31

**TABLE 11.6.19.1-13 Recreation Sector Activity in
 the Proposed Gold Point SEZ ROI, 2007**

ROI	Employment	Income (\$ million)
Amusement and recreation services	105	3.8
Automotive rental	13	0.4
Eating and drinking places	814	14.7
Hotels and lodging places	565	13.9
Museums and historic sites,	0	0.0
Recreational vehicle parks and campsites	54	1.5
Scenic tours	37	1.0
Sporting goods retailers	29	0.3
Total ROI	1,617	35.4

Source: MIG, Inc. (2010).

1 income in the ROI in 2007. The primary sources of recreation-related employment were hotels
2 and lodging places and eating and drinking places.

3 4 5 **11.6.19.2 Impacts**

6
7 The following analysis begins with a description of the common impacts of solar
8 development, including common impacts on recreation, social change, and livestock grazing.
9 These impacts would occur regardless of the solar technology developed in the SEZ. The
10 impacts of projects employing various solar energy technologies are analyzed in detail in
11 subsequent sections.

12 13 14 **11.6.19.2.1 Common Impacts**

15
16 Construction and operation of a solar energy facility at the proposed SEZ would produce
17 direct and indirect economic impacts. Direct impacts would occur as a result of expenditures on
18 wages and salaries and on procurement of goods and services required for project construction
19 and operation, and the collection of state sales and income taxes. Indirect impacts would occur as
20 project wages and salaries, procurement expenditures, and tax revenues subsequently circulated
21 through the economy of the state, thereby creating additional employment, income, and tax
22 revenues. Facility construction and operation would also require in-migration of workers and
23 their families into the ROI surrounding the site, which would affect population, rental housing,
24 health service employment, and public safety employment. Socioeconomic impacts common to
25 all utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in detail in Section 5.17. These impacts will
26 be minimized through the implementation of programmatic design features described in
27 Appendix A, Section A.2.2.

28 29 30 **Recreation Impacts**

31
32 Estimating the impact of solar facilities on recreation is problematic, because it is not
33 clear how solar development in the SEZ would affect recreational visitation and nonmarket
34 values (i.e., the value of recreational resources for potential or future visits; see
35 Section 5.17.1.2.3). While it is clear that some land in the ROI would no longer be accessible
36 for recreation, the majority of popular recreational locations would be precluded from solar
37 development. It is also possible that solar development in the ROI would be visible from popular
38 recreation locations, and that construction workers residing temporarily in the ROI would occupy
39 accommodations otherwise used for recreational visits, thus reducing visitation and consequently
40 affecting the economy of the ROI.

41 42 43 **Social Change**

44
45 Although an extensive literature in sociology documents the most significant components
46 of social change in energy boomtowns, the nature and magnitude of the social impact of energy

1 development in small rural communities are still unclear (see Section 5.17.1.1.4). While some
2 degree of social disruption is likely to accompany large-scale in-migration during the boom
3 phase, insufficient evidence exists to predict the extent to which specific communities are likely
4 to be affected, which population groups within each community are likely to be most affected,
5 and the extent to which social disruption is likely to persist beyond the end of the boom period
6 (Smith et al. 2001). Accordingly, because of the lack of adequate social baseline data, it has been
7 suggested that social disruption is likely to occur once an arbitrary population growth rate
8 associated with solar energy projects has been reached, with an annual rate of between 5 and
9 10% growth in population assumed to result in a breakdown in social structures, with a
10 consequent increase in alcoholism, depression, suicide, social conflict, divorce, and delinquency
11 and deterioration in levels of community satisfaction (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996).

12
13 In overall terms, the in-migration of workers and their families into the ROI would
14 represent an increase of 2.3% in regional population during construction of the trough
15 technology, with smaller increases for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies, and
16 during the operation of each technology. While it is possible that some construction and
17 operations workers will choose to locate in communities closer to the SEZ, the lack of available
18 housing in smaller rural communities in the ROI to accommodate all in-migrating workers and
19 families and insufficient range of housing choices to suit all solar occupations, many workers are
20 likely to commute to the SEZ from larger communities elsewhere in the ROI, thereby reducing
21 the potential impact of solar development on social change. Regardless of the pace of population
22 growth associated with the commercial development of solar resources and the likely residential
23 location of in-migrating workers and families in communities some distance from the SEZ itself,
24 the number of new residents from outside the ROI is likely to lead to some demographic and
25 social change in small rural communities in the ROI. Communities hosting solar development
26 are likely to be required to adapt to a different quality of life, with a transition away from a more
27 traditional lifestyle involving ranching and taking place in small, isolated, close-knit,
28 homogenous communities with a strong orientation toward personal and family relationships,
29 toward a more urban lifestyle, with increasing cultural and ethnic diversity and increasing
30 dependence on formal social relationships within the community.

31 32 33 **Livestock Grazing Impacts**

34
35 Cattle ranching and farming supported 80 jobs and \$1.7 million in income in the ROI in
36 2007 (MIG, Inc. 2010). The construction and operation of solar facilities in the SEZ could result
37 in a decline in the amount of land available for livestock grazing. However, because the amount
38 of acreage that would be used in the proposed SEZ would be small compared to the overall size
39 of locally affected land allotments, acreage loss would not have a significant impact on overall
40 grazing operations, with livestock management changes or the provision of additional livestock
41 management facilities, meaning that no loss of AUMs is anticipated.

1 **Transmission Line Impacts**

2

3 The impacts of transmission line construction could include the addition of 79 jobs in the

4 ROI (including direct and indirect impacts) in the peak year of construction (Table 11.6.19.2-1).

5 Construction activities in the peak year would constitute less than 0.1% of total ROI

6 employment. A transmission line would also produce \$3.7 million in income. Direct sales taxes

7 would be \$0.1 million.

8

9 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,

10 construction of a transmission line would mean that some in-migration of workers and their

11 families from outside the ROI would be required, with 116 persons in-migrating into the ROI.

12 Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number

13 of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile

14 home parks) would mean that the impact of solar facility construction on the number of vacant

15 rental housing units is not expected to be large, with 58 rental units expected to be occupied in

16

17

**TABLE 11.6.19.2-1 Proposed Gold Point SEZ ROI
Socioeconomic Impacts of Transmission Line Facilities^a**

Parameter	Construction	Operations
Employment (no.)		
Direct	46	<1
Total	79	<1
Income (\$ million 2008)		
Total	3.7	<0.1
Direct state taxes (\$ million 2008)		
Sales	0.1	<0.1
In-migrants (no.)	116	0
Vacant housing ^b (no.)	58	0
Local community service employment (no.)		
Teachers	1	0
Physicians	0	0
Public safety	1	0

^a Construction impacts assume 22 mi [35 km] of transmission line is required to connect SEZ solar facilities to the grid. Construction impacts were assessed for a single representative year, 2021.

^b Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

1 the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent less than 0.1% of the vacant rental units expected
2 to be available in the ROI.

3
4 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
5 community service employment (education, health, and public safety). Accordingly, one new
6 teacher and one new public safety employee would be required in order to meet existing levels of
7 service in the ROI.

8
9 Total operations employment impacts on the ROI (including direct and indirect impacts)
10 of a transmission line would be less than 1 job (Table 11.6.19.2-2) and would also produce less
11 than \$0.1 million in income. Direct sales taxes would be less than \$0.1 million. Operation of a
12 transmission line would not require the in-migration of workers and their families from outside
13 the ROI; consequently, no impacts on housing markets in the ROI would be expected, and no
14 new community service employment would be required in order to meet existing levels of
15 service in the ROI.

16 17 **11.6.19.2.2 Technology-Specific Impacts**

18
19
20 The economic impacts of solar energy development in the proposed SEZ were measured
21 in terms of employment, income, state tax revenues (sales), BLM acreage rental and capacity
22 payments, population in-migration, housing, and community service employment (education,
23 health, and public safety). More information on the data and methods used in the analysis are
24 provided in Appendix M.

25
26 The assessment of the impact of the construction and operation of each solar technology
27 was based on SEZ acreage, assuming 80% of the area could be developed. To capture a range of
28 possible impacts, solar facility size was estimated on the basis of the land requirements of
29 various solar technologies, assuming that 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) would be required for
30 power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies and 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) for solar trough
31 technologies. Impacts of multiple facilities employing a given technology at each SEZ were
32 assumed to be the same as impacts for a single facility with the same total capacity. Construction
33 impacts were assessed for a representative peak year of construction, assumed to be 2021 for
34 each technology. Construction impacts assumed that a maximum of one project could be
35 constructed within a given year, with a corresponding maximum land disturbance of up to
36 3,000 acres (12 km²). For operations impacts, a representative first year of operations was
37 assumed to be 2023 for trough and power tower, 2022 for the minimum facility size for dish
38 engine and PV, and 2023 for the maximum facility size for these technologies. The years of
39 construction and operations were selected as representative of the entire 20-year study period,
40 because they are the approximate midpoint; construction and operations could begin earlier.

41 42 43 **Solar Trough**

44
45
46 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
47 and indirect impacts) from the use of solar trough technologies would be up to 2,287 jobs

1 (Table 11.6.19.2-2). Construction activities would constitute 8.0% of total ROI employment.
2 A solar facility would also produce \$138.9 million in income and \$0.1 million in direct sales
3 taxes.
4

5 Based on the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker
6 availability in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean
7 that some in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required,
8 with 1,827 persons in-migrating into the ROI. The relatively small number of in-migrants and the
9 availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the
10 impact of solar facility construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would be
11 expected to be large, with 914 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy
12 rate would represent 51.6% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
13

14 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
15 community service employment (education, health, and public safety). An increase in such
16 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
17 16 new teachers, 2 physicians, and 8 public safety employees (career firefighters and uniformed
18 police officers) would be required in the ROI. These increases would represent 2.3% of total
19 ROI employment expected in these occupations.
20

21
22 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
23 indirect impacts) of a build-out using solar trough technologies would be 224 jobs
24 (Table 11.6.19.2-2). Such a solar facility would also produce \$7.6 million in income and
25 \$0.1 million in direct sales taxes. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy
26 Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010b), acreage rental payments would be \$0.3 million, and solar
27 generating capacity payments would total at least \$5.1 million.
28

29 Based on the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational
30 categories, operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their
31 families from outside the ROI would be required, with 107 persons in-migrating into the ROI.
32 Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number
33 of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile
34 home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-
35 occupied housing units would not be expected to be large, with 96 owner-occupied units
36 expected to be occupied in the ROI.
37

38 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
39 community service (health, education, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
40 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the provision of these
41 services in the ROI. Accordingly, one new teacher would be required in the ROI.
42
43

TABLE 11.6.19.2-2 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ with Trough Facilities

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts ^a	Operations Impacts ^b
Employment (no.)		
Direct	1,641	168
Total	2,287	224
Income (\$ million 2008)		
Total	138.9	7.6
Direct state taxes ^c (\$ million 2008)		
Sales	0.1	0.1
BLM payments (\$ million 2008)		
Rental	NA	0.3
Capacity ^d	NA	5.1
In-migrants (no.)	1,827	107
Vacant housing ^f (no.)	914	96
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	16	1
Physicians (no.)	2	0
Public safety (no.)	8	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 600 MW (corresponding to 3,000 acres [12 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 770 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010c), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1
2

1 **Power Tower**
2
3

4 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
5 and indirect impacts) from the use of power tower technologies would be up to 911 jobs
6 (Table 11.6.19.2-3). Construction activities would constitute 3.2% of total ROI employment.
7 Such a solar facility would also produce \$55.3 million in income and less than \$0.1 million in
8 direct sales taxes.
9

10 Based on the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker
11 availability in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean
12 that some in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required,
13 with 728 persons in-migrating into the ROI. The relatively small number of in-migrants and the
14 availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the
15 impact of solar facility construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be
16 expected to be large, with 364 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy
17 rate would represent 20.6% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
18

19 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
20 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
21 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
22 seven new teachers, one physician, and three public safety employees would be required in the
23 ROI. These increases would represent 0.9% of total ROI employment expected in these
24 occupations.
25
26

27 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
28 indirect impacts) of a build-out using power tower technologies would be 106 jobs
29 (Table 11.6.19.2-3). Such a solar facility would also produce \$3.4 million in income. Direct
30 sales taxes would be less than \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar
31 Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010b), acreage rental payments would be \$0.3 million,
32 and solar generating capacity payments would total at least \$2.8 million.
33

34 Based on the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational
35 categories, operation of a solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their
36 families from outside the ROI would be required, with 55 persons in-migrating into the ROI.
37 Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number
38 of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels and mobile
39 home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant
40 owner-occupied housing units would not be expected to be large, with 50 owner-occupied units
41 expected to be required in the ROI.
42

43 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
44 service in the ROI.
45
46

TABLE 11.6.19.2-3 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ with Power Tower Facilities

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts ^a	Operations Impacts ^b
Employment (no.)		
Direct	654	87
Total	911	106
Income (\$ million 2008)		
Total	55.3	3.4
Direct state taxes ^c (\$ million 2008)		
Sales	<0.1	<0.1
BLM payments (\$ million 2008)		
Rental	NA	0.3
Capacity ^d	NA	2.8
In-migrants (no.)	728	55
Vacant housing ^f (no.)	364	50
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	7	0
Physicians (no.)	1	0
Public safety (no.)	3	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 333 MW (corresponding to 3,000 acres [12 km²] of land disturbance) could be built.

Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 428 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010b), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 **Dish Engine**
2
3

4 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
5 and indirect impacts) from the use of dish engine technologies would be up to 370 jobs
6 (Table 11.6.19.2-4). Construction activities would constitute 1.3% of total ROI employment.
7 Such a solar facility would also produce \$22.5 million in income and less than \$0.1 million in
8 direct sales taxes.
9

10 Based on the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker
11 availability in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean
12 that some in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required,
13 with 296 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
14 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
15 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
16 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
17 with 148 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
18 8.4% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
19

20 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
21 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
22 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly, three
23 new teachers, and one public safety employees would be required in the ROI. These increases
24 would represent less than 0.4% of total ROI employment expected in these occupations.
25
26

27 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
28 indirect impacts) of a build-out using dish engine technologies would be 103 jobs
29 (Table 11.6.19.2-4). Such a solar facility would also produce \$3.4 million in income and less
30 than \$0.1 million in direct sales taxes. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy
31 Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010b), acreage rental payments would be \$0.3 million, and solar
32 generating capacity payments would total at least \$2.8 million.
33

34 Based on the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational
35 categories, operation of a dish engine solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and
36 their families from outside the ROI would be required, with 54 persons in-migrating into the
37 ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small
38 number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and
39 mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant
40 owner-occupied housing units would not be expected to be large, with 48 owner-occupied units
41 expected to be required in the ROI.
42

43 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
44 service in the ROI.
45
46

TABLE 11.6.19.2-4 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ with Dish Engine Facilities

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts ^a	Operations Impacts ^b
Employment (no.)		
Direct	266	84
Total	370	103
Income (\$ million 2008)		
Total	22.5	3.4
Direct state taxes ^c (\$ million 2008)		
Sales	<0.1	<0.1
BLM payments (\$ million 2008)		
Rental	NA	0.3
Capacity ^d	NA	2.8
In-migrants (no.)	296	54
Vacant housing ^f (no.)	148	48
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	3	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	1	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 333 MW (corresponding to 3,000 acres [12 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 428 MW.

^c Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^d Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010b), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 **Photovoltaic**

2
3
4 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
5 indirect impacts) from the use of PV technologies would be up to 173 jobs (Table 11.6.19.2-5).
6 Construction activities would constitute 0.6% of total ROI employment. Such a solar
7 development would also produce \$10.5 million in income and less than \$0.1 million in direct
8 sales taxes.
9

10 Based on the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker
11 availability in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean
12 that some in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required,
13 with 138 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
14 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
15 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
16 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
17 with 69 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
18 3.9% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
19

20 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
21 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
22 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
23 one new teacher and one public safety employee would be required in the ROI. This increase
24 would represent less than 0.2% of total ROI employment expected in this occupation.
25
26

27 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
28 indirect impacts) of a build-out using PV technologies would be 10 jobs (Table 11.6.19.2-5).
29 Such a solar facility would also produce \$0.3 million in income and less than \$0.1 million in
30 direct sales taxes. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental
31 Policy (BLM 2010b), acreage rental payments would be \$0.3 million, and solar generating
32 capacity payments would total \$2.2 million.
33

34 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
35 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
36 from outside the ROI would be required, with five persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
37 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
38 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
39 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
40 housing units would not be expected to be large, with five owner-occupied units expected to be
41 required in the ROI.
42

43 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
44 service in the ROI.
45
46

TABLE 11.6.19.2-5 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ with PV Facilities

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts ^a	Operations Impacts ^b
Employment (no.)		
Direct	124	8
Total	173	10
Income (\$ million 2008)		
Total	10.5	0.3
Direct state taxes ^c (\$ million 2008)		
Sales	<0.1	<0.1
BLM payments (\$ million 2008)		
Rental	NA	0.3
Capacity ^d	NA	2.2
In-migrants (no.)	138	5
Vacant housing ^f (no.)	69	5
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	1	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	1	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 333 MW (corresponding to 3,000 acres [12 km²] of land disturbance) could be built.

Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 428 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing..

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010b), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 **11.6.19.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 No SEZ-specific design features addressing socioeconomic impacts have been
4 identified for the Gold Point SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features described in
5 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program, would reduce the
6 potential for socioeconomic impacts during all project phases.
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1 **11.6.20 Environmental Justice**

2
3
4 **11.6.20.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority
7 Populations and Low-Income Populations,” formally requires federal agencies to incorporate
8 environmental justice as part of their missions (*Federal Register*, Volume 59, page 7629, 1994).
9 Specifically, it directs them to address, as appropriate, any disproportionately high and adverse
10 human health or environmental effects of their actions, programs, or policies on minority and
11 low-income populations.

12
13 The analysis of the impacts of solar energy projects on environmental justice issues
14 follows guidelines described in the CEQ’s *Environmental Justice Guidance under the National*
15 *Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997). The analysis method has three parts: (1) a description
16 of the geographic distribution of low-income and minority populations in the affected area is
17 undertaken; (2) an assessment is conducted to determine whether construction and operation
18 would produce impacts that are high and adverse; and (3) if impacts are high and adverse, a
19 determination as to whether these impacts disproportionately affect minority and low-income
20 populations.

21
22 Construction and operation of solar energy projects in the proposed SEZ could affect
23 environmental justice if any adverse health and environmental impacts resulting from any phase
24 of development are significantly high and if these impacts disproportionately affect minority and
25 low-income populations. If the analysis determines that health and environmental impacts are not
26 significant, there can be no disproportionate impacts on minority and low-income populations. In
27 the event impacts are significant, disproportionality would be determined by comparing the
28 proximity of any high and adverse impacts with the location of low-income and minority
29 populations.

30
31 The analysis of environmental justice issues associated with the development of solar
32 facilities considered impacts within the SEZ and an associated 50-mi (80-km) radius around the
33 boundary of the SEZ. A description of the geographic distribution of minority and low-income
34 groups in the affected area was based on demographic data from the 2000 Census (U.S. Bureau
35 of the Census 2009j,k). The following definitions were used to define minority and low-income
36 population groups:

- 37
38 • **Minority.** Persons who identify themselves as belonging to any of the
39 following racial groups: (1) Hispanic, (2) Black (not of Hispanic origin) or
40 African American, (3) American Indian or Alaska Native, (4) Asian, or
41 (5) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

42
43 Beginning with the 2000 Census, where appropriate, the census form allows
44 individuals to designate multiple population group categories to reflect their
45 ethnic or racial origin. In addition, persons who classify themselves as being
46 of multiple racial origin may choose up to six racial groups as the basis of

1 their racial origins. The term minority includes all persons, including those
2 classifying themselves in multiple racial categories, except those who classify
3 themselves as not of Hispanic origin and as White or “Other Race”
4 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009j).

5
6 The CEQ guidance proposed that minority populations should be identified
7 where either (1) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50% or
8 (2) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully
9 greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or
10 other appropriate unit of geographic analysis.

11
12 This PEIS applies both criteria in using the Census data for census block
13 groups, wherein consideration is given to the minority population that is both
14 greater than 50% and 20 percentage points higher than in the state (the
15 reference geographic unit).

- 16
17 • **Low-Income.** Individuals who fall below the poverty line. The poverty line
18 takes into account family size and age of individuals in the family. In 1999,
19 for example, the poverty line for a family of five with three children below
20 the age of 18 was \$19,882. For any given family below the poverty line, all
21 family members are considered as being below the poverty line for the
22 purposes of analysis (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009k).

23
24 The data in Table 11.6.20.1-1 show the minority and low-income composition of the
25 total population located in the proposed SEZ based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines.
26 Individuals identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino are included in the table as a separate
27 entry. However, because Hispanics can be of any race, this number also includes individuals
28 identifying themselves as being part of one or more of the population groups listed in the table.

29
30 Minority and low-income individuals are located in the 50-mi (80-km) area around the
31 boundary of the SEZ. Within the 50-mi (80-km) radius in Nevada, 18.7% of the population is
32 classified as minority, while 9.8% is classified as low-income. However, the number of minority
33 individuals does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area and does not exceed the state
34 average by 20 percentage points or more; thus, in aggregate, there is no minority population in
35 the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines. The number of low-income
36 individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more and does not
37 exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income
38 populations in the Nevada portion of the SEZ area.

39
40 In the California portion of the 50-mi (80-km) radius, 14.6% of the population is
41 classified as minority, while 11.9% is classified as low-income. The number of minority
42 individuals does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area and does not exceed the state
43 average by 20 percentage points or more; thus, in aggregate, there is no minority population in
44 the California portion of the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines. The
45 number of low-income individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or

TABLE 11.6.20.1-1 Minority and Low-Income Populations within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius Surrounding the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Parameter	California	Nevada
Total population	3,800	4,966
White, non-Hispanic	3,089	4,243
Hispanic or Latino	391	370
Non-Hispanic or Latino minorities	320	353
One race	247	206
Black or African American	5	56
American Indian or Alaskan Native	207	96
Asian	21	27
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	9	10
Some other race	5	17
Two or more races	73	147
Total minority	711	723
Low-income	372	589
Percentage minority	18.7	14.6
State percentage minority	53.3	34.8
Percentage low-income	9.8	11.9
State percentage low-income	14.2	10.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009j,k).

more and does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the SEZ area.

11.6.20.2 Impacts

Environmental justice concerns common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities are described in detail in Section 5.18. These impacts would be minimized through the implementation of the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, which address the underlying environmental impacts contributing to the concerns. The potentially relevant environmental impacts associated with solar facilities within the proposed SEZ include noise and dust during the construction; noise and EMF effects associated with operations; visual impacts of solar generation and auxiliary facilities, including transmission lines; access to land used for economic, cultural, or religious purposes; and effects on property values as areas of concern that might potentially affect minority and low-income populations.

1 Potential impacts on low-income and minority populations could be incurred as a result
2 of the construction and operation of solar facilities involving each of the four technologies.
3 Impacts are likely to be small, however, and there are no minority or low-income populations,
4 as defined by CEQ guidelines (Section 11.6.20.1), within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the
5 boundary of the SEZ; this means that any adverse impacts of solar projects could not
6 disproportionately affect minority or low-income populations.
7
8

9 **11.6.20.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

10
11 No SEZ-specific design features addressing environmental justice impacts have been
12 identified for the proposed Gold Point SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features
13 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would
14 reduce the potential for environmental justice impacts during all project phases.
15
16

1 **11.6.21 Transportation**

2
3 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is accessible by road. One U.S. highway serves the
4 immediate area. The nearest railroad access is about 160 mi (257 km) away. Four small airports
5 serve the area within a drive of about 91 mi (146 km). General transportation considerations and
6 impacts are discussed in Sections 3.4 and 5.19, respectively.
7

8
9 **11.6.21.1 Affected Environment**

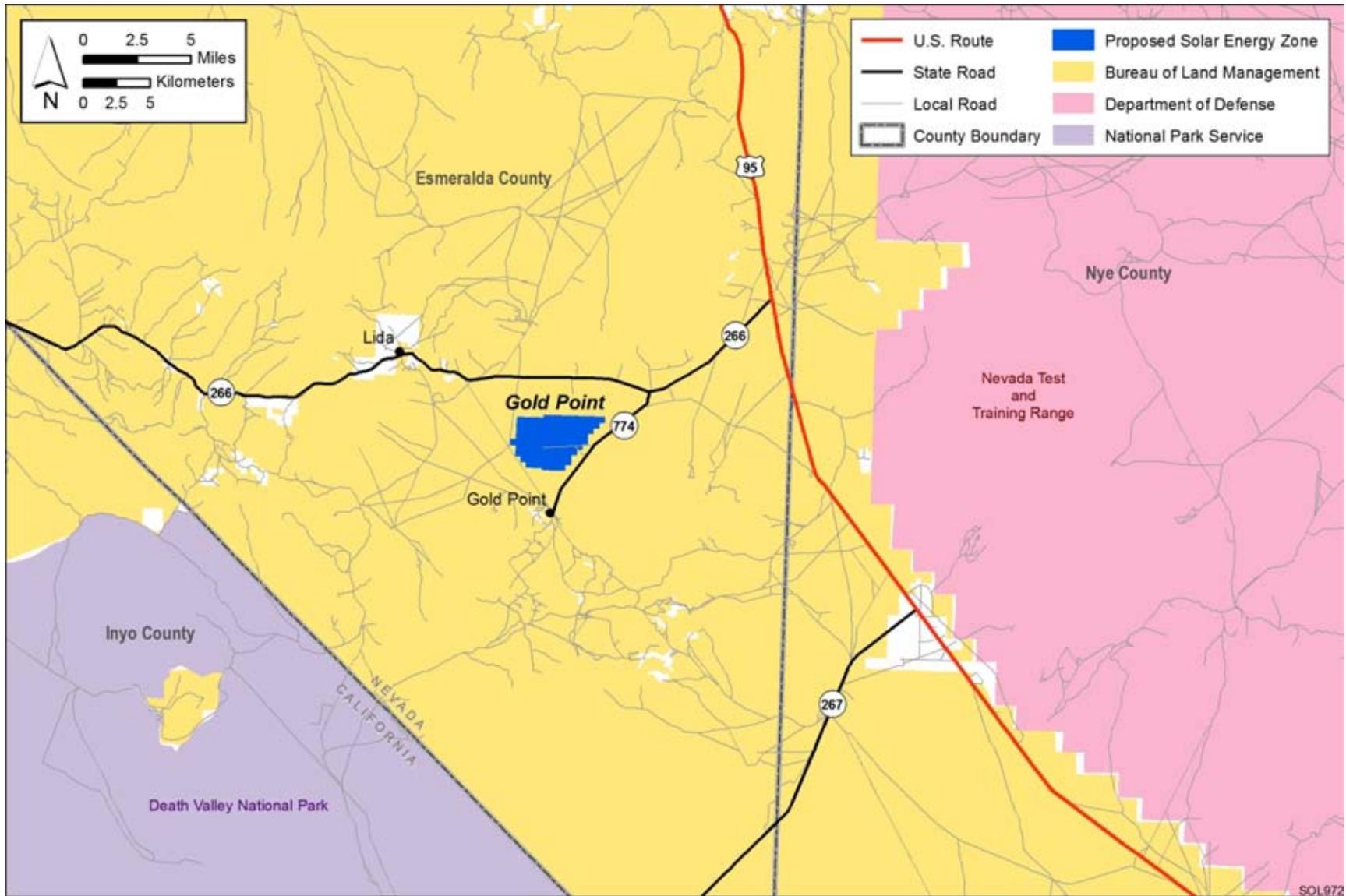
10
11 U.S. 95 extends north to south as it passes within 9 mi (14 km) east of the proposed
12 Gold Point SEZ, as shown in Figure 11.6.21.1-1. The small town of Tonopah is about 50 mi
13 (80 km) north of the SEZ along U.S. 95. I-80 is about 250 mi (400 km) northwest of the SEZ
14 at its closest approach. Southeast of the SEZ, U.S. 95 passes through Beatty, about 60 mi
15 (97 km) away, on its way to the Las Vegas metropolitan area, a distance of about 180 mi
16 (290 km) from the SEZ. As seen in Figure 11.6.21.1-1. State Route 266 passes along the
17 northern edge of the SEZ at a distance of about 1.6 mi (2.6 km), connects with U.S. 95 to the
18 east, and passes into California to the west. Access to the proposed Gold Point SEZ would be
19 from State Route 774, which parallels the eastern edge of the SEZ as it extends from State
20 Route 266 to Gold Point south of the SEZ. Some unimproved dirt roads are also in the area.
21 The area is classified as open to vehicle use (BLM 1997). As listed in Table 11.6.21.1-1,
22 State Routes 266 and 774 and U.S. 95 carry average traffic volumes of about 210, 20, and
23 2,000 vehicles per day, respectively, in the vicinity of the proposed Gold Point SEZ
24 (NV DOT 2010).
25

26 The UP Railroad serves the region. A spur from the main line that crosses northern
27 Nevada ends at Thorne (UP 2009), 160 mi (257 km) northwest of the SEZ along U.S. 95,
28 immediately north of Hawthorne. Access to the UP Railroad is also available 180 mi (290 km)
29 away in Las Vegas.
30

31 The nearest public airport is the Lida Junction Airport, a small BLM airport about 10 mi
32 (16 km) from the proposed Gold Point SEZ at the junction of State Route 266 with U.S. 95. The
33 airport has a single dirt runway in good condition, as listed in Table 11.6.21.1-2. A similar BLM-
34 managed airport is 48 mi (77 km) away in Dyer. Other small airports are located in Tonopah,
35 Nevada, and Bishop, California. None of these four airports has scheduled commercial passenger
36 service or regular freight service, with the exception of the Sierra Regional Airport in Bishop,
37 California, which has regular UPS freight service (Eastern Sierra Regional Airport 2010). In
38 2008, 72,724 lb (32,980 kg) of freight was shipped, and 289,323 lb (131,212 kg) of freight was
39 received (BTS 2009). The nearest major airport to the proposed Gold Point SEZ is in Las Vegas.
40

41
42 **11.6.21.2 Impacts**

43
44 As discussed in Section 5.19, the primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be
45 from commuting construction worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers
46 each day, with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum). The increase in the volume



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FIGURE 11.6.21.1-1 Local Transportation Network Serving the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

TABLE 11.6.21.1-1 AADT on Major Roads near the Proposed Gold Point SEZ for 2009

Road	General Direction	Location	AADT (Vehicles)
U.S. 6	East–west	East of Tonopah (west of State Route 376)	1,100
U.S. 95	Northwest–southeast	North of Tonopah, 13 mi (21 km) past the Nye/Esmeralda county line	1,900
		South of Tonopah	2,100
		South of Goldfield	2,000
		North of junction State Route 266	1,900
		South of junction State Route 266	2,000
		South of junction State Route 267 (about midway between State Route 267 and Beatty)	2,200
		North of Beatty	2,400
State Route 266	East–west	West of junction with U.S. 95	210
State Route 267	East–west	West of junction with U.S. 95	50
State Route 374	Northeast–southwest	West of Beatty and junction with U.S. 95	480
State Route 774 (Gold Point Road)	Northeast–southwest	South of junction with State Route 266	20

Source: NV DOT (2010).

TABLE 11.6.21.1-2 Airports Open to the Public in the Vicinity of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Airport	Location	Owner/Operator	Runway 1 ^a			Runway 2 ^a		
			Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition	Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition
Dyer	Southeast of Dyer, 48 mi (77 km) from the SEZ via State Route 266 to State Route 264	BLM	2,870 (875)	Dirt	Fair	NA ^b	NA	NA
Eastern Sierra Regional	West of the SEZ, in Bishop, Calif., a 91 mi (146 km) drive	City of Los Angeles/ Inyo County	5,567 (1,697)	Asphalt	Good	5,600 (1,707)	Asphalt/ Porous friction surfaces	Good
			7,498 (2,285)	Asphalt/ Porous friction surfaces	Good	NA	NA	NA
Lida Junction	About 10 mi (16 km) from the SEZ, at the junction State Route 266 with U.S. 95	U.S. BLM	6,100 (1,859)	Dirt	Good	NA	NA	NA
Tonopah	East of Tonopah, 58 mi (93 km) east of the SEZ on U.S. 6	Nye County	6,196 (1,889)	Asphalt	Good	7,161 (2,183)	Asphalt	Good

^a Source: FAA (2009).

^b NA = not applicable.

1 of traffic on U.S. 95 east of the proposed Gold Point SEZ, on State Route 266 past the northern
2 border of the SEZ, and along State Route 744 along the eastern edge of the SEZ would represent
3 increases in traffic of about 100%, 1,000%, and 10,000%, respectively. Also, higher traffic
4 volumes would be experienced during shift changes. Thus, traffic on U.S. 95 could experience
5 slowdowns during these periods in the vicinity of the junction with State Route 266, and local
6 road improvements would be necessary on State Routes 266 and 774 so as not to overwhelm the
7 local access roads near any site access points.
8

9 Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes
10 designated open and available for public use. If there are any routes designated as open within
11 the proposed SEZ, open routes crossing areas issued ROWs for solar facilities would be
12 redesignated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for more details on how routes coinciding with
13 proposed solar facilities would be treated).
14
15

16 **11.6.21.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness** 17

18 No SEZ-specific design features have been identified related to impacts on transportation
19 systems around the proposed Gold Point SEZ. The programmatic design features described in
20 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, including local road improvements, multiple site access locations,
21 staggered work schedules, and ride-sharing, would all provide some relief to traffic congestion
22 on local roads leading to the site. Depending on the location of solar facilities within the SEZ,
23 more specific access locations and local road improvements could be implemented.
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1 **11.6.22 Cumulative Impacts**
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3 The analysis presented in this section addresses the potential cumulative impacts in the
4 vicinity of the proposed Gold Point SEZ in Esmeralda County, Nevada. The CEQ guidelines for
5 implementing NEPA define cumulative impacts as environmental impacts resulting from the
6 incremental effects of an action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable
7 future actions (40 CFR 1508.7). The impacts of other actions are considered without regard to
8 the agency (federal or nonfederal), organization, or person that undertakes them. The time frame
9 of this cumulative impacts assessment could appropriately include activities that would occur up
10 to 20 years in the future (the general time frame for PEIS analyses), but little or no information is
11 available for projects that could occur further than 5 to 10 years in the future.
12

13 The land surrounding the proposed Gold Point SEZ is undeveloped with several ghost
14 towns and few permanent residents living in the area. The nearest population centers are the
15 small communities of Goldfield, population 310, located 25 mi (40 km) northeast of the SEZ;
16 Tonopah, population 1,500, located 45 mi (72 km) northeast of the SEZ; and Beatty, population
17 1,600, located approximately 45 mi (72 km) southeast of the SEZ. Death Valley NP in California
18 is 10 mi (16 km) southwest of the SEZ. The NTTR is 12 mi (19 km) east of the SEZ, and the
19 NTS is 45 mi (72 km) east of the SEZ. The Sylvania Mountains, Piper Mountain and White
20 Mountains WAs are located within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ in California.
21

22 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
23 resources near the Gold Point SEZ is identified in Section 11.6.22.1. An overview of ongoing
24 and reasonably foreseeable future actions is presented in Section 11.6.22.2. General trends in
25 population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate change are discussed in
26 Section 11.6.22.3. Cumulative impacts for each resource area are discussed in Section 11.6.22.4.
27
28

29 **11.6.22.1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis**
30

31 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
32 resources evaluated near the Gold Point SEZ is provided in Table 11.6.22.1-1. These geographic
33 areas define the boundaries encompassing potentially affected resources. Their extent may vary
34 based on the nature of the resource being evaluated and the distance at which an impact may
35 occur (e.g., air quality may have a greater regional extent of impact than visual resources). The
36 BLM, the NPS, the DOE, and the DoD administer most of the land around the SEZ. The BLM
37 administers approximately 47.3% of the lands within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ.
38
39

40 **11.6.22.2 Overview of Ongoing and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions**
41

42 The future actions described below are those that are “reasonably foreseeable”; that is,
43 they have already occurred, are ongoing, are funded for future implementation, or are included in
44 firm near-term plans. Types of proposals with firm near-term plans are as follows:
45

- 46 • Proposals for which NEPA documents are in preparation or finalized;

TABLE 11.6.22.1-1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis by Resource Area: Proposed Gold Point SEZ

Resource Area	Geographic Extent
Land Use	Southern Esmeralda County
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Gold Point SEZ
Rangeland Resources	Southern Esmeralda County and Southwestern Nye County in Nevada and Western Inyo County in California
Grazing	Grazing allotments within 50 mi (80 km) of the Gold Point SEZ
Wild Horses and Burros	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Gold Point SEZ
Recreation	Southern Esmeralda County and Southwestern Nye County in Nevada and Western Inyo County in California
Military and Civilian Aviation	Southern Nye County
Soil Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Gold Point SEZ
Minerals	Southern Esmeralda County
Water Resources	
Surface Water	Jackson Wash and tributaries
Groundwater	Lida Valley groundwater basin
Air Quality and Climate	A 31-mi (50-km) radius from the center of the Gold Point SEZ
Vegetation, Wildlife and Aquatic Biota, Special Status Species	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Gold Point SEZ, including portions of Esmeralda and Nye Counties in Nevada and Inyo County in California
Visual Resources	Viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Gold Point SEZ
Acoustic Environment (noise)	Areas adjacent to the Gold Point SEZ
Paleontological Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Gold Point SEZ
Cultural Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Gold Point SEZ for archaeological sites; viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Gold Point SEZ for other properties, such as traditional cultural properties
Native American Concerns	Areas within and adjacent to the Gold Point SEZ including the surrounding mountains; viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Gold Point SEZ
Socioeconomics	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Gold Point SEZ
Environmental Justice	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Gold Point SEZ
Transportation	U.S. 95, State Routes 266 and 774

1
2

- 1 • Proposals in a detailed design phase;
- 2
- 3 • Proposals listed in formal NOIs published in the *Federal Register* or state
- 4 publications;
- 5
- 6 • Proposals for which enabling legislation has been passed; and
- 7
- 8 • Proposals that have been submitted to federal, state, or county regulators to
- 9 begin a permitting process.

10
11 Projects in the bidding or research phase or that have been put on hold were not included in the
12 cumulative impact analysis.

13
14 The ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions described below are grouped into
15 two categories: (1) actions that relate to renewable energy production and energy distribution,
16 including potential solar energy projects under the proposed action (Section 11.6.22.2.1) and
17 (2) other ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions (Section 11.6.22.2.2). Together, these
18 actions have the potential to affect human and environmental receptors within the geographic
19 range of potential impacts over the next 20 years.

20 21 22 ***11.6.22.2.1 Energy Production and Distribution***

23
24 On February 16, 2007, Governor Gibbons signed an Executive Order to encourage the
25 development of renewable energy resources in Nevada (Gibbons 2007a). The Executive Order
26 requires all relevant state agencies to review their permitting processes to ensure the timely and
27 expeditious permitting of renewable energy projects. On May 9, 2007, and June 12, 2008, the
28 Governor signed Executive Orders creating the Nevada Renewable Energy Transmission Access
29 Advisory Committee Phase I and Phase II, which will propose recommendations for improved
30 access to the grid system for renewable energy industries (Gibbons 2007b, 2008). On May 28,
31 2009, the Nevada Legislature passed Senate Bill 358, a bill modifying the Renewable Energy
32 Portfolio Standards. The bill requires that 25% of the electricity sold be produced by renewable
33 energy sources by 2025.

34 35 36 **Renewable Energy and Energy Distribution Projects**

37
38 Renewable energy applications are considered in two categories, fast-track and regular-
39 track applications. Fast-track applications, which apply principally to solar and wind energy
40 facilities, are those applications on public lands for which the environmental review and public
41 participation process is under way and the applications could be approved by December 2010.
42 A fast-track project would be considered foreseeable, because the permitting and environmental
43 review processes would be under way. Regular-track proposals are considered potential future
44 projects, but not necessarily foreseeable projects, since not all applications would be expected to
45 be carried to completion.

1 No fast-track or other reasonably foreseeable future renewable energy or foreseeable
2 energy distribution projects are within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed Gold Point SEZ.
3
4

5 **Pending Renewable Energy ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Lands** 6

7 Applications for ROWs that have been submitted to the BLM include one pending solar
8 project, one pending authorization for wind site testing, two authorized projects for wind site
9 testing, and one authorized geothermal project that would be located within 50 mi (80 km) of the
10 Gold Point SEZ. Table 11.6.22.2-1 lists these applications, and Figure 11.6.22.2-1 shows their
11 locations.
12

13 There is a pending solar project that would be on private land about 49 mi (78 km) north
14 of the Gold Point SEZ, about 1 mi (1.6 km) south of the Millers SEZ. In 2010, Altella Energy
15 Corporation proposed to Esmeralda County the development of a 100-MW solar energy facility
16 on private land near U.S. 6 and U.S. 95. The site is known as the Miller's Well site. The project's
17 estimated cost is \$500 million (Esmeralda County 2010a,b).
18

19 The likelihood of any of the regular-track application projects actually being developed
20 is uncertain, but it is generally assumed to be less than that for fast-track applications. Potential
21 projects listed in Table 11.6.22.2-1 give an indication of the level of interest in development of
22 renewable energy in the region. Some number of these applications would be expected to result
23 in actual projects. Thus, the cumulative impacts of these potential projects are analyzed in their
24 potential aggregate effects.
25

26 Wind testing would involve some relatively minor activities that could have some
27 environmental effects, mainly the erection of meteorological towers and monitoring of wind
28 conditions. These towers may or may not employ guy wires and may be 200 ft (60 m) high.
29
30

31 ***11.6.22.2.2 Other Actions*** 32

33 Other major ongoing and foreseeable actions within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed Gold
34 Point SEZ are listed in Table 11.6.22.2-2 and described in the following sections.
35
36

37 ***Beatty Water and Sanitation District Water Treatment Plant.*** The Beatty Water and
38 Sanitation District proposes to install a water treatment facility to remove arsenic from the
39 drinking water supply for Beatty. The total disturbed area would be about 8.5 acres (0.034 km²).
40 The facility will include a septic tank leach field, backwash holding tank, and an
41 evaporation/infiltration basin (BLM 2009b).
42
43

44 ***Chemetall Foote Lithium Carbonate Facility Expansion.*** The DOE is proposing to
45 upgrade an existing brine field production system, brine evaporation pond system, and lithium
46 carbonate plant at the Chemetall Foote facility adjacent to the unincorporated town of Silver

TABLE 11.6.22.2-1 Pending Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Land within 50 mi (80 km) of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ^{a,b}

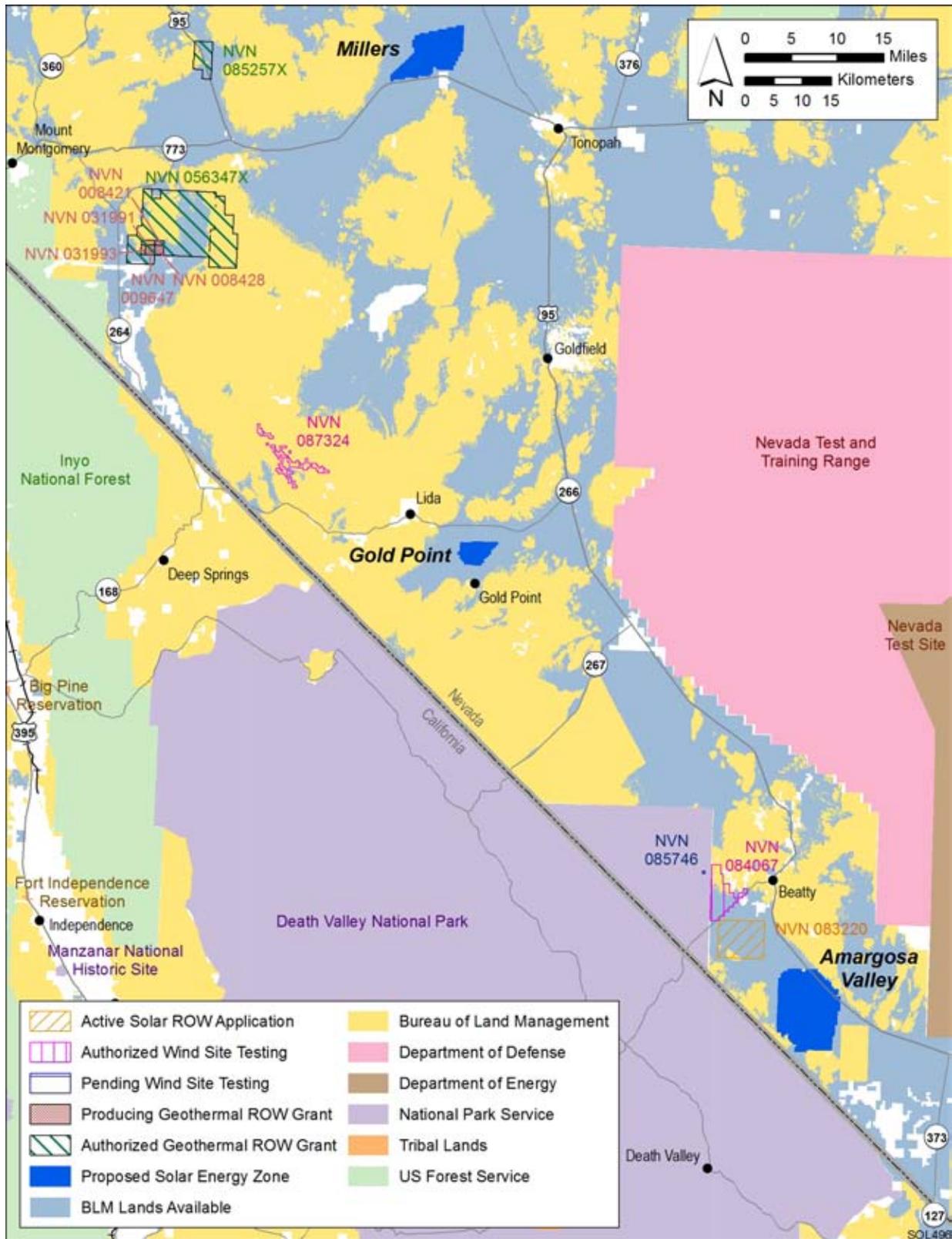
Serial Number	Applicant	Application Received	Size (acres) ^c	MW	Technology	Status	Field Office
<i>Solar Applications</i>							
NVN 83220	Cogentrix Solar Services	March 5, 2007	12,800	1,400	CSP	Pending	Pahrump
<i>Wind Applications</i>							
NVN 85746	Desert Research Institute	Aug. 1, 2008	28,428	– ^d	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Las Vegas
NVN 84067	AltaGas Renewable Energy	Aug. 30, 2007	7,360	–	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Tonopah
NVN 87324	Pacific Wind Development	March 23, 2009	4,280	–	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Tonopah
<i>Geothermal Applications</i>							
NVN 56347X	Fish Lake Power	–	47,769	–	Geothermal	Authorized	Tonopah

^a BLM (2009a).

^b Information for pending solar and pending wind (BLM and USFS 2010b) energy projects downloaded from GeoCommunicator.

^c To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d A dash indicates no data available.



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.6.22.2-1 Locations of Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on Public Land**
 3 **within a 50-mi (80-km) Radius of the Proposed Gold Point SEZ**

TABLE 11.6.22.2-2 Other Major Actions near the Proposed Gold Point SEZ^a

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
Beatty Water and Sanitation District Water Treatment Plant	EA Nov. 2009	Drinking water	43 mi (69 km) southeast of the SEZ
Chemetall Foote Lithium Carbonate Facility Expansion	FEA issued Sept 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, air quality	25 mi (40 km) northwest of the SEZ
Mineral Ridge Project	Mining expected to resume 2011		28 mi (45 km) northwest of the SEZ
Caliente Rail Realignment	FEIS June 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, cultural resources	8 mi (13 km) northwest of the SEZ
120-kV Transmission Line	Operating	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes from east to west–north of the SEZ
120-kV Transmission Line	Operating	Disturbed areas, terrestrial habitats along transmission line ROW	Corridor passes from north to south–north of the SEZ
Producing Geothermal Lease (NVN 8421)	Operating	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	45 mi (72 km) northwest of the SEZ
Producing Geothermal Lease (NVN 8428)	Operating	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	45 mi (72 km) northwest of the SEZ
Producing Geothermal Lease (NVN 9647)	Operating	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	45 mi (72 km) northwest of the SEZ
Producing Geothermal Lease (NVN 31991)	Operating	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	45 mi (72 km) northwest of the SEZ
Producing Geothermal Lease (NVN 31993)	Operating	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	45 mi (72 km) northwest of the SEZ

^a Projects ongoing or in later stages of agency environmental review and project development.

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Peak, Nevada, and about 25 mi (40 km) northwest of the SEZ. The site is about 15,000 acres (61 km²), mostly occupied by large evaporation ponds. The plant and administrative offices occupy approximately 20 acres (0.08 km²). Existing lithium brine ponds would be expanded through recovering old ponds and rebuilding the dikes. Construction of new brine production wells would require soil placement for drill pads (DOE 2010).

1 **Mineral Ridge Project.** Mineral Ridge, a formerly producing gold and silver mine, has
2 both underground workings and open pits, with a 6-acre (0.024 km²) deep leach operation and a
3 high volume crusher plant. It is currently not operational but engineering work is being
4 performed for future operations. It is anticipated that active mining will commence in 2011. The
5 site is 3 mi (5 km) northwest of the unincorporated town of Silver Peak and approximately 28 mi
6 (45 km) northwest of the SEZ. (Top Stock Picks 2010).
7
8

9 **Caliente Rail Alignment.** The DOE proposes to construct and operate a railroad for the
10 shipment of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste to the geologic repository at
11 Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The rail line would begin near Caliente, Nevada, and extend north;
12 then turn in a westerly direction, passing about 8 mi (13 km) northwest of the SEZ, to a location
13 near the northwest corner of the NTTR (labeled Nellis Air Force Range in Figure 11.6.22.2-1);
14 and then continue south–southwest to Yucca Mountain. The rail line would range in length from
15 approximately 328 mi (528 km) to 336 mi (541 km), depending upon the exact location of the
16 alignment and would be restricted to DOE shipments. Over a 50-year period, 9,500 casks
17 containing spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste, and approximately 29,000 rail
18 cars of other materials, including construction materials, would be shipped to the repository. An
19 average of 17 one-way trains per week would travel along the rail line. Construction of support
20 facilities—interchange yard, staging yard, maintenance-of-way facility, rail equipment
21 maintenance yard, cask maintenance facility, and Nevada Rail Control Center and National
22 Transportation Operation Center—would also be required. Construction would take 4 to 10 years
23 and cost \$2.57 billion. Construction activities would occur inside a 1000-ft (300-m) wide ROW
24 for a total footprint of 40,600 acres (164 km²) (DOE 2008).
25
26

27 **Existing 120-kV Transmission Line.** Sierra Pacific owns the two existing 120-kV
28 transmission lines that run north to south and east to west, north of the SEZ (RETAAC 2007).
29
30

31 **Existing Geothermal Leases.** There is a small, contiguous, cluster of five producing
32 geothermal leases located about 40 mi (64 km) northwest of the proposed SEZ, shown in Figure
33 11.6.22.2-1.
34
35

36 **Grazing**

37
38 There are no active grazing allotments in the immediate vicinity of the SEZ.
39
40

41 **Mining**

42
43 There are no foreseeable mining projects near the proposed SEZ.
44
45

1 **11.6.22.3 General Trends**

2
3 General trends of population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate
4 change for the proposed Gold Point SEZ are presented in this section. Table 11.6.22.3-1 lists the
5 relevant impacting factors for the trends.
6

7
8 **11.6.22.3.1 Population Growth**

9
10 Over the period 2000 to 2008, the population grew annually by 3.9% in Nye County, but
11 fell by 4.6% annually in sparsely populated Esmeralda County in Nevada, portions of which
12 compose the ROI for the Gold Point SEZ. The annual growth rate for the State of Nevada as a
13 whole was 3.4%. The population of the ROI in 2008 was 44,839 and is expected to increase to
14 78,122 by 2021 and to 80,872 by 2023 (Section 11.6.19.1.4).
15

16
17 **11.6.22.3.2 Energy Demand**

18
19 The growth in energy demand is related to population growth through increases in
20 housing, commercial floorspace, transportation, manufacturing, and services. Given that
21 population growth is expected in seven SEZ areas in Nevada between 2006 and 2016, an
22 increase in energy demand is also expected. However, the EIA projects a decline in per-capita
23
24

TABLE 11.6.22.3-1 General Trends Relevant to the Proposed SEZs in Nevada

General Trend	Impacting Factors
Population growth	Urbanization Increased use of roads and traffic Land use modification Employment Education and training Increased resource use (e.g., water and energy) Tax revenue
Energy demand	Increased resource use Energy development (including alternative energy sources) Energy transmission and distribution
Water availability	Drought conditions and water loss Conservation practices Changes in water distribution
Climate change	Water cycle changes Increased wildland fires Habitat changes Changes in farming production and costs

1 energy use through 2030, mainly because of improvements in energy efficiency and the high
2 cost of oil throughout the projection period. Primary energy consumption in the United States
3 between 2007 and 2030 is expected to grow by about 0.5% each year, with the fastest growth
4 projected for the commercial sector (at 1.1% each year). Transportation, residential, and
5 industrial energy consumption are expected to grow by about 0.5, 0.4, and 0.1% each year,
6 respectively (EIA 2009).

7 8 9 **11.6.22.3.3 Water Availability**

10
11 As described in Section 11.6.9.1.2, the proposed Gold Point SEZ is located in the
12 Lida Valley groundwater basin. Estimated groundwater depth is 300 to 400 ft (91 to 122 m).
13 Groundwater recharge estimates range up to 500 ac-ft/yr (616,700 m³/yr) by precipitation and
14 200 ac-ft/yr (246,700 m³/yr) by subsurface inflow. Groundwater discharge by outflow to the
15 Sarcobatus Flat basin is estimated to be 700 ac-ft/yr (863,400 m³/yr), while evapotranspiration
16 is assumed to be negligible (Section 11.6.9.1.2).

17
18 In 2005, withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Esmeralda County were
19 46,786 million ac-ft/yr (57.7 million m³/yr), of which 9% came from surface waters and 91%
20 from groundwater. The largest water use categories for groundwater were irrigation and mining
21 at 28,235 and 14,202 ac-ft/yr (34.8 million and 17.5 million m³/yr), respectively.

22
23 Since the Lida Valley groundwater basin is not an NDWR-designated groundwater basin,
24 there are no specified beneficial uses set by the NDWR. The perennial yield of the Lida Valley
25 groundwater basin is set at 350 ac-ft/yr (431,700 m³/yr), and current water rights total 76 ac-ft/yr
26 (93,700 m³/yr) for mining, stockwater, and municipal uses (Section 11.6.9.1.3).

27 28 29 **11.6.22.3.4 Climate Change**

30
31 Governor Jim Gibbons' Nevada Climate Change Advisory committee (NCCAC)
32 conducted a study of climate change and its effects on Nevada (NCCAC 2008). The report
33 summarized the present scientific understanding of climate change and its potential impacts on
34 Nevada. A report on global climate change in the United States prepared by the U.S. Global
35 Research Program (GCRP 2009) documents current temperature and precipitation conditions and
36 historic trends. Excerpts of the conclusions from these reports follow.

- 37
38 • Precipitation will decrease, and a greater percentage of that precipitation will
39 come from rain, resulting in a greater likelihood of winter and spring flooding
40 and decreased stream flow in the summer.
- 41
42 • The average temperature in the Southwest has already increased by about
43 1.5°F compared to a 1960 to 1979 baseline, and by the end of the century, the
44 average annual temperature is projected to rise by 4°F to 10°F.
- 45

- 1 • A warming climate and a related reduction in spring snowpack and soil
2 moisture have increased the length of the wildfire season and intensity of
3 forest fires.
- 4
- 5 • Later snow and less snow coverage in ski resort areas could force ski areas to
6 shut down before the season would otherwise end.
- 7
- 8 • Much of the Southwest has experienced drought conditions since 1999. This
9 represents the most severe drought in the last 110 years. Projections indicate
10 an increasing probability of drought in the region.
- 11
- 12 • As temperatures rise, landscape will be altered as species shift their ranges
13 northward and upward to cooler climates.
- 14
- 15 • Temperature increases, when combined with urban heat island effects for
16 major cities such as Las Vegas, present significant stress to health, electricity,
17 and water supply.
- 18
- 19 • Increased minimum temperatures and warmer springs extend the range and
20 lifetime of many pests that stress trees and crops, and lead to northward
21 migration of weed species.
- 22
- 23

24 **11.6.22.4 Cumulative Impacts on Resources**

25

26 This section addresses potential cumulative impacts in the proposed Gold Point SEZ on
27 the basis of the following assumptions: (1) because of the small size of the proposed SEZ
28 (<10,000 acres [$<40.5 \text{ km}^2$]), only one project could be constructed at a time, and (2) maximum
29 total disturbance over 20 years would be about 3,848 acres (15.6 km^2) (80% of the entire
30 proposed SEZ). For analysis, it is also assumed that no more than 3,000 acres (12.1 km^2) per
31 project would be disturbed annually and 250 acres (1.01 km^2) monthly on the basis of
32 construction schedules planned in current applications. An additional 667 acres (2.7 km^2) would
33 be disturbed to construct a transmission line from the SEZ to the regional grid 22 mi (35 km)
34 away. For site access, the nearest major road is State Route 774, which lies adjacent to the
35 SEZ. It is assumed that no new access road would be constructed to support solar development
36 in the SEZ.

37

38 Cumulative impacts that would result from the construction, operation, and
39 decommissioning of solar energy development projects within the proposed SEZ when added
40 to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions described in the previous
41 section in each resource area are discussed below. At this stage of development, because of the
42 uncertain nature of the future projects in terms of size, number, location within the proposed
43 SEZ, and types of technology that would be employed, the impacts are discussed qualitatively or
44 semi-quantitatively, with ranges given as appropriate. More detailed analyses of cumulative
45 impacts would be performed in the environmental reviews for the specific projects in relation to
46 all other existing and proposed projects in the geographic areas.

47

1 **11.6.22.4.1 Lands and Realty**
2

3 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is undeveloped and rural with only a few dirt roads
4 present. There are no existing ROWs within the SEZ, but a designated Section 368b
5 transmission corridor passes 6.5 mi (10 km) to the northeast, while a proposed local corridor
6 would be located just west of the Section 368b corridor. The corridors are currently not utilized.
7 As of February 2010, there were no ROW applications for solar energy facility development
8 within the SEZ (Section 11.6.2.1).
9

10 Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish a large
11 industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in
12 perpetuity. Solar energy facilities would be a new and highly discordant land use to the area.
13 However, as of February 2010, there were no ROW applications for solar energy facility
14 development within the SEZ.
15

16 As presented in Section 11.6.22.2, no foreseeable renewable energy or transmission
17 projects were identified within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the proposed SEZ. The only
18 foreseeable action is a water treatment plant in Beatty, Nevada, designed to remove arsenic
19 from drinking water. In addition, one potential solar facility with a pending application covering
20 12,800 acres (52 km²), one pending and two authorized wind site testing applications covering
21 40,068 acres (162 km²), and one authorized geothermal application covering 47,769 acres (193
22 km²) lie within this distance (Figure 11.6.22.2-1). Solar development within the proposed SEZ
23 would require construction of a 22-mi (35-km) transmission line to the nearest existing line.
24 Existing facilities within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ include two 120-kV transmission lines and a
25 cluster of five producing geothermal leases about 45 mi (72 km) northwest. The seven pending
26 renewable energy applications indicate moderate interest in renewable energy development in
27 the region.
28

29 Given that the approved and pending renewable energy applications are widely
30 dispersed—all are more than 15 mi (24 km) from the proposed SEZ—and although the size of
31 the application ROWs typically far exceeds the amount of land that would be affected for other
32 uses, total impacts on land use within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects would be
33 small. Development of utility-scale solar projects in the proposed Gold Point SEZ would not be
34 expected to contribute significantly to cumulative impacts on lands and realty.
35
36

37 **11.6.22.4.2 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**
38

39 There are nine specially designated areas within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Gold
40 Point SEZ in Nevada and California (Section 11.6.3.1). Potential exists for cumulative visual
41 impacts on these areas from the construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the
42 SEZ and other projects outside the SEZ. The degree of cumulative impacts would depend on the
43 number, type, and location of potential solar, wind, and geothermal projects with pending or
44 approved applications within the geographic extent of effects that are actually built. Given the
45 small number and wide geographic separation of such applications, potential cumulative impacts

1 on wilderness characteristics would be relatively small. No cumulative impacts would be
2 expected from currently foreseeable actions in the region, however.

3 4 5 **11.6.22.4.3 Rangeland Resources**

6
7 The one very large grazing allotment that overlaps the proposed SEZ would be reduced
8 by 0.7% of its total size (Section 11.6.4.1.2.1). Such a small reduction would not contribute to
9 cumulative impacts on grazing.

10
11 Solar energy development within the SEZ would not directly affect wild horses and
12 burros that are managed by the BLM or the USFS, while indirect impacts would be negligible
13 with implementation of programmatic design features (Section 11.6.4.2.2). Thus, the SEZ would
14 not contribute to cumulative impacts on these species.

15 16 17 **11.6.22.4.4 Recreation**

18
19 Little or no recreation occurs on the proposed Gold Point SEZ or along the route of the
20 assumed transmission line. Construction of utility-scale solar projects on the SEZ would
21 preclude recreational use of the affected lands for the duration of the projects. However, alternate
22 routes exist nearby for any road closures within the relatively small proposed SEZ. Foreseeable
23 and potential future actions would similarly affect areas of low recreational use and would have
24 minimal effects on recreation. Thus, cumulative impacts on recreation within the geographic
25 extent of effects are not expected.

26 27 28 **11.6.22.4.5 Military and Civilian Aviation**

29
30 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located under numerous MTRs, is located between
31 two MOAs, and lies within a mandatory DoD Consultation Area. Nellis Air Force Base and
32 NTTR have expressed a variety of concerns over solar energy facilities being constructed within
33 the Gold Point SEZ (Section 11.6.6.2). Foreseeable and potential solar, wind, and geothermal
34 facilities and transmission lines could present additional concerns and result in cumulative
35 impacts on military aviation. No impacts on civilian aviation are expected from solar facilities
36 in the proposed SEZ.

37 38 39 **11.6.22.4.6 Soil Resources**

40
41 Ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling) during the
42 construction phase of a solar project, including the construction of the associated transmission
43 line and any new roads, would contribute to soil loss due to wind erosion and potential
44 sedimentation of nearby washes and streams. Road use during construction, operations, and
45 decommissioning of the solar facilities would further contribute to soil loss and siltation.
46 Programmatic design features would be employed to minimize wind erosion, soil loss, and

1 stream sedimentation. Proposed renewable energy projects on the region with pending
2 applications, if built, would be too far away to combine with soil impacts from the SEZ. Thus,
3 with programmatic design features in place, cumulative impacts on soil resources near the
4 proposed SEZ are not expected.

5 6 7 **11.6.22.4.7 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)**

8
9 As discussed in Section 11.6.8, there are currently no active oil and gas leases within the
10 proposed Gold Point SEZ, and there are no mining claims or proposals for geothermal energy
11 development pending in the SEZ. Because of the generally low level of mineral production in the
12 area and the expected low impact on mineral accessibility of other foreseeable actions within the
13 geographic extent of effects, no cumulative impacts on mineral resources are expected.

14 15 16 **11.6.22.4.8 Water Resources**

17
18 Section 11.6.9.2 describes the water requirements for various technologies if they were to
19 be employed on the proposed SEZ to develop utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount of
20 water needed during the peak construction year for all evaluated solar technologies would be
21 1,182 to 1,707 ac-ft (1.5 million to 2.1 million m³). During operations, with full development of
22 the SEZ over 80% of its available land area, the amount of water needed for all evaluated solar
23 technologies would range from 22 to 11,555 ac-ft/yr (27 thousand to 14 million m³). The amount
24 of water needed during decommissioning would be similar to or less than the amount used
25 during construction. As discussed in Section 11.6.22.2.3, water withdrawals in 2005 in
26 Esmeralda County were 46,786 ac-ft/yr (57.7 million m³/yr), of which 9% came from surface
27 waters and 91% came from groundwater. The largest water use categories for groundwater were
28 irrigation and mining at 28,235 and 14,202 ac-ft/yr (34.8 million and 17.5 million m³/yr),
29 respectively. Therefore, cumulatively the additional water resources needed for solar facilities
30 in the SEZ during operations would constitute from a very small (0.05%) to a large (24%)
31 increment (the ratio of the annual operations water requirement to the annual amount withdrawn
32 in Esmeralda County) depending on the solar technology used (PV technology at the low end
33 and wet-cooled parabolic trough technology at the high end).

34
35 Near the SEZ, the perennial yield of the Lida Valley groundwater basin is set at 350 ac-
36 ft/yr (431,700 m³/yr), while current water rights total 76 ac-ft/yr (93,700 m³/yr). Thus, solar
37 facilities on the SEZ would have the capacity to overwhelm the specified groundwater yield in
38 the local basin using wet-cooled technologies, while dry-cooled technologies could require three-
39 times the specified yield. Full development with non-cooled dish engine technology would
40 require up to 219 ac-ft/yr (0.27 million m³/yr), or about 63%, and PV would require 22 ac-ft/yr
41 (27 thousand m³/yr), or about 6% of this level (Section 11.6.9.2.2).

42
43 While solar development of the proposed SEZ with water-intensive technologies would
44 likely be infeasible because of impacts on groundwater supplies, excessive groundwater
45 withdrawals could disrupt the existing groundwater supplies in the Lida Valley. In addition, land
46 disturbance for solar facility construction could cause localized soil erosion and sedimentation of

1 ephemeral washes, degrade associated habitats in Jackson Wash, and alter groundwater recharge
2 and discharge processes. Cumulative impacts on surface and groundwater resources are not
3 expected, however, because of the absence of foreseeable development near the SEZ. Potential
4 solar, wind, and geothermal projects are more than 15 mi (24 km) from the SEZ and would not
5 likely affect the same water resources (Section 11.6.22.2).
6

7 Small quantities of sanitary wastewater would be generated during the construction and
8 operation of the potential utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount generated from solar
9 facilities would range from 9 to 74 ac-ft (11 to 91 thousand m³) during the peak construction
10 year and from 1 up to 11 ac-ft/yr (up to 14,000 m³/yr) during operations. Because of the small
11 quantity, the sanitary wastewater generated by the solar energy facilities would not be expected
12 to place undue strain on available sanitary wastewater treatment facilities in the general area of
13 the SEZ. For technologies that rely on conventional wet-cooling systems, there would also be
14 121 to 219 ac-ft/yr (0.15 to 0.27 million m³/yr) of blowdown water from cooling towers.
15 Blowdown water would need to be either treated on-site or sent to an off-site facility. Any on-
16 site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure that treatment ponds are effectively lined in
17 order to prevent any groundwater contamination. Thus, blowdown water would not contribute to
18 cumulative effects on treatment systems or on groundwater.
19
20

21 ***11.6.22.4.9 Vegetation***

22

23 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located within the Tonopah Basin ecoregion, which
24 supports sparse shadscale communities. Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub is the
25 predominant cover type within the proposed SEZ. Sensitive habitats on the SEZ include riparian,
26 desert dry wash, and playa habitats. The area surrounding the SEZ consists of a mosaic of the
27 Tonopah Basin and the Tonopah Sagebrush Foothills ecoregion. The dominant cover type in the
28 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect effects is Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. There are
29 no NWI-mapped wetlands within the SEZ or in the area of indirect effects. Ephemeral washes in
30 the SEZ drain to Jackson Wash, which supports riparian communities downstream. If utility-
31 scale solar energy projects were to be constructed within the SEZ, all vegetation within the
32 footprints of the facilities would likely be removed during land-clearing and land-grading
33 operations. Full development of the SEZ over 80% of its area would result in small impacts on
34 all cover types in the affected area (Section 11.6.10.2.1). Site-clearing and -grading could disrupt
35 surface water flow patterns and potentially alter plant communities in riparian or playa habitats
36 within or outside of the SEZ, while increased runoff from facilities could affect the hydrology of
37 these areas. In addition, groundwater drawdown by solar facilities could affect wetland
38 communities associated with springs. A further concern in disturbed areas is the establishment
39 and spread of noxious weeds and invasive species.
40

41 The fugitive dust generated during the construction of the solar facilities could increase
42 the dust loading in habitats outside a solar project area, in combination with that from other dust
43 sources. The cumulative dust loading could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant
44 community composition. Similarly, surface runoff from project areas after heavy rains could
45 increase sedimentation and siltation in areas downstream. Programmatic design features would

1 be used to reduce the impacts from solar energy projects and thus reduce the overall cumulative
2 impacts on plant communities and habitats.

3
4 Solar facilities within the SEZ would not be expected to contribute to cumulative effects
5 on vegetation within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects because of the absence of
6 foreseeable development outside the SEZ and long distances to potential renewable energy
7 projects. Of the seven renewable energy applications, only one is for a solar facility and it lies
8 almost 50 mi (80 km) from the SEZ. Wind and geothermal applications, which lie as close as
9 16 mi (26 km), would general disturb far less land than a solar facility.

10 11 12 ***11.6.22.4.10 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota***

13
14 Wildlife species that could potentially be affected by the development of utility-scale
15 solar energy facilities in the proposed SEZ include amphibians, reptiles, birds, and
16 mammals. The construction of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ and any associated
17 transmission lines and roads in or near the SEZ would have an impact on wildlife through habitat
18 disturbance (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration), wildlife disturbance, and
19 wildlife injury or mortality. In general, species with broad distributions and a variety of habitats
20 would be less affected than species with a narrowly defined habitat within a restricted area. The
21 use of programmatic design features would reduce the severity of impacts on wildlife. These
22 design features may include pre-disturbance biological surveys to identify key habitat areas used
23 by wildlife, followed by avoidance or minimization of disturbance to those habitats.

24
25 As noted in Section 11.6.22.2, few foreseeable or potential future actions lie within 50 mi
26 (80 km) of the proposed SEZ (Section 11.6.22.2). While impacts from full build-out over 80% of
27 the proposed SEZ would result in small impacts on amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species
28 (Section 11.6.11), cumulative impacts from foreseeable development within the 50-mi (80-km)
29 geographic extent of effects are not expected. Many of the wildlife species within the proposed
30 SEZ that could be affected by other actions would still have extensive habitat available within
31 the region, while regional impacts from solar facilities within the proposed SEZ would be small
32 due to its modest size.

33
34 No perennial streams or water bodies are present in the proposed Gold Point SEZ or
35 within the area of direct effects, including the area associated with the proposed new
36 transmission line corridor. Ephemeral streams flow primarily after rainfall and typically do not
37 support wetland or riparian habitats or flow into perennial surface waters. No NWI-mapped
38 wetlands are present within the SEZ or within the area of indirect effects. Within the 50-mi
39 (80-km) geographic extent of effects, the nearest permanent surface water is more than 14 mi
40 (22 km) from the SEZ (Section 11.6.11.4). Soil disturbance from construction of solar facilities
41 in the SEZ could result in soil transport to surface streams via water and airborne routes, but is
42 expected to be low with mitigations in place and is not expected to affect any perennial water
43 body. However, groundwater drawdown by operating solar facilities within the SEZ might affect
44 water levels on off-site streams and wetlands. Since development of the SEZ is not expected to
45 affect aquatic habitats, it would not contribute to cumulative impacts on such habitats. Impacts

1 from other ongoing and foreseeable development within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of
2 effects would be small, given the low level of identified development.
3
4

5 ***11.6.22.4.11 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, 6 and Rare Species)*** 7

8 On the basis of recorded occurrences in the region or suitable habitat, as many as
9 21 special status species could occur within the proposed Gold Point SEZ. However, no special
10 status species are known to occur within the affected area of the SEZ, and no groundwater-
11 dependent species are known to occur in the vicinity of the SEZ. Special status species that could
12 occur on or in the vicinity of the SEZ include species listed as threatened or endangered in the
13 ESA, listed as protected or sensitive species by the State of Nevada, or listed as a sensitive
14 species by the BLM (Section 11.6.12.1). Potential design features to be used to reduce or
15 eliminate the potential for effects on these species from the construction and operation of utility-
16 scale solar energy projects in the SEZ and related facilities (e.g., access roads and transmission
17 line connections) outside the SEZ include avoidance of habitat and minimization of erosion,
18 sedimentation, and dust deposition. Special status species are also affected by ongoing actions
19 within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects, including roads, transmission lines,
20 recreation, and activities at the NTTR. Future facilities would add further effects, including those
21 from one potential solar facility with a pending application covering 12,800 acres (52 km²), one
22 pending and two authorized wind site testing applications covering 40,068 acres (162 km²), and
23 one authorized geothermal applications covering 47,769 acres (193 km²) (Section 11.6.22.2).
24 Although individual facilities would cover large areas and long linear distances and because only
25 a small number of potential actions and no foreseeable actions have been identified, cumulative
26 impacts on special status species within the geographic extent of effects are expected to be small.
27 Future projects would employ mitigation measures to limit effects.
28
29

30 ***11.6.22.4.12 Air Quality and Climate*** 31

32 While solar energy generates minimal emissions compared with fossil fuels, the site
33 preparation and construction activities associated with solar energy facilities would be
34 responsible for some amount of air pollutants. Most of the emissions would be particulate matter
35 (fugitive dust) and emissions from vehicles and construction equipment. When these emissions
36 are combined with those from other nearby projects outside the proposed SEZ or when they are
37 added to natural dust generation from winds and windstorms, the air quality in the general
38 vicinity of the projects could be temporarily degraded. For example, the maximum 24-hour
39 PM₁₀ concentration at or near the SEZ boundaries could at times exceed the applicable standard
40 of 150 µg/m³. The dust generated by the construction activities can be controlled by
41 implementing aggressive dust control measures, such as increased watering frequency or road
42 paving or treatment.
43

44 Because operation of solar facilities within the proposed SEZ would produce no or
45 minimal contributions of combustion emissions, the only air pollutant of concern is dust
46 generated during construction of new facilities, in addition to that produced by winds. Because

1 there are relatively few other foreseeable or potential actions that could produce fugitive dust
2 emissions near the SEZ, it is unlikely that construction of two or more projects would overlap in
3 both time and affected area and produce cumulative air quality effects due to dust emissions.
4

5 Over the long term and across the region, the development of solar energy may have
6 beneficial cumulative impacts on air quality and atmospheric values by offsetting the need for
7 energy production that results in higher levels of emissions, such as coal, oil, and natural gas.
8 As discussed in Section 11.6.13.2.2, air emissions from operating solar energy facilities are
9 relatively minor, while the displacement of criteria air pollutants, VOCs, TAPs, and GHG
10 emissions currently produced from fossil fuels could be significant. For example, if the relatively
11 small Gold Point SEZ were fully developed (80% of its acreage) with solar facilities, the quantity
12 of pollutants avoided could be as large as 3.6% of all emissions from current electric power
13 systems in Nevada.
14

15 ***11.6.22.4.13 Visual Resources*** 16

17
18 The proposed Gold Point SEZ is located within Lida Valley in Esmeralda County in
19 southwestern Nevada. The SEZ is flat to slightly sloping, has a strong horizon line, and is
20 surrounded by mountain ranges. The area is rural with few cultural modifications visible;
21 however, roads, transmission lines, and the very small community of Gold Point are visible
22 near the SEZ (Section 11.6.14.1).
23

24 Construction of utility-scale solar facilities in the SEZ would substantially alter the
25 natural scenic quality of the area. Other potential renewable energy projects would cumulatively
26 affect the visual resources in the region. Because of the large size of utility-scale solar energy
27 facilities and the generally flat, open nature of the proposed SEZ, some lands outside the SEZ
28 would also be subjected to visual impacts related to the construction, operation, and
29 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities. Potential impacts would include night
30 sky pollution, including increased skyglow, light spillage, and glare.
31

32 Visual impacts resulting from solar energy development within the SEZ would be in
33 addition to impacts caused by other potential projects in the area. There currently is one wind
34 project with an authorized application for wind testing on public land within the 25-mi (40-km)
35 geographic extent for visual impacts (Figure 11.6.22.2-1). There are no currently foreseeable
36 projects within this distance, however (Section 11.6.22.2). While the contribution of potential
37 projects to cumulative visual impacts would depend on the location of facilities that are actually
38 built, it may be concluded that small cumulative visual impacts could result from the presence of
39 potential facilities. Because of the topography of the region such facilities, located in basin flats,
40 would be visible at great distances from surrounding mountains, which include sensitive
41 viewsheds, including in Death Valley National Park. Given the low number and wide separation
42 of current proposals, few viewing locations would be affected by two or more facilities.
43 However, facilities would be located near roads and thus would be viewable by motorists, who
44 would also be viewing transmission lines, towns, and other infrastructure, as well as the road
45 system itself.
46

1 As additional facilities are added, multiple projects might be viewed in succession, as
2 viewers move through the landscape, for example, by driving on local roads. In general,
3 however, the small number of potential new facilities would be expected to result in small
4 cumulative visual impacts within the geographic extent of effects.
5

6 7 ***11.6.22.4.14 Acoustic Environment*** 8

9 The areas around the proposed Gold Point SEZ are relatively quiet. The existing noise
10 sources around the SEZ include road traffic, aircraft flyover, cattle grazing, and recreational
11 activities. The construction of solar energy facilities could increase the noise levels periodically
12 for up to 3 years per facility, but there would be little or minor noise impacts during operation of
13 solar facilities, except from solar dish engine facilities and from parabolic trough or power tower
14 facilities using TES, that could affect nearby residences.
15

16 Other ongoing and reasonably foreseeable and potential future activities in the general
17 vicinity of the SEZ are described in Section 11.6.22.2. Because the residences nearest to the
18 SEZ in Gold Point are relatively far from other potential projects with respect to noise impacts,
19 cumulative noise effects during the construction or operation of solar facilities are unlikely.
20

21 22 ***11.6.22.4.15 Paleontological Resources*** 23

24 The proposed Gold Point SEZ has low potential for the occurrence of significant fossil
25 material over all its area, which is covered with thick alluvial deposits. The potential for the
26 occurrence of paleontological resources in some portions of the route of the assumed 22-mi
27 (35-km) long new transmission line is unknown (Section 11.6.16.1). While impacts on
28 significant paleontological resources are unlikely to occur in the SEZ, a review of the geological
29 deposits in the specific sites selected for future projects would be needed to determine whether a
30 paleontological survey was warranted. Any paleontological resources encountered would be
31 mitigated to the extent possible. No significant contributions to cumulative impacts on
32 paleontological resources are expected.
33

34 35 ***11.6.22.4.16 Cultural Resources*** 36

37 The area around Gold Point is rich in cultural history, with settlements dating as far back
38 as 12,000 years. The area covered by the proposed Gold Point SEZ has the potential to contain
39 significant cultural resources, especially related to the mining industry. Visual impacts are
40 possible to the NRHP-eligible Gold Point Town Site. Areas with high potential for containing
41 archaeological sites also lie along the assumed route of the transmission line. While no surveys
42 have been conducted within the SEZ boundaries, 18 surveys have been conducted within the
43 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect effects, recording 12 cultural resources (Section 11.6.17.1). It is
44 possible that the development of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ and the associated
45 transmission line could contribute to cumulative impacts on cultural resources in the region.
46 While any future solar projects would disturb large areas, the specific sites selected would be

1 surveyed; historic properties encountered would be avoided or mitigated to the extent possible.
2 Through ongoing consultation with the Nevada SHPO and appropriate Native American
3 governments, it is likely that most adverse effects on significant resources in the region could
4 be mitigated to some degree. It is unlikely that any sites recorded in the SEZ or along the
5 transmission line would be of such individual significance that, if properly mitigated,
6 development would cumulatively cause an irretrievable loss of information about a significant
7 resource type, but this would depend on the results of the future surveys and evaluations. Visual
8 impacts from the transmission lines are possible on the Goldfield Historic District and,
9 depending on the actual location of the line and the importance of the visual setting for that
10 property, solar development could result in cumulative impacts on the district.
11
12

13 ***11.6.22.4.17 Native American Concerns***

14

15 To date, no specific concerns have been raised to the BLM regarding the proposed Gold
16 Point SEZ; however the development of utility-scale solar facilities in the proposed SEZ might
17 cumulatively affect resources important to Native Americans. In comments on the scope of this
18 PEIS, the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley recommended that the BLM preserve
19 undisturbed lands intact and that recently disturbed lands be given primary consideration for
20 solar energy development. Such concerns would similarly apply to other future projects outside
21 the proposed SEZ. Potential impacts on existing water supplies and springs in the Lida Valley
22 from groundwater drawdown by solar energy facilities would be of further concern to local
23 Tribes, as would impacts on important game and plant species and on visual resources
24 (Section 11.6.18.2). Continued discussions with the area Tribes through government-to-
25 government consultation are necessary to effectively consider and address the Tribes' concern
26 tied to solar energy development in the Gold Point SEZ.
27
28

29 ***11.6.22.4.18 Socioeconomics***

30

31 Solar energy development projects in the proposed Gold Point SEZ could cumulatively
32 contribute to socioeconomic effects in the immediate vicinity of the SEZ and in the surrounding
33 ROI. The effects could be positive (e.g., creation of jobs and generation of extra income,
34 increased revenues to local governmental organizations through additional taxes paid by the
35 developers and workers) or negative (e.g., added strain on social institutions such as schools,
36 police protection, and health care facilities). Impacts from solar development would be most
37 intense during facility construction, but of greatest duration during operations. Construction
38 would temporarily increase the number of workers in the area needing housing and services in
39 combination with temporary workers involved in other new projects in the area, including other
40 renewable energy development. The number of workers involved in the construction of solar
41 projects (including the transmission lines) in the peak construction year could range from about
42 170 to 1,600 depending on the technology being employed, with solar PV facilities at the low
43 end and solar trough facilities at the high end. The total number of jobs created in the area could
44 range from approximately 220 (solar PV) to as high as 2,300 (solar trough). Cumulative
45 socioeconomic effects in the ROI from construction of solar facilities would occur to the extent
46 that multiple construction projects of any type were ongoing at the same time. It is a reasonable

1 expectation that this condition would occur within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ
2 occasionally over the 20-year or more solar development period.

3
4 Annual impacts during the operation of solar facilities would be less, but of 20- to
5 30-year duration, and could combine with those from other new facilities in the area, including
6 several potential solar, wind, and geothermal energy projects (Section 11.6.22.2). The number of
7 workers needed at the SEZ solar facilities would range from 8 to 120 with approximately 10 to
8 170 total jobs created in the region, assuming full build-out of the SEZ (Section 11.6.19.2.2).
9 Population increases would contribute to general upward trends in the region in recent years. The
10 socioeconomic impacts overall would be positive, through the creation of additional jobs and
11 income. The negative impacts, including some short-term disruption of rural community quality
12 of life, would not likely be considered large enough to require specific mitigation measures.

13 14 15 ***11.6.22.4.19 Environmental Justice***

16
17 Any impacts from solar development could have cumulative effects on minority and low-
18 income populations within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ in combination with other
19 development in the area. Such impacts could be both positive, such as from increased economic
20 activity, and negative, such as from visual degradation, noise, and exposure to fugitive dust.
21 Actual impacts would depend on where low-income populations are located relative to solar and
22 other proposed facilities and on the geographic range of effects. Overall, effects from facilities
23 within the SEZ are expected to be small, while other foreseeable and potential actions could
24 contribute additional small effects on minority and low-income populations. However, most
25 other potential actions, mainly renewable energy projects, are more than 25 mi (40 km) from the
26 proposed SEZ, while no minority or low-income populations are currently present within the
27 50-mi (80-km) ROI (Section 11.6.20.1). While future minority and low-income populations, if
28 present, could experience small cumulative effects of some types, such as on visual resources or
29 from fugitive dust, from all actions within the geographic extent of effects, contributions from
30 solar development in the proposed Gold Point SEZ would be small. If needed, mitigation
31 measures can be employed to reduce the impacts on these populations in the vicinity of the SEZ.

32 33 34 ***11.6.22.4.20 Transportation***

35
36 U.S. 95 is the nearest major road and lies about 9 mi (14 km) east of the proposed Gold
37 Point SEZ. The Las Vegas metropolitan area lies approximately 180 mi (290 km) southeast of
38 the SEZ along U.S. 95. Access to the Gold Point SEZ would be from State Route 774, which
39 parallels the eastern edge of the SEZ. This road intersects State Route 266 to the north, which,
40 in turn, intersects U.S. 95 to the east. None of the local airports has scheduled commercial
41 passenger service; the largest major airport is in Las Vegas. The closest railroad access is
42 160 mi (257 km) northwest of the SEZ, north of Hawthorne. During construction of utility-scale
43 solar energy facilities, up to 1,000 workers could be commuting to the construction site at the
44 SEZ, which could increase the AADT on these roads by 2,000 vehicle trips for each facility
45 under construction. With a single solar facility assumed to be under construction at a given
46 time, traffic on all affected roads could experience slowdowns at access points near the SEZ

1 (Section 11.6.21.2). Construction worker traffic could likewise have minor cumulative impacts
2 on traffic flow in combination with existing traffic levels and potential increases from additional
3 future facilities in the vicinity of the proposed SEZ should project schedules overlap. Local road
4 improvements may be necessary on affected roads near access to the SEZ. Any impacts during
5 construction activities would be temporary. The impacts can also be mitigated to some degree by
6 staggered work schedules and ride-sharing programs. Traffic increases during operation would
7 be relatively small because of the low number of workers needed to operate the solar facilities
8 and would have little contribution to cumulative impacts.
9
10

1 **11.6.23 References**

2
3 *Note to Reader:* This list of references identifies Web pages and associated URLs where
4 reference data were obtained for the analyses presented in this PEIS. It is likely that at the time
5 of publication of this PEIS, some of these Web pages may no longer be available or their URL
6 addresses may have changed. The original information has been retained and is available through
7 the Public Information Docket for this PEIS.

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30

1 **11.7 MILLERS**

2
3
4 **11.7.1 Background and Summary of Impacts**

5
6
7 **11.7.1.1 General Information**

8
9 The proposed Millers SEZ is located in Esmeralda County in southern Nevada
10 (Figure 11.7.1.1-1), 44 mi (71 km) east of the California border. The SEZ has a total area of
11 16,787 acres (68 km²). In 2008, the county population was 664, while adjacent Nye County to
12 the west had a population of 44,175. The nearest town is Tonopah, Nevada, about 15 mi (24 km)
13 west in Nye County, with a population of approximately 1,500. The NTTR is 30 mi (48 km)
14 northeast of the SEZ.

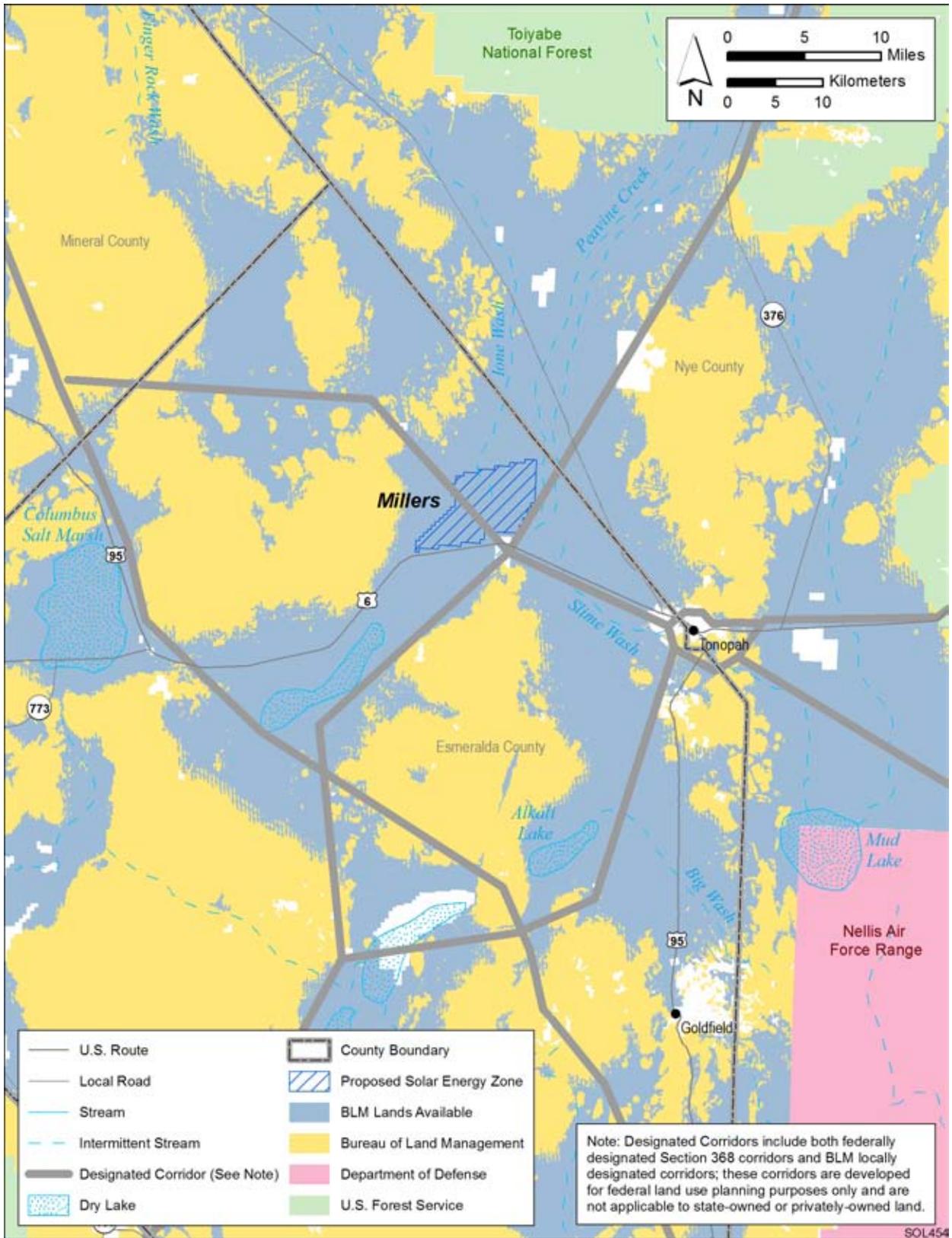
15
16 The nearest major road access to the proposed SEZ is via U.S. 95/U.S. 6, which runs
17 east–west along its southern border. The nearest railroad stop is 90 mi (145 km) away in Thorne,
18 which is the end of a spur from the main line of the UP Railroad. Tonopah Airport, a small
19 county airport 23 mi (37 km) to the east of the SEZ, and three public airports managed by the
20 BLM serve the area, though none have scheduled commercial passenger service or regular
21 freight service.

22
23 A 120-kV transmission line passes through the SEZ. It is assumed that this existing
24 transmission line could potentially provide access from the SEZ to the transmission grid
25 (see Section 11.7.1.1.2).

26
27 Applications for ROWs that have been submitted to the BLM include one fast-track solar
28 application, one pending solar project, one pending wind site testing application, four authorized
29 wind site testing projects, and two authorized geothermal projects that would be located within
30 50 mi (80 km) of the Millers SEZ. These applications are discussed in Section 11.7.22.2.1. There
31 are currently no solar applications within the SEZ.

32
33 The proposed Millers SEZ is undeveloped and rural, with few permanent residents in the
34 area. The SEZ is located in the Big Smoky Valley, lying between the Lone Mountain to the
35 south, the Monte Cristo Range to the west, and the San Antonio Mountains to the east. Land
36 within the SEZ is undeveloped scrubland characteristic of a high-elevation, semiarid basin.

37
38 The criteria used to identify the proposed Millers SEZ as an appropriate location for
39 solar energy development included proximity to existing transmission or designated corridors,
40 proximity to existing roads, and a slope of generally less than 2%. In addition, the area was
41 identified as being relatively free of other types of conflicts, such as USFWS-designated
42 critical habitat for threatened and endangered species, ACECs, SRMAs, and NLCS lands
43 (see Section 2.2.2.2 for the complete list of exclusions). Although these classes of restricted
44 lands were excluded from the proposed Millers SEZ, other restrictions might be appropriate.
45 The analyses in the following sections address the affected environment and potential impacts
46



1

2 **FIGURE 11.7.1.1-1 Proposed Millers SEZ**

1 associated with utility-scale solar energy development in the proposed SEZ for important
 2 environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic resources.

3
 4 As initially announced in the *Federal Register* on June 30, 2009, the proposed Millers
 5 SEZ encompassed 19,205 acres (78 km²). Subsequent to the study area scoping period, the
 6 boundaries of the proposed Millers SEZ were altered somewhat to facilitate the BLM’s
 7 administration of the SEZ area. The revised SEZ is approximately 2,418 acres (10 km²)
 8 smaller than the original SEZ as published in June 2009.

9
 10
 11 **11.7.1.2 Development Assumptions for the Impact Analysis**

12
 13 Maximum solar development of the Millers SEZ is assumed to be 80% of the SEZ area
 14 over a period of 20 years, a maximum of 13,430 acres (54 km²). These values are shown in
 15 Table 11.7.1.2-1, along with other development assumptions. Full development of the Millers
 16 SEZ would allow development of facilities with an estimated total of 1,492 MW of electrical
 17 power capacity if power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies were used, assuming
 18 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required and an estimated 2,686 MW of power if solar
 19 trough technologies were used, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.

20
 21 Availability of transmission from SEZs to load centers will be an important consideration
 22 for future development in SEZs. The nearest existing transmission line is a 120-kV line that runs
 23
 24

TABLE 11.7.1.2-1 Proposed Millers SEZ—Assumed Development Acreages, Solar MW Output, Access Roads, and Transmission Line ROWs

Total Acreage and Assumed Developed Acreage (80% of Total)	Assumed Maximum SEZ Output for Various Solar Technologies	Distance to Nearest State, U.S., or Interstate Highway	Distance and Capacity of Nearest Existing Transmission Line	Assumed Area of Transmission Line and Road ROWs	Distance to Nearest Designated Corridor ^e
16,787 acres and 13,430 acres ^a	1,492 MW ^b and 2,686 MW ^c	U.S. 95/U.S. 6 adjacent	0 mi and 120 kV	0 acres; NA ^d	Adjacent

^a To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.
^b Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using power tower, dish engine, or PV technologies, assuming 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) of land required.
^c Maximum power output if the SEZ were fully developed using solar trough technologies, assuming 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) of land required.
^d NA = no access road construction is assumed necessary for Millers.
^e BLM-designated corridors are developed for federal land use planning purposes only and are not applicable to state-owned or privately owned land.

1 through the SEZ. It is possible that this existing line could be used to provide access from the
2 SEZ to the transmission grid, but the 120-kV capacity of that line would be inadequate for 1,492
3 to 2,686 MW of new capacity (note that a 500 kV line can accommodate approximately the load
4 of one 700-MW facility). At full build-out capacity, it is clear that substantial new transmission
5 and/or upgrades of existing transmission lines would be required to bring electricity from the
6 proposed Millers SEZ to load centers; however, at this time the location and size of such new
7 transmission facilities are unknown. Generic impacts of transmission and associated
8 infrastructure construction and of line upgrades for various resources are discussed in Chapter 5.
9 Project-specific analyses would need to identify the specific impacts of new transmission
10 construction and line upgrades for any projects proposed within the SEZ.

11
12 For the purposes of analysis in the PEIS, it was assumed that the existing 120-kV
13 transmission line which passes through the proposed SEZ and could provide initial access to the
14 transmission grid. and thus, no additional acreage for transmission line access was assessed.
15 Access to the existing transmission line was assumed, without additional information on whether
16 this line would be available for connection of future solar facilities. If a connecting transmission
17 line were constructed in the future to connect facilities within the SEZ to a different, off-site, grid
18 location from the one assumed here, site developers would need to determine the impacts from
19 construction and operation of that line. In addition, developers would need to determine the
20 impacts of line upgrades if they are needed.

21
22 Existing road access to the proposed Millers SEZ should be adequate to support
23 construction and operation of solar facilities, because U.S. 95/U.S. 6 runs from east to west along
24 the southern border of the SEZ. Thus, no additional road construction outside of the SEZ was
25 assumed to be required to support solar development.

26 27 28 **11.7.1.3 Summary of Major Impacts and SEZ-Specific Design Features**

29
30 In this section, the impacts and SEZ-specific design features assessed in Sections 11.7.2
31 through 11.7.21 for the proposed Millers SEZ are summarized in tabular form. Table 11.7.1.3-1
32 is a comprehensive list of impacts discussed in these sections; the reader may reference the
33 applicable sections for detailed support of the impact assessment. Section 11.7.22 discusses
34 potential cumulative impacts from solar energy development in the proposed SEZ.

35
36 Only those design features specific to the proposed Millers SEZ are included in
37 Sections 11.7.2 through 11.7.21 and in the summary table. The detailed programmatic design
38 features for each resource area to be required under BLM's Solar Energy Program are presented
39 in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would also be required for
40 development in this and other SEZs.

TABLE 11.7.1.3-1 Summary of Impacts of Solar Energy Development within the Proposed Millers SEZ and SEZ-Specific Design Features^a

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Millers SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Lands and Realty	<p>Full development of the SEZ could disturb up to 13,430 acres (54 km²). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish a large industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in perpetuity. Since the SEZ is rural and undeveloped, utility-scale solar energy development would be a new and dominant land use in the area.</p> <p>The designated local transmission corridor located within the SEZ occupies a portion of the proposed SEZ and could limit future solar development within the corridor.</p>	<p>None.</p> <p>None.</p>
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	None.	None.
Rangeland Resources: Livestock Grazing	Grazing on about 4% of the Monte Cristo allotment would be closed.	Development of range improvements in the Monte Cristo allotment should be considered if site-specific analysis determines there would need to be a reduction in permitted AUMs because of lost grazing capacity.
Rangeland Resources: Wild Horses and Burros	Less than 2% of the total land areas of each of two HMAs occur within the indirect impact area of the SEZ. The Paymaster HMA contained an estimated 52 wild horses in FY 2009. The Pilot Mountain HMA contained an estimated 342 wild horses. Indirect impacts on these HMAs and the wild horses in them are expected to be negligible with implementation of design features.	None.

TABLE 11.7.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Millers SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Recreation	A small amount of recreational use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ that would be developed for solar energy production.	None.
	A portion of an existing route of a competitive OHV race course that passes through the area would be closed.	Alternative routes for the race course should be considered consistent with local land use plan requirements.
Military and Civilian Aviation	The military has expressed serious concern over construction of solar energy facilities within the SEZ. Nellis Air Force Base has indicated that solar technologies requiring structures higher than 50 ft (15 m) above ground level may present unacceptable electromagnetic compatibility concerns for the NTTR test mission and could interfere with flight operations on MTRs that cross the SEZ.	None
	There are no impacts to civilian aviation.	None.
Geologic Setting and Soil Resources	Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling) during the construction phase of a solar project. These include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind, soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. The magnitude of impacts would depend on the types and sizes of components built for a given facility. These impacts may be impacting factors for other resources (e.g., air quality, water quality, and vegetation). Portions of the dry lake may not be a suitable location for construction. A study may be required to evaluate the potential impacts of building a solar facility in close proximity to Crescent Dunes to the northwest of the site.	None.
Minerals (fluids, solids, and geothermal resources)	None.	None.

TABLE 11.7.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Millers SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Water Resources	<p>Ground-disturbance activities (affecting 36% of the total area in the peak construction year) could affect surface water quality due to surface runoff, sediment erosion, and contaminant spills.</p> <p>Construction activities may require up to 3,300 ac-ft (4.1 million m³) of water during the peak construction year.</p> <p>Construction activities would generate as much as 148 ac-ft (182,600 m³) of sanitary wastewater.</p> <p>Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would use the following amounts of water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For parabolic trough facilities (2,686-MW capacity), 1,918 to 4,067 ac-ft/yr (2.4 to 5.0 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; water requirements for wet-cooled systems exceed the perennial yield of the basin. • For power tower facilities (1,492-MW capacity), 1,061 to 2,255 ac-ft/yr (1.3 to 2.8 million m³/yr) for dry-cooled systems; water requirements for wet-cooled systems exceed the perennial yield of the basin. • For dish engine facilities (1,492-MW capacity), 763 ac-ft/yr (941,100 m³/yr). • For PV facilities (1,492-MW capacity), 77 ac-ft/yr (95,000 m³/yr). • Assuming full development of the SEZ, operations would generate up to 38 ac-ft/yr (46,900 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater and up to 763 ac-ft/yr (941,000 m³/yr) of blowdown water. 	<p>Water resource analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be feasible; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures.</p> <p>Land disturbance activities should minimize impacts on the ephemeral stream channels of Lone Wash and Peavine Creek, as well as alluvial fan features along the western edge of the SEZ.</p> <p>Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid any areas identified as within a 100-year floodplain or jurisdictional waters.</p> <p>Groundwater rights must be obtained through coordination with the NDWR and current water rights holders.</p> <p>Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.</p> <p>Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in accordance with state standards.</p> <p>Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet the water quality standards of the <i>Nevada Administrative Code</i>.</p>

TABLE 11.7.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Millers SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation ^b	<p>Up to 80% (13,430 acres [54.3 km²]) of the SEZ would be cleared of vegetation; re-establishment of shrub communities in temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult because of the arid climate and might require extended periods of time.</p> <p>Noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in widespread habitat degradation.</p> <p>The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition. Sand transport processes could be altered, potentially affecting sand dune plant communities in Crescent Dunes, northeast of the SEZ, or dunes southwest of the SEZ.</p> <p>Vegetation communities associated with playa habitats, Ione Wash, dry washes, greasewood flats communities, or other intermittently flooded areas within or downgradient from solar projects or the access road could be affected by ground-disturbing activities.</p> <p>Candelaria blazingstar, a plant species on the Nevada Natural Heritage Program watch list may occur within the SEZ and may be directly affected by solar project development. The population occurring east of the SEZ may be indirectly affected by project activities within the SEZ.</p>	<p>An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan addressing habitat restoration should be approved and implemented to increase the potential for successful restoration of affected habitats and minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species. Invasive species control should focus on biological and mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use of herbicides.</p> <p>Dry washes, Ione Wash, playas, and wetlands within the SEZ should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated. A buffer area should be maintained around wetlands, playas, and dry washes to reduce the potential for impacts.</p> <p>Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on the playa wetland and other playas, as well as Ione Wash shrub communities, dry washes and greasewood flat habitats within the SEZ, and downstream occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition to these habitats. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be determined through agency consultation.</p> <p>Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect impacts on plant communities that access groundwater, such as those in the vicinity of playas. Potential impacts on springs should be determined through hydrological studies.</p>

TABLE 11.7.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Millers SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Vegetation ^b (Cont.)		A qualified botanist or plant ecologist should survey for candelaria blazing star during a period when it is flowering and easily documented prior to any construction activities within the SEZ. If individuals are located, individuals or populations should be avoided through fencing and flagging of the area, including an appropriate buffer zone.
Wildlife: Amphibians and Reptiles ^b	Direct impacts from SEZ development for all representative amphibian and reptile species would be small (i.e., loss of $\leq 1.0\%$ of potentially suitable habitats within the SEZ region). With implementation of design features, indirect impacts would be negligible.	Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.
Wildlife: Birds ^b	<p>Direct impacts on representative bird species would be moderate for the killdeer (i.e., loss of 1.1% of potentially suitable habitats within the SEZ region) and small for all other bird species (i.e., loss 0.5% or less of potentially suitable habitats within the SEZ region).</p> <p>Other impacts on birds could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., buildings and fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment.</p>	<p>The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds will be followed.</p> <p>Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.</p> <p>Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.</p>
Wildlife: Mammals ^b	Direct impacts on all representative mammal species would be small.	The fencing around the solar energy development

TABLE 11.7.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Millers SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Aquatic Biota ^b	<p>Loss of potentially suitable habitats for cougar, mule deer, and pronghorn would be 0.3%, 0.3%, and 0.2%, respectively, of potentially suitable habitats within the SEZ region. Loss of potentially suitable habitats for the other representative mammal species would be 0.4% or less of potentially suitable habitats within the SEZ region.</p> <p>Other impacts on mammals could result from collision with vehicles and infrastructure (e.g., fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and harassment. These impacts are expected to be negligible with the implementation of design features.</p> <p>No permanent streams or water bodies occur within the proposed Millers SEZ. The surface water features that do occur in the area are generally dry most of the time and do not support wetland or riparian habitats. Consequently, potential effects on aquatic habitats or biota from solar energy development within the proposed SEZ would be negligible.</p>	<p>should not block the free movement of mammals, particularly big game species.</p> <p>Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.</p>
Special Status Species ^b	<p>Potentially suitable habitat for 19 special status species occurs in the affected area of the Millers SEZ. For all special status species, less than 1% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region occurs in the area of direct effects.</p>	<p>Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the area of direct effects to determine the presence and abundance of special status species. Disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing impacts to occupied habitats is not possible for some species, translocation of individuals from areas of direct effects; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy for special status species that used one or more of these options to</p>
Special Status Species ^b		<p>offset the impacts of development should be</p>

TABLE 11.7.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Millers SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
<i>(Cont.)</i>	<p><i>Construction:</i> Predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ and 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentration levels could exceed the AAQS at the SEZ boundaries and in the immediate surrounding areas during the construction of solar facilities. However, concentrations would decrease quickly with distance. Modeling indicates that emissions from construction activities are not anticipated to exceed Class I PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearest federal Class I area. In addition, construction emissions from the engine exhaust of heavy equipment and vehicles could somewhat affect AQRVs at nearby federal Class I areas.</p>	<p>developed in coordination with the appropriate federal and state agencies.</p> <p>Coordination should be conducted with the USFWS and NDOW for the Crescent Dunes aegialian scarab beetle, Crescent Dunes serican scarab beetle, and greater sage-grouse – species that are candidates or under review for ESA listing. Coordination would identify an appropriate survey protocol, and mitigation requirements, which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or compensation.</p> <p>Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the affected area should be avoided or minimized. This can be accomplished by identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.</p>
Air Quality and Climate	<i>Operations:</i> Positive impact due to avoided emission of air pollutants	None.

TABLE 11.7.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Millers SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
<i>(Cont.)</i>	from combustion-related power generation: 6.9 to 12% of total SO ₂ , NO _x , Hg, and CO ₂ emissions from electric power systems in the State of Nevada (up to 6,639 tons/yr SO ₂ , 5,695 tons/yr NO _x , 0.038 tons/yr Hg, and 3,655,000 tons/yr CO ₂).	
Visual Resources	<p>The SEZ is in an area of low scenic quality, with some cultural disturbances already present. Residents, workers, and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) as they travel area roads. The residents nearest to the SEZ could be subjected to large visual impacts from solar energy development within the SEZ.</p> <p>Large visual impacts on the SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed due to major modification of the character of the existing landscape are possible.</p> <p>Approximately 31 mi (50 km) of U.S. 6 is within the SEZ viewshed. Weak to strong visual contrasts could be observed within the SEZ by travelers on U.S. 6.</p>	None.
Acoustic Environment	<p><i>Construction.</i> For construction activities occurring near the southeastern SEZ boundary, estimated noise levels at the nearest residences (about 11 mi [18 km] east-southeast of the SEZ) would be about 15 dBA, which is well below a typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. In addition, an estimated 40-dBA L_{dn} at these residences (i.e., no contribution from construction activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p><i>Operations.</i> Noise levels at the nearest residences from a parabolic trough or power tower facility would be about 21 dBA, which is much lower than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. For 12-hour daytime operation, about 40 dBA L_{dn} (i.e., no contribution from</p>	None.
Acoustic Environment	<p>facility operation) would be estimated for the nearest residences, which is</p>	

TABLE 11.7.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Millers SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
<i>(Cont.)</i>	<p>well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. In the case of 6-hour TES, the estimated nighttime noise level at the nearest residences would be 31 dBA, which is comparable to the typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. The day-night average noise level is estimated to be about 41 dBA L_{dn}, which is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p> <p>If 80% of the SEZ were developed with dish engine facilities, the estimated noise level at the nearest residences, about 11 mi (18 km) from the SEZ boundary, would be about 33 dBA, which is below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. Assuming 12-hour daytime operation, the estimated 40 dBA L_{dn} at these residences would be well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.</p>	
Paleontological Resources	<p>The potential for impacts on significant paleontological resources in 94% of the proposed Millers SEZ is unknown, but potentially high. A more detailed investigation of the lacustrine and playa deposits is needed prior to project approval. A paleontological survey would likely be needed.</p> <p>Few, if any, impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely in the remaining 6% of the proposed SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of the SEZ is needed to determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted.</p>	The need for and the nature of any SEZ-specific design features would depend on the results of future paleontological investigations.
Cultural Resources	<p>Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed Millers SEZ; however, further investigation is needed. At least 30 sites have been recorded within the SEZ, although none have been evaluated for inclusion in the NRHP. Dune areas have considerable potential for containing significant sites on the valley floors suitable for solar development. The area within the proposed Millers SEZ associated with Lake Tonopah also has the potential to provide significant sites related to exploitation of lacustrine resources.</p>	Avoidance of areas with a high potential for a high density of sites, such as in the vicinity of both the former Lake Tonopah and Millers town site, is recommended.

TABLE 11.7.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Millers SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Cultural Resources (Cont.)	A cultural resource survey of the entire area of potential effect, including consultation with affected Native American Tribes, would first need to be conducted to identify archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and traditional cultural properties, and an evaluation would need to follow to determine whether any are eligible for listing in the NRHP.	Other SEZ-specific design features would be determined through consultation with the Nevada SHPO and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations.
Native American Concerns	While no comments specific to the proposed Millers SEZ have been received from Native American Tribes to date, as consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it is possible that Native Americans will express concern over potential visual, acoustic, and other effects of solar energy development within the SEZ on specific resources, including culturally important landscapes.	The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features would be determined during government-to-government consultations with the affected Tribes.
Socioeconomics	<i>Construction:</i> 346 to 4,578 total jobs; \$21 million to \$278.3 million income in ROI. <i>Operations:</i> 36 to 785 annual total jobs; \$1.2 million to \$26.3 million annual income in the ROI.	None.
Environmental Justice	Minority and low-income <i>individuals</i> live within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ. However, as defined in CEQ guidelines, no minority or low-income <i>populations</i> occur within that area; thus, there would be no disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on low-income or minority populations.	None.

TABLE 11.7.1.3-1 (Cont.)

Resource Area	Environmental Impacts—Proposed Millers SEZ	SEZ-Specific Design Features
Transportation	The primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day, with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum) or possibly 4,000 vehicle trips per day if two larger projects were to be developed at the same time. The volume of traffic on U.S. 95 along the southern edge of the Millers SEZ would represent an increase in traffic of about 100 or 200% for one or two projects, respectively, should all traffic access the SEZ in that area.	None.

Abbreviations: AAQS = ambient air quality standards; AQRV = air quality-related value; AUM = animal unit month; BLM = Bureau of Land Management; CEQ = Council on Environmental Quality; CO₂ = carbon dioxide; DoD = U.S. Department of Defense; EPA = U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; ESA = Endangered Species Act; FY = Fiscal Year; Hg = mercury; HMA = Herd Management Area; MTR = military training route; NDOW = Nevada Department of Wildlife; NDWR = Nevada Division of Water Resources; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; NRHP = *National Register of Historic Places*; NTTR = Nevada Test and Training Range; OHV = off-highway vehicle; PEIS = programmatic environmental impact statement; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 μm or less; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 μm or less; PSD = prevention of significant deterioration; PV = photovoltaic; ROI = region of influence; SEZ = solar energy zone; SHPO = State Historic Preservation Office; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; USFS = U.S. Forest Service; USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- ^a The detailed programmatic design features for each resource area to be required under BLM’s Solar Energy Program are presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. These programmatic design features would be required for development in the proposed Millers SEZ.
- ^b The scientific names of all plants, wildlife, aquatic biota, and special status species are provided in Sections 11.7.10 through 11.7.12.

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1 **11.7.2 Lands and Realty**

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4 **11.7.2.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Millers SEZ is a large and very well-blocked area of BLM-administered
7 public land. The overall character of the land in the SEZ area is rural and undeveloped, although
8 there are numerous dirt roads that cross the SEZ. The old town site of Millers is located just
9 south of the SEZ, and there is land disturbance all around the SEZ associated with road
10 construction, power line construction, mining, and development of the town site. U.S. 6/U.S. 95
11 parallels the southern side of the SEZ and provides good access to the site. There is a highway
12 rest stop just south of the southeastern corner of the SEZ.
13

14 There are several transmission lines within ROWs in and near the SEZ. Two lines
15 traverse the area, one in a north–south direction and the other in a northwest–southeast direction.
16 There are maintenance roads along these transmission lines. The latter line is located within
17 one of the two locally designated corridors near the SEZ. The second corridor, which contains
18 two existing transmission lines, parallels the southeastern boundary of the SEZ, and small
19 portions of the ROW for one of the transmission lines lie within the SEZ. There is a designated
20 Section 368 (of the Energy Policy Act of 2005) energy corridor about 15 mi (24 km) southwest
21 of the SEZ. Small portions of the ROWs for U.S. 6/U.S. 95 and a fiber optic line paralleling the
22 highway are within the SEZ as well.
23

24 As of February 2010, there were no ROW applications for solar energy facility
25 development on the SEZ; however, the BLM is processing a solar energy application for a site
26 about 3 mi (5 km) east of the proposed SEZ.
27
28

29 **11.7.2.2 Impacts**

30
31
32 ***11.7.2.2.1 Construction and Operations***

33
34 Full development of the proposed Millers SEZ could disturb up to 13,430 acres (54 km²)
35 (Table 11.7.1.2-1). Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would
36 establish a large industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land,
37 perhaps in perpetuity. Since the SEZ is rural and undeveloped, utility-scale solar energy
38 development would be a new and dominant land use in the area.
39

40 Existing ROW authorizations on the SEZ are prior existing rights, and facilities within
41 the ROWs would not be affected by solar energy development. Since the small portions of
42 three ROWs within the southern and southeastern boundaries of the SEZ were issued in
43 aliquot parts rather than based on a survey, it is likely that there is no physical development in
44 them within the SEZ. There is a technical issue about whether the existing ROW holders would
45 agree to amend their existing ROWs to allow solar development to occur within the existing
46 ROWs or if it would be necessary to make minor adjustments to the proposed SEZ boundary to

1 avoid these ROWs. Either way, existing rights issued to the ROW holders would be protected.
2 Should the proposed SEZ be identified as an SEZ in the ROD for this PEIS, the BLM would still
3 have discretion to authorize additional ROWs in the area until solar energy development was
4 authorized, and then future ROWs would be subject to the rights issued for solar energy
5 development. Because the area currently has so few ROWs present, and there is a large amount
6 of potentially available BLM-administered land nearby, it is not anticipated that approval of solar
7 energy development would have a significant impact on public land available for future ROWs
8 in the area.
9

10 The designated local transmission corridor located within the SEZ occupies an
11 undetermined amount of the proposed SEZ and could limit future solar development within the
12 corridor. To avoid technical or operational interference between transmission and solar energy
13 facilities, solar energy facilities cannot be constructed under transmission lines or over pipelines.
14 The corridor could be relocated outside the SEZ to allow full solar development within the SEZ.
15 This is an administrative conflict that the BLM can address through its planning process; but if
16 the existing corridor alignment is retained, there would be implications for the amount of
17 potential solar energy development that could be accommodated within the SEZ.
18
19

20 ***11.7.2.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***

21

22 An existing 120-kV transmission line runs adjacent to the SEZ; this line might be
23 available to transport the power produced in this SEZ. Establishing a connection to the existing
24 line would not involve the construction of a new transmission line outside of the SEZ. If a
25 connecting transmission line were constructed in a different location outside of the SEZ in the
26 future, site developers would need to determine the impacts from construction and operation of
27 that line. In addition, developers would need to determine the impacts of line upgrades if they
28 were needed. .
29

30 U.S. 6/U.S. 95 is adjacent to the SEZ, and it is assumed that no new roads would be
31 required to provide access to the site. Roads and transmission lines would be constructed within
32 the SEZ as part of the development of the area.
33
34

35 **11.7.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

36

37 There are no SEZ specific design features proposed to protect lands and realty resources.
38 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as
39 required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would provide adequate mitigation for some
40 identified impacts. The exceptions would be the establishment of a large industrial area that
41 would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land and would be a new and discordant
42 land use to the area.
43

1 **11.7.3 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**

2
3
4 **11.7.3.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 Specially designated areas normally consist of the following:

- 7
8 • National Parks, National Monuments, National Recreation Areas, National
9 Preserves, National Wildlife Refuges, National Reserves, National
10 Conservation Areas, National Historic Sites;
11
12 • Congressionally authorized Wilderness Areas;
13
14 • Wilderness Study Areas;
15
16 • National Wild and Scenic Rivers;
17
18 • Congressionally authorized Wild and Scenic Study Rivers;
19
20 • National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails;
21
22 • National Historic Landmarks and National Natural Landmarks;
23
24 • All-American Roads, National Scenic Byways, State Scenic Highways; and
25 BLM- and USFS-designated scenic highways/byways;
26
27 • BLM-designated Special Recreation Management Areas;
28
29 • BLM-designated ACECs; and
30
31 • Designated state or local facilities or attractions.

32
33 In the case of the proposed Millers SEZ, none of these types of areas are present within
34 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ. In addition, there are no areas within 25 mi (40 km) of the SEZ that
35 have been identified by the BLM as possessing wilderness characteristics.

36
37
38 **11.7.3.2 Impacts**

39
40 There would be no impacts on specially designated areas in the SEZ.

41
42
43 **11.7.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

44
45 No SEZ-specific design features would be required to protect specially designated areas.
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1 **11.7.4 Rangeland Resources**

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4 **11.7.4.1 Livestock Grazing**

5
6
7 ***11.7.4.1.1 Affected Environment***

8
9 The proposed Millers SEZ contains a small portion of the Monte Cristo perennial grazing
10 allotment. The total acreage of the allotment is 496,018 acres (2,007 km²). One permittee
11 operates in the allotment.
12

13
14 ***11.7.4.1.2 Impacts***

15
16
17 **Construction and Operations**

18
19 Should utility-scale solar development occur in the SEZ, grazing would be excluded from
20 the areas developed as provided for in the BLM grazing regulations (43 CFR Part 4100). This
21 would include reimbursement of the permittee for their portion of the value for any range
22 improvements in the area removed from the grazing allotment. There are 16,787 acres (68 km²)
23 of public lands in this SEZ, which is less than 4% of the Monte Cristo allotment. Because of the
24 size of the allotment, the loss of this portion of the allotment is not anticipated to have a
25 significant impact on the overall grazing operation because there likely are opportunities to make
26 livestock management changes and/or to provide additional livestock management facilities to
27 mitigate the loss of forage within the SEZ. No loss of AUMs is anticipated.
28

29
30 **Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure**

31
32 Because of the availability of a major transmission line in the SEZ, and U.S. 6/U.S. 95
33 near the SEZ, and assuming that additional project-specific analysis would be done for
34 construction of such infrastructure, no assessment of the impacts of such activities outside of the
35 SEZ was conducted (see Section 11.7.1.2).
36

37
38 ***11.7.4.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

39
40 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
41 as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program would provide adequate mitigation for some
42 identified impacts. The exception may be the loss of 4% of the Monte Cristo grazing allotment.
43
44

1 A proposed design features specific to the Millers SEZ is:
2

- 3 • Development of range improvements in the Monte Cristo allotment should be
4 considered if site-specific analysis determines there would need to be a
5 reduction in permitted AUMs because of lost grazing capacity.
6

7 8 **11.7.4.2 Wild Horses and Burros**

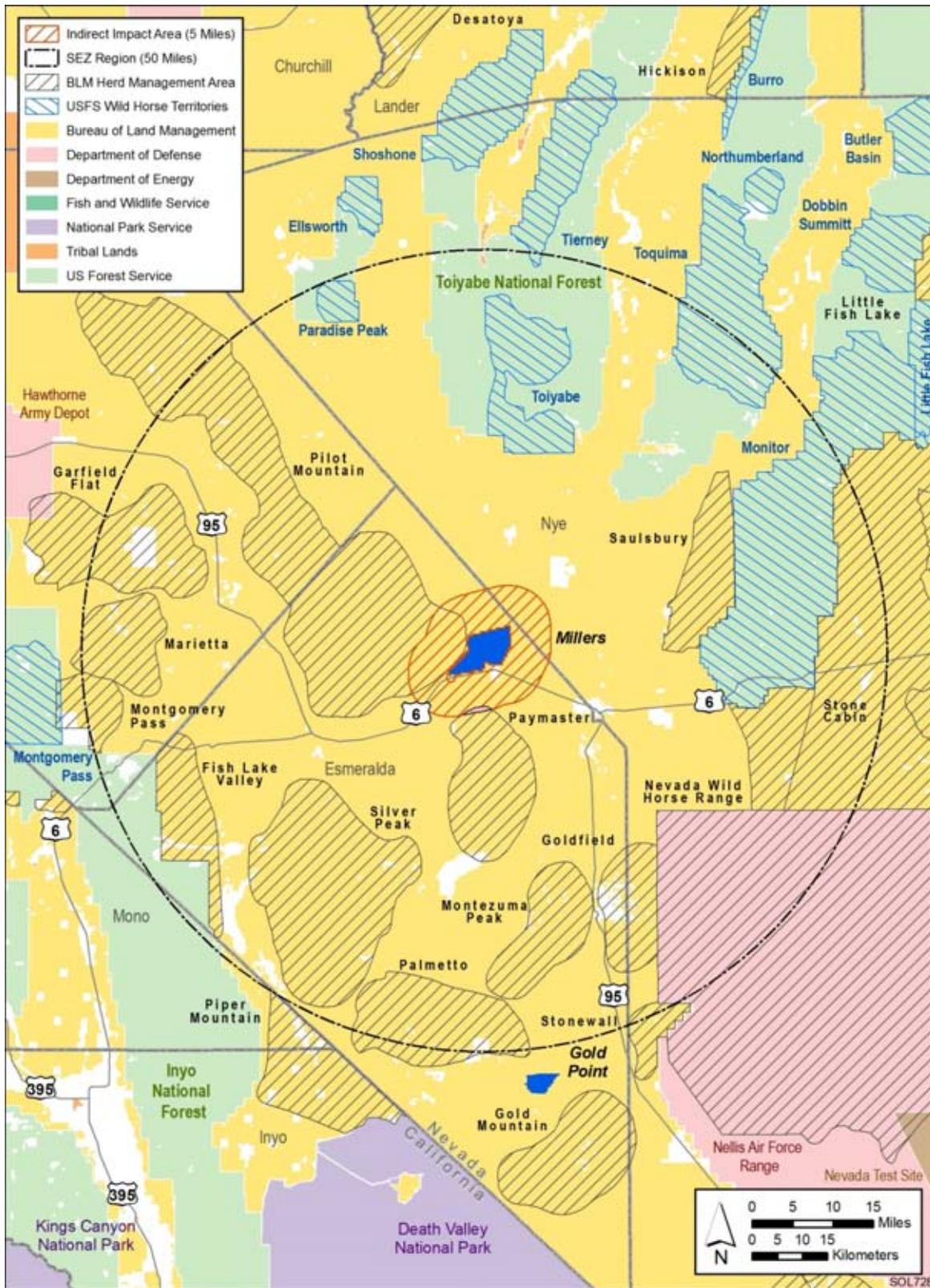
9 10 **11.7.4.2.1 Affected Environment**

11
12
13 Section 4.4.2 discusses wild horses (*Equus caballus*) and burros (*E. asinus*) that occur
14 within the six-state study area. Nearly 100 wild horse and burro herd management areas (HMAs)
15 occur within Nevada (BLM 2009d). A number of HMAs occur within the 50-mi (80-m) SEZ
16 region for the proposed Millers SEZ (Figure 11.7.4.2-1). A portion of the Paymaster and Pilot
17 Mountain HMAs occurs within the indirect impact area of the SEZ. The Paymaster HMA
18 contained an estimated population of 52 wild horses in FY 2009, although the appropriate
19 management level is only 38 wild horses. The Pilot Mountain HMA contained an estimated
20 population of 342 wild horses, which is less than the appropriate management level of 415 wild
21 horses (BLM 2010c).
22

23 In addition to the HMAs managed by the BLM, the USFS has wild horse and burro
24 territories in Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah; and is the lead management
25 agency that administers 37 of the territories (Giffen 2009; USFS 2007). The closest territories
26 to the Millers SEZ are the Toiyabe and Monitor territories located about 21 and 23 mi (34 and
27 37 km), respectively, from the SEZ (Figure 11.7.4.2-1). No wild horses occupy the Toiyabe
28 Territory; wild horses occur in the Monitor Territory, but the number present is not reported
29 (USFS 2005a,b).
30

31 32 **11.7.4.2.2 Impacts**

33
34 The Paymaster HMA totals 100,591 acres (407.1 km²), of which 99,919 acres
35 (404.4 km²) are BLM acres. About 998 acres (4 km²), or 1.0%, of the HMA would be in the
36 area of indirect impact for the proposed Millers SEZ. The Pilot Mountain HMA totals
37 477,136 acres (1,930.9 km²), of which 475,499 acres (1,924.3 km²) are BLM acres. About
38 29,219 acres (118.2 km²), or 1.6%, of the HMA would be in the area of indirect impact for the
39 SEZ. Indirect impacts on wild horses could result from surface water and sediment runoff from
40 disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, and harassment. These
41 indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with the implementation of programmatic design
42 features. USFS wild horse territories are located well outside of the indirect impact area for the
43 proposed Millers SEZ; thus, no direct or indirect impacts on any wild horses in USFS wild horse
44 territories would occur from the construction or operations of solar facilities in the SEZ.
45
46



1
 2 **FIGURE 11.7.4.2-1 Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas and Territories within**
 3 **the Analysis Area for the Proposed Millers SEZ (Sources: BLM 2010b; USFS 2007)**

1 ***11.7.4.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***
2

3 No SEZ-specific design features for solar development within the proposed Millers SEZ
4 would be necessary to protect or minimize direct impacts on wild horses and burros. Indirect
5 impacts should be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic design features
6 and engineering controls that reduce noise lighting, spills, and fugitive dust.
8

1 **11.7.5 Recreation**

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3
4 **11.7.5.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The site of the proposed Millers SEZ is located adjacent to U.S. 6/U.S. 95 and is about
7 15 mi (24 km) from Tonopah. The area is flat and generally unremarkable, with numerous roads
8 and trails that provide access through the area. While there are no recreational use data for the
9 area, backcountry driving, OHV use of the roads and trails, and hunting are likely to be the major
10 recreational activities in the area. A portion of the route for the annual Las Vegas to Reno OHV
11 race passes through the area.

12
13
14 **11.7.5.2 Impacts**

15
16
17 ***11.7.5.2.1 Construction and Operations***

18
19 Recreational use would be eliminated from portions of the SEZ developed for solar
20 energy production. Although there are no recreational use figures for the area, the nature of the
21 area does not encourage recreational use. The area contains numerous roads and trails that are
22 available for travel that would be closed if solar energy development would occur, and the route
23 of the Las Vegas to Reno OHV race within the SEZ would be closed. The potential loss of
24 recreational use that would accompany solar development of the SEZ is anticipated to be small.

25
26 Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes
27 designated open and available for public use. If open OHV routes within the SEZ were identified
28 during project-specific analyses, they would be re-designated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for
29 more details on how routes coinciding with proposed solar facilities would be treated).

30
31
32 ***11.7.5.2.2 Transmission Facilities and Other Off-Site Infrastructure***

33
34 Because of the availability of an existing transmission line and U.S. 6/U.S. 95 near the
35 SEZ, no additional construction of transmission or road facilities was assessed. Should additional
36 transmission lines be required outside of the SEZ, there may be additional recreation impacts.
37 See Section 11.7.1.2 for the development assumptions underlying this analysis.

38
39
40 **11.7.5.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

41
42 Implementing the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
43 as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would provide some mitigation for some
44 identified impacts. The exceptions may be recreational use of the area developed for solar energy
45 production would be lost and would not be mitigatable.

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Proposed design features specific to the Millers SEZ include the following:

- Alternative routes for the Las Vegas to Reno race should be considered consistent with local land use plan requirements.

1 **11.7.6 Military and Civilian Aviation**

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3
4 **11.7.6.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 Approximately the eastern two-thirds of the proposed Millers SEZ is covered by MTRs,
7 with 50- and 100-ft (15- and 30-m) AGL operating limits. The area is located about 26 mi
8 (42 km) northwest of the boundary of the NTTR and the Nellis Air Force Base.

9
10 The closest civilian municipal aviation facility is the Tonopah Municipal Airport, which
11 is located about 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the SEZ. The airport does not have scheduled
12 commercial passenger service or regular freight service.

13
14
15 **11.7.6.2 Impacts**

16
17 The military has expressed serious concern over solar energy facilities being constructed
18 within the proposed Millers SEZ and at the solar energy site currently being evaluated just east
19 of the SEZ. The military is especially concerned over the potential use of power tower facilities
20 that would obstruct existing military airspace. Nellis Air Force Base has indicated that it has
21 concerns for its use of the MTRs because of potential overflight restrictions above a solar energy
22 facility, the height of solar facilities, possible restrictions on hydrocarbon or residue from fuel
23 burn by aircraft, possible glare from reflective surfaces, and any potential restrictions on
24 supersonic operations over solar facilities. The NTTR has indicated that solar technologies
25 requiring structures higher than 50 ft (15 m) AGL may present unacceptable electromagnetic
26 compatibility concerns for its test mission at the NTTR. The NTTR maintains that a pristine
27 testing environment is required for the unique national security missions conducted on the
28 NTTR. The potential electromagnetic interference impacts from solar facilities on testing
29 activities at the NTTR, coupled with potential training route obstructions created by taller
30 structures, make it likely that solar facilities exceeding 50 ft (15 m) could significantly affect
31 military operations.

32
33 The Air Force states that the NTTR complex is unique in the world in its ability to
34 provide realistic training of air crews. In addition to the effect of individual solar energy
35 facilities, there is a more general concern over the potential for cumulative effects from multiple
36 solar energy projects around the NTTR to eventually have a serious adverse effect on the training
37 environment of the NTTR.

38
39 The Tonopah Airport is located far enough away from the proposed SEZ that there would
40 be no effect on airport operations.

1 **11.7.6.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 No SEZ specific design features are required to protect either military airspace or civilian
4 aviation operations. The programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2,
5 would require early coordination with the DoD to identify and mitigate, if possible, potential
6 impacts on the use of MTRs.
7

1 **11.7.7 Geologic Setting and Soil Resources**

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4 **11.7.7.1 Affected Environment**

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7 **11.7.7.1.1 Geologic Setting**

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9
10 **Regional Setting**

11
12 The proposed Millers SEZ is located in the Big Smoky Valley, a north-trending basin
13 within the Basin and Range physiographic province in south-central Nevada. In the Millers
14 SEZ region, the valley is bounded on the northwest by the Monte Cristo Range and Royston
15 Hills and on the east by the San Antonio Mountains. The Lone Mountain lies to the south
16 (Figure 11.7.7.1-1). The Big Smoky Valley is one of many structural basins (graben) typical
17 of the Basin and Range province.

18
19 Exposed sediments in the Big Smoky Valley consist mainly of modern alluvial (Qa) and
20 playa (Qp) sediments. Alluvial sediments at the Millers SEZ cover or partially cover lacustrine
21 deposits (Ql) associated with Lake Tonopah, an ancient lake that covered the valley during the
22 Pleistocene (Figure 11.7.7.1-2). These fine-grained sediments—sandy silts, silts, sandy clays,
23 and clays—are found in the valley center and are abundant within the SEZ. Sand dunes and dune
24 complexes also occur throughout the valley; the Crescent Dunes are located about 6 mi (10 km)
25 to the northwest of the SEZ. In the surrounding mountains, exposures are predominantly Tertiary
26 volcanics. The oldest rocks in the region are the Late Proterozoic to Cambrian metamorphic
27 rocks (CZq) that occur in Lone Mountain south of the SEZ. These rocks have been intruded by
28 Mesozoic granites and granodiorites.

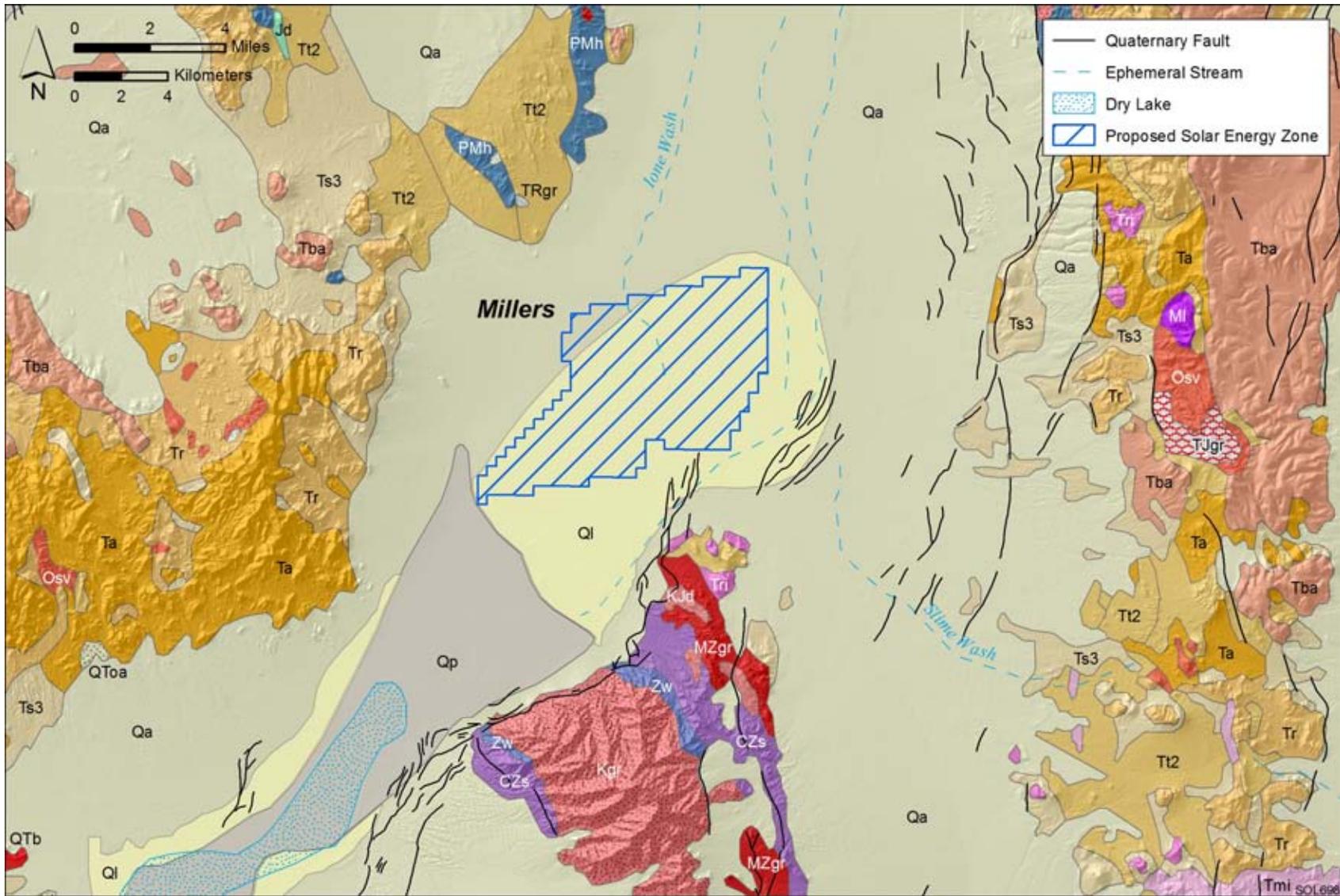
29
30 Semiconsolidated to unconsolidated basin-fill deposits are estimated to be about 5,000 ft
31 (1,530 m) thick in the northern part of the Big Smoky Valley; estimates for the southern part of
32 the valley, where the proposed Millers SEZ is located, have not been reported. Basin-fill
33 sediments constitute the most important aquifers in the Big Smoky Valley (Handman and
34 Kilroy 1997).

35
36
37 **Topography**

38
39 The Big Smoky Valley covers an area of about 567,700 acres (2,300 km²) (USDA 1980)
40 and stretches 115 mi (185 km) across three counties in south-central Nevada (Figure 11.7.7.1-1).
41 Elevations along the valley axis range from about 6,200 ft (1,890 m) at its northern end (Lander
42 County) and along the valley sides to about 4,750 ft (1,450 m) at its southern end (Esmeralda
43 County). Alluvial fan deposits occur along the mountain fronts on both sides of the valley; near
44 the SEZ, they enter the valley from the west. The valley is drained by several unnamed
45 ephemeral streams. Other topographic features include sand dunes, playas, and the many



FIGURE 11.7.7.1-1 Physiographic Features of the Big Smoky Valley Region



1
2 **FIGURE 11.7.7.1-2 Geologic Map of the Big Smoky Valley Region (Sources: Ludington et al. 2007; Stewart and Carlson 1978;**
3 **Soller et al. 2009)**

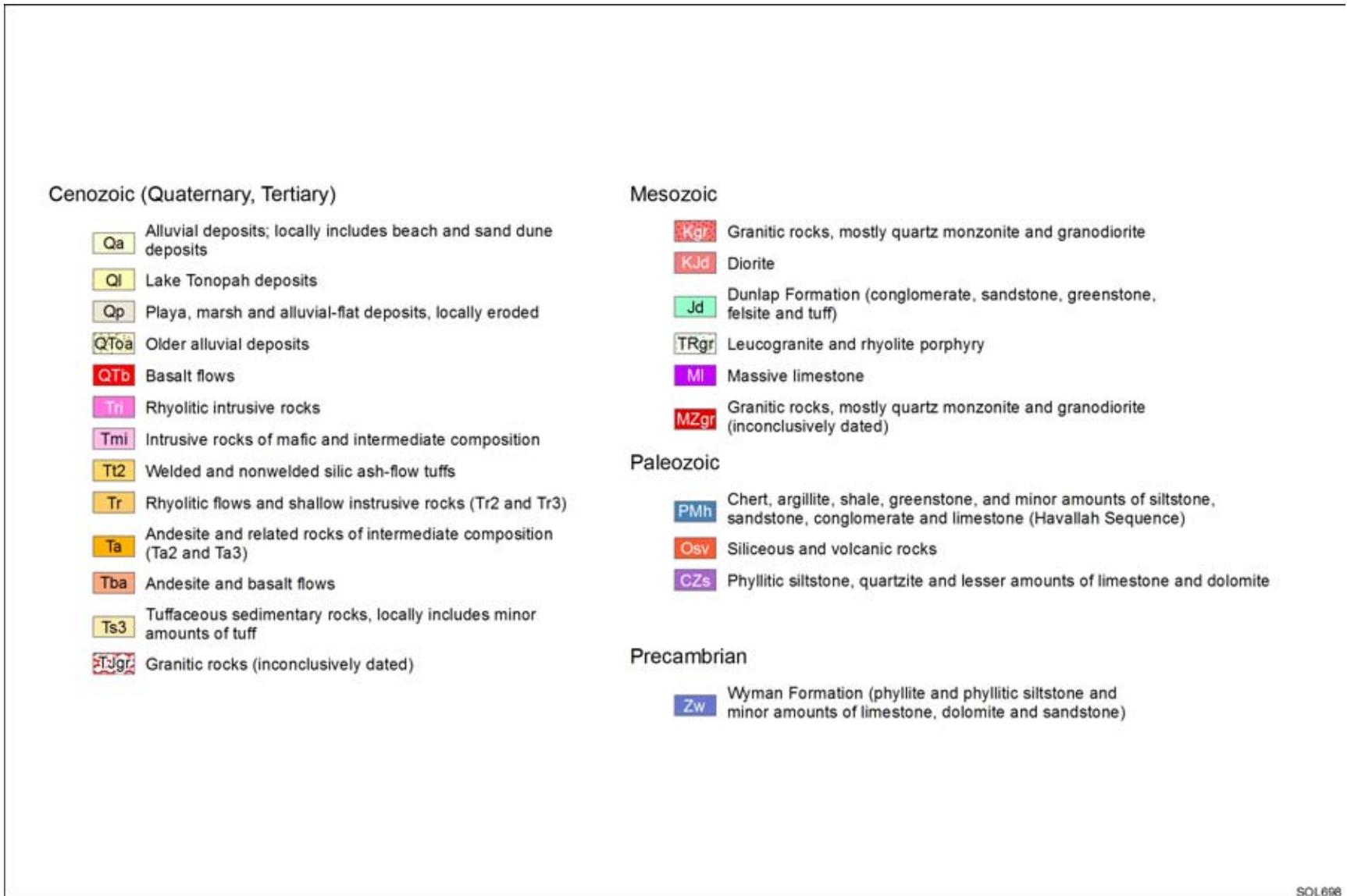


FIGURE 11.7.7.1-2 (Cont.)

1 unnamed washes that drain the surrounding mountains and feed the central streams in the valley
2 center.

3
4 The proposed Millers SEZ is located in the southern part of the Big Smoky Valley,
5 between the Monte Cristo Range and Royston Hills to the northwest, the Lone Mountain to the
6 south, and the San Antonio Mountains to the east. Its terrain is relatively flat, with elevations
7 ranging from about 4,850 ft (1,480 m) along the northern border to 4,780 ft (1,460 m) near the
8 southwest end (Figure 11.7.7.1-3). Several drainages enter the SEZ from the north and drain to a
9 large playa southwest of the site. A series of unnamed sand dunes occupy the northeast corner of
10 the site.

11 12 13 **Geologic Hazards**

14
15 The types of geologic hazards that could potentially affect solar project sites and their
16 mitigation are discussed in Section 5.7.3. The following sections provide a preliminary
17 assessment of these hazards at the proposed Millers SEZ. Solar project developers may need
18 to conduct a geotechnical investigation to identify and assess geologic hazards locally to better
19 identify facility design criteria and site-specific design features to minimize their risk.

20
21
22 **Seismicity.** The Big Smoky Valley is located within the Walker Lane Belt, a northwest-
23 trending seismic region along the Nevada–California border that accommodates (right-lateral
24 shear) strain from movement between the Pacific and North American plates. The proposed
25 Millers SEZ lies within a zone of north–northeast trending extensional (normal) faults that run
26 parallel to the valley axis and border the mountains to the southeast. These include the Lone
27 Mountain and Paymaster Ridge faults, which extend from the SEZ to the southwest, and the
28 Crescent Dune fault, which extends from the SEZ to the northeast (Figure 11.7.7.1-4).

29
30 The Lone Mountain fault extends from the southeast corner of the Millers SEZ near
31 the Nye-Esmeralda county border to the southwest, along the northwest front of Lone
32 Mountain and the Weepah Hills and the southeast side of the Big Smoky Valley sand dunes
33 (Figure 11.7.7.1-4). Well-defined scarps along the fault trace in these areas show down-to-the-
34 northwest displacement of as much as 16 ft (5 m). With the estimated age of offset sediments,
35 the most recent movement along the fault is estimated at less than 15,000 years ago. The slip
36 rate along this fault is estimated to be less than 0.2 mm/yr. Recurrence intervals have not been
37 estimated (Anderson and Sawyer 1999).

38
39 The north-trending Paymaster Ridge fault is located about 4 mi (6.4 km) south of the
40 Millers SEZ (Figure 11.7.7.1-4). It extends to the south, along the eastern front of Lone
41 Mountain, and continues for the length of Paymaster Ridge to the south. The fault is thought to
42 be the major block-bounding fault separating Paymaster Ridge from the basin (graben) beneath
43 Clayton Valley to the west. The fault plane likely dips gently to the west, and displacement is
44 down to the west. With the age of offset sediments (Late Pleistocene), the most recent movement
45 along the fault is estimated at less than 130,000 years ago. The slip rate along this fault is
46

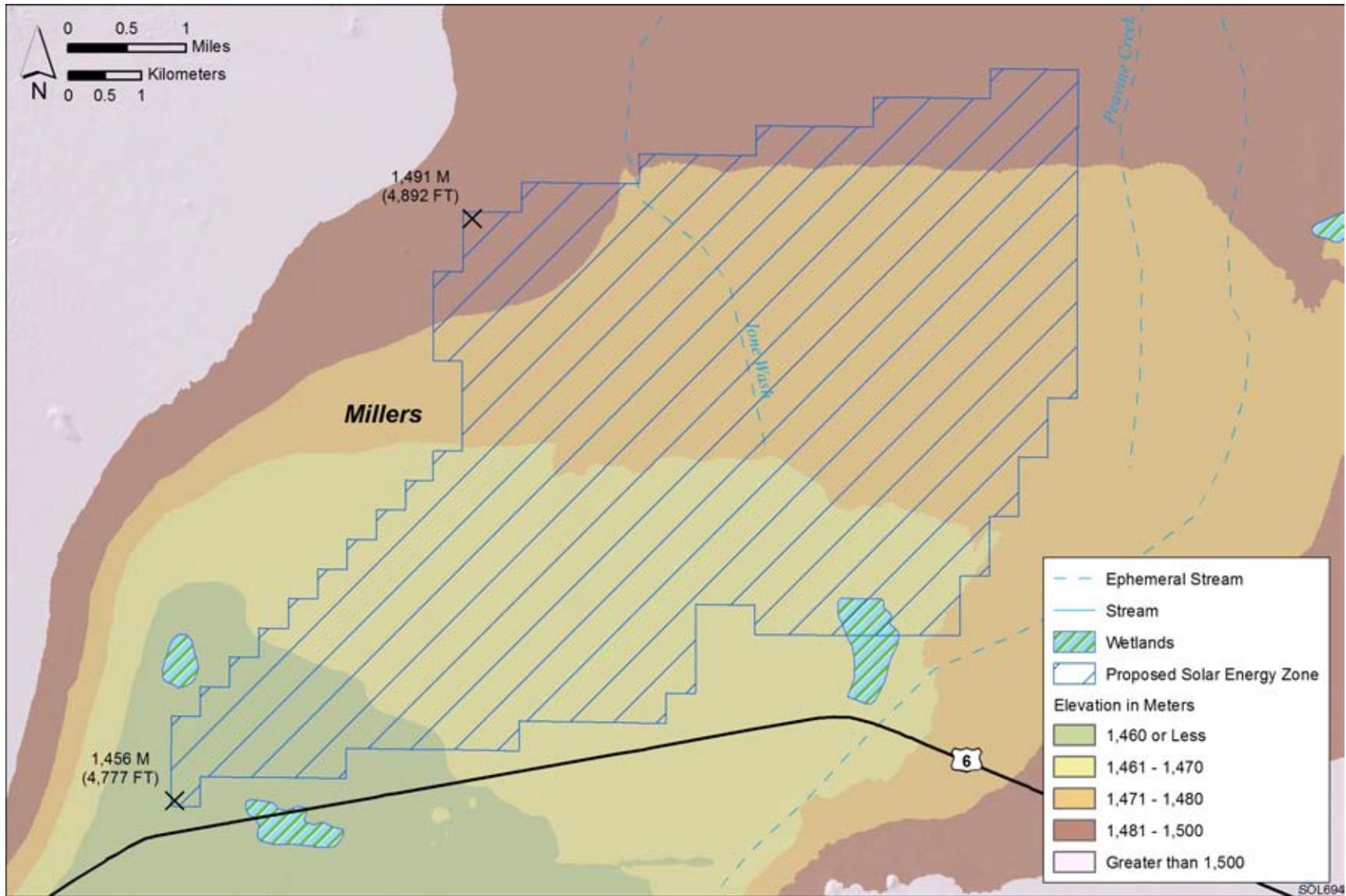
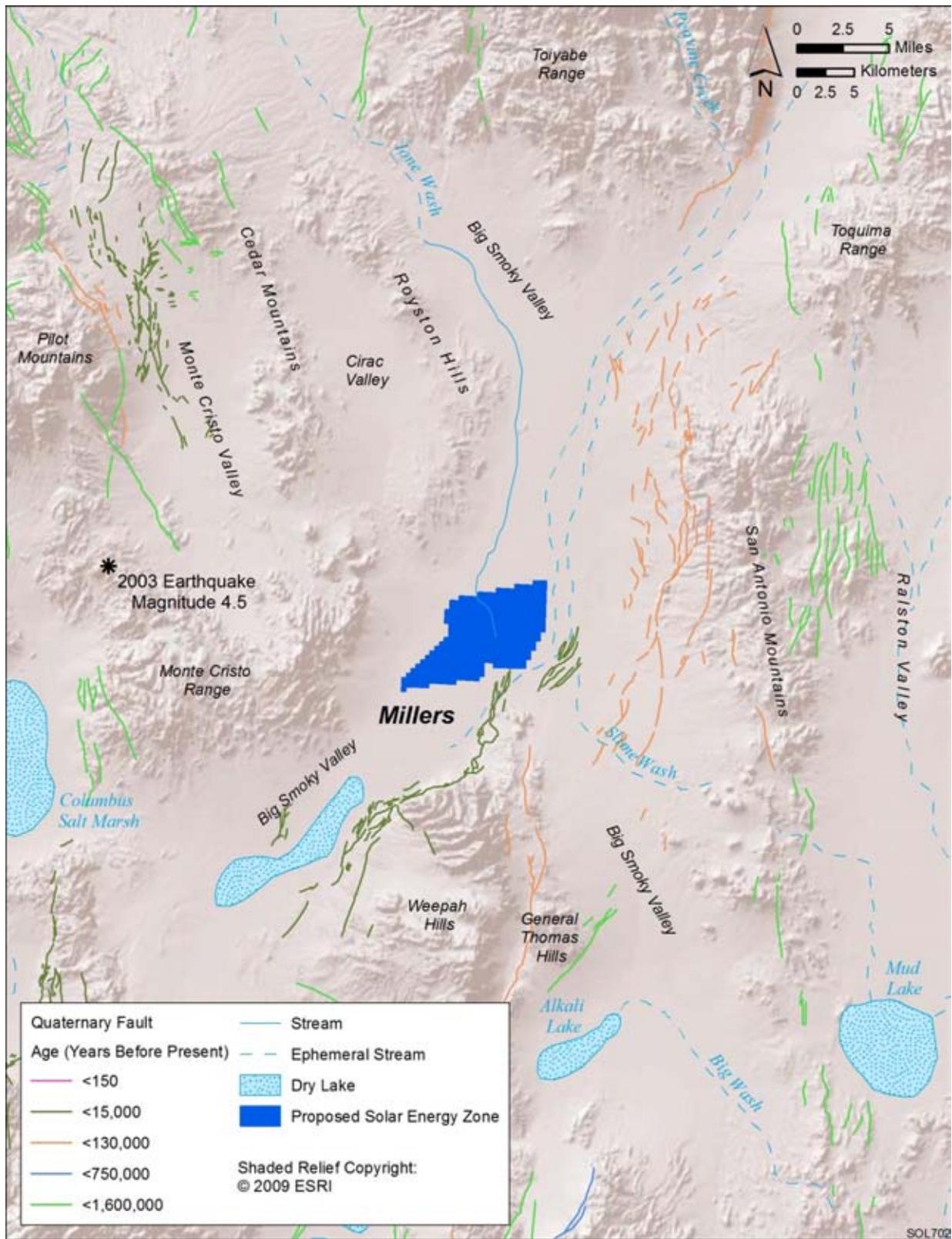


FIGURE 11.7.7.1-3 General Terrain of the Proposed Millers SEZ



1

2 **FIGURE 11.7.7.1-4 Quaternary Faults in the Big Smoky Valley Region (Sources: USGS and**
 3 **NBMG 2010)**

1 estimated to be less than 0.2 mm/yr. Recurrence intervals have not been estimated (Anderson
2 and Ernest 1999).

3
4 The Crescent Dune fault is located about 4 mi (6.4 km) east of the Millers SEZ
5 (Figure 11.7.7.1-4). It comprises a series of normal faults that extend to the north, along the
6 western front of the San Antonio Mountains and across the piedmont slopes in the eastern part of
7 the Big Smoky Valley. Scarps at the northwest end of the San Antonio Mountains and piedmont
8 slope surfaces indicate displacement of as much as 13 ft (4 m). With the age of offsets of Early
9 Pleistocene sediments and Tertiary volcanic rocks, the most recent movement along these faults
10 is estimated at less than 130,000 years ago. Slip rates along these faults are estimated to be less
11 than 0.2 mm/yr. Recurrence intervals have not been estimated (Sawyer 1999).

12
13 From June 1, 2000 to May 31, 2010, 123 earthquakes were recorded within a 61-mi
14 (100-km) radius of the proposed Millers SEZ. The largest earthquake during that period occurred
15 on November 15, 2003. It was located about 19 mi (30 km) west of the SEZ in the Monte Cristo
16 Mountains (north of the Columbus Salt Marsh) and registered a Richter scale magnitude (ML¹ of
17 4.5 (Figure 11.7.7.1-4). During this period, 63 (51 %) of the recorded earthquakes within a 61-mi
18 (100-km) radius of the SEZ had magnitudes greater than 3.0; none were greater than 4.5
19 (USGS 2010c).

20
21
22 **Liquefaction.** The proposed Millers SEZ lies within an area where the peak horizontal
23 acceleration with a 10% probability of exceedance in 50 years is between 0.15 and 0.20 g.
24 Shaking associated with this level of acceleration is generally perceived as strong to very strong;
25 however, potential damage to structures is light to moderate (USGS 2008). Given the deep water
26 table (from 8 to 78 ft [2 to 24 m] below the surface [USGS 2010b]) and the low intensity of
27 ground shaking estimated for the Big Smoky Valley, the potential for liquefaction in valley
28 sediments is likely to be low.

29
30
31 **Volcanic Hazards.** The Millers SEZ is located about 80 mi (130 km) northwest of the
32 southwestern Nevada volcanic field, which consists of volcanic rocks (tuffs and lavas) of the
33 Timber Mountain-Oasis Valley caldera complex and Silent Canyon and Black Mountain
34 calderas. The area has been studied extensively because of its proximity to the NTS and Yucca
35 Mountain repository. Two types of fields are present in the region: (1) large-volume, long-lived
36 fields with a range of basalt types associated with more silicic volcanic rocks produced by
37 melting of the lower crust, and (2) small-volume fields formed by scattered basaltic scoria cones
38 during brief cycles of activity, called rift basalts because of their association with extensional
39 structural features. The basalts of the region typically belong to the second group; examples
40 include the basalts of Silent Canyon and Sleeping Butte (Byers et al. 1989; Crowe et al. 1983).

41

¹ Richter scale magnitude (ML) was the original magnitude defined by Richter and Gutenberg for local earthquakes in 1935. It was based on the maximum amplitude recorded on a Wood-Anderson torsion seismograph but is currently calculated for earthquakes with magnitudes ranging from 2 to 6, using modern instruments with adjustments (USGS 2010d).

1 The oldest basalts in the region were erupted during the waning stages of silicic
2 volcanism in the southern Great Basin in the Late Miocene and are associated with silicic
3 volcanic centers like Dome Mountain (the first group). Rates of basaltic volcanic activity in the
4 region have been relatively constant but generally low. Basaltic eruptions occurred 1.7 million to
5 700,000 years ago, creating the cinder cones within Crater Flat (Stuckless and O'Leary 2007).
6 The most recent episode of basaltic eruptions occurred at the Lathrop Wells Cone complex about
7 80,000 years ago (Stuckless and O'Leary 2007). There has been no silicic volcanism in the
8 region in the past 5 million years. Current silicic volcanic activity occurs entirely along the
9 margins of the Great Basin (Crowe et al. 1983).

10
11 Crowe et al. (1983) determined that the annual probability of a volcanic event for the
12 region is very low (3.3×10^{-10} to 4.7×10^{-8}); similar to the probability of 1.7×10^{-8} calculated
13 for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository (Cline et al. 2005). The volcanic risk in the region is
14 associated only with basaltic eruptions; the risk of silicic volcanism is negligible. Perry (2002)
15 cites geologic data that could indicate an increase in the recurrence rate (and thus the probability
16 of disruption). These data include hypothesized episodes of an anomalously high strain rate, the
17 hypothesized presence of a regional mantle hot spot, and new aeromagnetic data that suggest that
18 previously unrecognized volcanoes may be buried in the alluvial-filled basins in the region.

19
20 The Long Valley Caldera of eastern California, is located about 70 mi (113 km)
21 southeast. The Long Valley Caldera is part of the Mono-Inyo Craters volcanic chain, which
22 extends from Mammoth Mountain (on the caldera rim) northward about 25 mi (40 km) to
23 Mono Lake. Small to moderate eruptions have occurred at various sites along the volcanic chain
24 in the past 5,000 years, at intervals ranging from 250 to 700 years. Windblown ash from some of
25 these eruptions is known to have drifted as far east as Nebraska. Since 1980, when Long Valley
26 experienced a swarm of strong earthquakes, the central part of the caldera has been rising,
27 indicating the rise of magma below the caldera. Although the probability of an eruption within
28 the volcanic chain in any given year is small (less than 1%), serious hazards could result from
29 an eruption. Depending on the location, size, timing (season), and type of eruption, hazards
30 could include mudflows and flooding, pyroclastic flows, small to moderate volumes of tephra,
31 and falling ash (Hill et al. 1998, 2000; Miller 1989).

32
33
34 ***Slope Stability and Land Subsidence.*** The incidence of rock falls and slope failures can
35 be moderate to high along mountain fronts and can present a hazard to facilities on the relatively
36 flat terrain of valley floors like the Big Smoky Valley, if they are located at the base of steep
37 slopes. The risk of rock falls and slope failures decreases toward the flat valley center.

38
39 There has been no land subsidence monitoring within the Big Smoky Valley to date; the
40 potential for subsidence is not currently known.

41
42
43 ***Other Hazards.*** Other potential hazards at the proposed Millers SEZ include those
44 associated with soil compaction (restricted infiltration and increased runoff), expanding clay
45 soils (destabilization of structures), and hydro-compactible or collapsible soil (settlement).

1 Disturbance of soil crusts and desert pavement on soil surfaces may increase the likelihood
2 of soil erosion by wind.

3
4 Alluvial fan surfaces, such as those found in the Big Smoky Valley, can be the sites of
5 damaging high-velocity flash floods and debris flows during periods of intense and prolonged
6 rainfall. The nature of the flooding and sedimentation processes (e.g., stream flow versus debris
7 flow) will depend on specific morphology of the fan (National Research Council 1996).
8 Section 11.7.9.1.1 provides further discussion of flood risks within the Millers SEZ.

9 10 11 **11.7.7.1.2 Soil Resources**

12
13 Soils within the proposed Millers SEZ are gravelly sands, gravelly fine sandy loams, fine
14 sands, silt loams, silty clay loams (playas), and gravelly loams of the Yomba, Youngston,
15 Belcher, Kawich, Wardenot, and Izo series, which together make up about 98% of the soil
16 coverage at the site (Figure 11.1.7.1-5). Soil map units within the Millers SEZ are described in
17 Table 11.7.7.1-1. These level to sloping soils are derived from mixed alluvium, typical of soils
18 on alluvial fans, alluvial flats, and playas. They are characterized as very deep and well to
19 excessively drained (except for playa soils, which are very poorly drained). Most soils on the site
20 have low to moderate surface runoff potential and slow to rapid permeability. The natural soil
21 surface is suitable for roads (except for playa soils which have a severe rutting hazard) with a
22 slight erosion hazard when used as roads or trails. The water erosion potential is low for most
23 soils. The susceptibility to wind erosion is moderate to high, with as much as 220 tons
24 (200 metric tons) of soil eroded by wind per acre (4,000 m²) each year (NRCS 2010). Biological
25 soil crusts and desert pavement have not been documented within the SEZ, but may be present.

26
27 All of the soils within the proposed Millers SEZ are rated as partially hydric.² Flooding is
28 rare for most soils at the site except for the Youngston-Playas and Slaw-Playas associations,
29 which cover about 319 ac (1 km²) and have an occasional flooding rating (with a 5 to 50%
30 chance in any year). None of the soils is classified as prime or unique farmland (NRCS 2010).

31 32 33 **11.7.7.2 Impacts**

34
35 Impacts on soil resources would occur mainly as a result of ground-disturbing activities
36 (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling), especially during the construction phase of a solar
37 project. These include soil compaction, soil horizon mixing, soil erosion and deposition by wind,
38 soil erosion by water and surface runoff, sedimentation, and soil contamination. Such impacts are
39 common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities in varying degrees and are described in more
40 detail for the four phases of development in Section 5.7 1.

41

² A hydric soil is a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding (NRCS 2010).

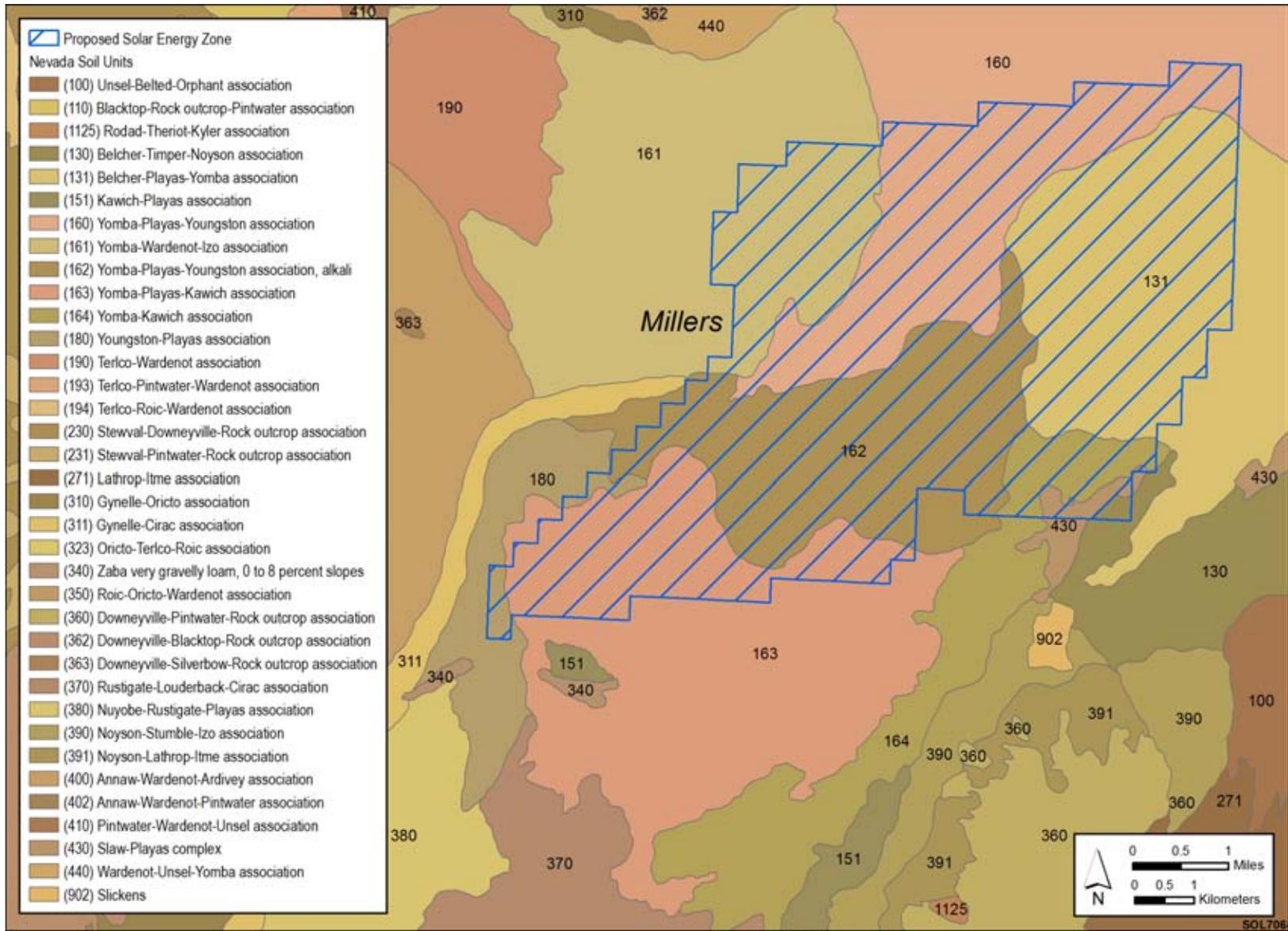


FIGURE 11.7.7.1-5 Soil Map for the Proposed Millers SEZ (NRCS 2008)

TABLE 11.7.7.1-1 Summary of Soil Map Units within the Proposed Millers SEZ

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area, in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
162	Yomba-Playas-Youngston association, alkali	Low	Moderate (WEG 4L) ^d	Consists of about 40% Yomba gravelly sand and 25% Playas (silty clay loam). Level to moderately sloping soils on alluvial flats, playas, and drainageways. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources. Very deep and very poorly (Playas) to somewhat excessively drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately slow to slow permeability. Available water capacity is very low (Playas) to low. Severe rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	4,068 (24)
131	Belcher-Playas-Yomba association	Low	High (WEG 2)	Consists of 45% Belcher gravelly sand, 20% Yomba gravelly fine sandy loam, and 20% Playas (silty clay loam). Level to nearly level soils on alluvial flats and playas. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources. Shallow to a duripan (Belcher) and very deep and very poorly (Playas) to somewhat excessively drained, with high surface runoff potential (very slow infiltration rate) and moderate to moderately rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low to low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for wildlife grazing, wildlife habitat, and irrigated cropland (alfalfa, corn silage, and small grains).	4,030 (24)
160	Yomba-Playas-Youngston association	Low	Moderate (WEG 4L)	Consists of 40% Yomba gravelly sand, 25% Playas (silty clay loam), and 20% Youngston silt loam. Level to moderately sloping soils on alluvial flats, playas, and drainageways. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources. Very deep and very poorly (Playas) to somewhat excessively drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately slow to slow permeability. Available water capacity is very low (Playas) to high. Severe rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	3,654 (22)

TABLE 11.2.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area, in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
163	Yomba-Playas-Kawich association	Moderate	High (WEG 1)	Consists of 30% Yomba gravelly sand, 30% Playas (silty clay loam), and 30% Kawich fine sand. Level to sloping soils on sand sheets (Kawich on stabilized sand dunes), alluvial flats, and playas. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources and eolian sand. Very deep and very poorly (Playas) to excessively drained, with low surface runoff potential (high infiltration rate) and moderate to very rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low (Playas) to low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	2,262 (13)
161	Yomba-Wardenot-Izo association	Low	High (WEG 2)	Consists of 45% Yomba gravelly sand, 25% Wardenot gravelly fine sandy loam, and 15% Izo very gravelly sand. Level to sloping soils formed on alluvial flats and fan skirts. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources. Very deep and somewhat excessively to excessively drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderate to rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low to low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly for grazing and wildlife habitat.	1,803 (11)
164	Yomba-Kawich association	Low	High (WEG 2)	Consists of 50% Yomba gravelly sand and 35% Kawich fine sand. Level to sloping soils on alluvial flats and fan skirts (Kawich on stabilized sand dunes). Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources. Very deep and somewhat excessively to excessively drained, with low surface runoff potential (high infiltration rate) and moderate to very rapid permeability. Available water capacity is very low to low. Moderate rutting hazard. Used mainly as livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	602 (4)

TABLE 11.2.7.1-1 (Cont.)

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Water Erosion Potential ^a	Wind Erosion Potential ^b	Description	Area, in Acres ^c (% of SEZ)
180	Youngston-Playas association	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 4L)	Consists of 60% Youngston silt loam and 25% Playas (silty clay loam). Level to nearly level soils on alluvial flats and playas. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources. Very deep and very poorly (Playas) to well drained, with moderate surface runoff potential and moderately slow permeability. Available water capacity is very low (Playas) to high. Severe rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and irrigated cropland (alfalfa, corn silage, and small grains).	182 (1)
430	Slaw-Playas complex	Moderate	Moderate (WEG 4L)	Consists of 45% Slaw loam and 40% Playas (silty clay loam). Level to nearly level soils on alluvial flats and playas. Parent material is alluvium from mixed sources. Very deep and very poorly (Playas) to well drained, with high surface runoff potential (slow infiltration rate) and slow permeability. Available water capacity is very low (Playas) to high. Severe rutting hazard. Used mainly for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.	137 (1)

^a Water erosion potential rates based on soil erosion factor K, which indicates the susceptibility of soil to sheet and rill erosion by water. Values range from 0.02 to 0.69 and are provided in parentheses under the general rating; a higher value indicates a higher susceptibility to erosion. Estimates based on the percentage of silt, sand, and organic matter and on soil structure and saturated hydraulic conductivity.

^b Wind erosion potential here is based on the wind erodibility group (WEG) designation: groups 1 and 2, high; groups 3 through 6, moderate; and groups 7 and 8 low (see footnote d for further explanation).

^c To convert from acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d WEG = wind erodibility group. WEGs are based on soil texture, content of organic matter, effervescence of carbonates, content of rock fragments, and mineralogy, and also take into account soil moisture, surface cover, soil surface roughness, wind velocity and direction, and the length of unsheltered distance (USDA 2004). Groups range in value from 1 (most susceptible to wind erosion) to 8 (least susceptible to wind erosion). The NRCS provides a wind erodibility index, expressed as an erosion rate in tons per acre per year, for each of the wind erodibility groups: WEG 1, 220 tons (200 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year; WEG 2, 134 tons (122 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year; and WEG 4L, 86 tons (78 metric tons) per acre (4,000 m²) per year.

Source: NRCS (2010).

1 Because impacts on soil resources result from ground-disturbing activities in the project
2 area, soil impacts would be roughly proportional to the size of a given solar facility, with larger
3 areas of disturbed soil having a greater potential for impacts than smaller areas (Section 5.7.2).
4 The magnitude of impacts would also depend on the types of components built for a given
5 facility since some components would involve greater disturbance and would take place over a
6 longer timeframe.
7

8 It is not known whether construction within the proposed Millers SEZ would affect the
9 eolian processes that maintain the Crescent Dunes to the northwest of the site. A study may be
10 required to evaluate the impacts of constructing and operating a solar facility in close proximity
11 to the landform and to develop specific mitigation measures to avoid or minimize them.
12

13 **11.7.7.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

14 No SEZ-specific design features were identified for soil resources at the proposed Millers
15 SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features described under both Soils and Air Quality
16 in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would reduce
17 the potential for soil impacts during all project phases.
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1 **11.7.8 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)**

2
3
4 **11.7.8.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 As of July 19, 2010, there are no locatable mining claims within the SEZ (BLM and
7 USFS 2010a), and the public land within the SEZ has been closed to locatable mineral entry
8 since June 2009 pending the outcome of this solar energy PEIS. There are no active oil and gas
9 leases in the area, and the area has not been leased in the past (BLM and USFS 2010b). The area
10 remains open for discretionary mineral leasing for oil and gas and other leasable minerals, and
11 for disposal of salable minerals. There is no active geothermal leasing or development in or near
12 the SEZ, nor has the area been leased previously (BLM and USFS 2010b).
13

14
15 **11.7.8.2 Impacts**

16
17 If the area is identified as a solar energy development zone, it would continue to be
18 closed to all incompatible forms of mineral development. For the purpose of this analysis, it is
19 assumed that future development of oil and gas resources, should any be found, would continue
20 to be possible, since such development could occur with directional drilling from outside the
21 SEZ. Since the SEZ does not contain existing mining claims, it was also assumed that there
22 would be no future loss of locatable mineral production. The production of common minerals,
23 such as sand and gravel and mineral materials used for road construction or other purposes,
24 might take place in areas not directly developed for solar energy production.
25

26 The SEZ has had no history of development of geothermal resources. For that reason,
27 it is not anticipated that solar development would adversely affect development of geothermal
28 resources.
29

30
31 **11.7.8.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

32
33 No SEZ specific design features are required. Implementing the programmatic design
34 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy
35 Program, would provide adequate mitigation for mineral resource impacts.
36

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1 **11.7.9 Water Resources**

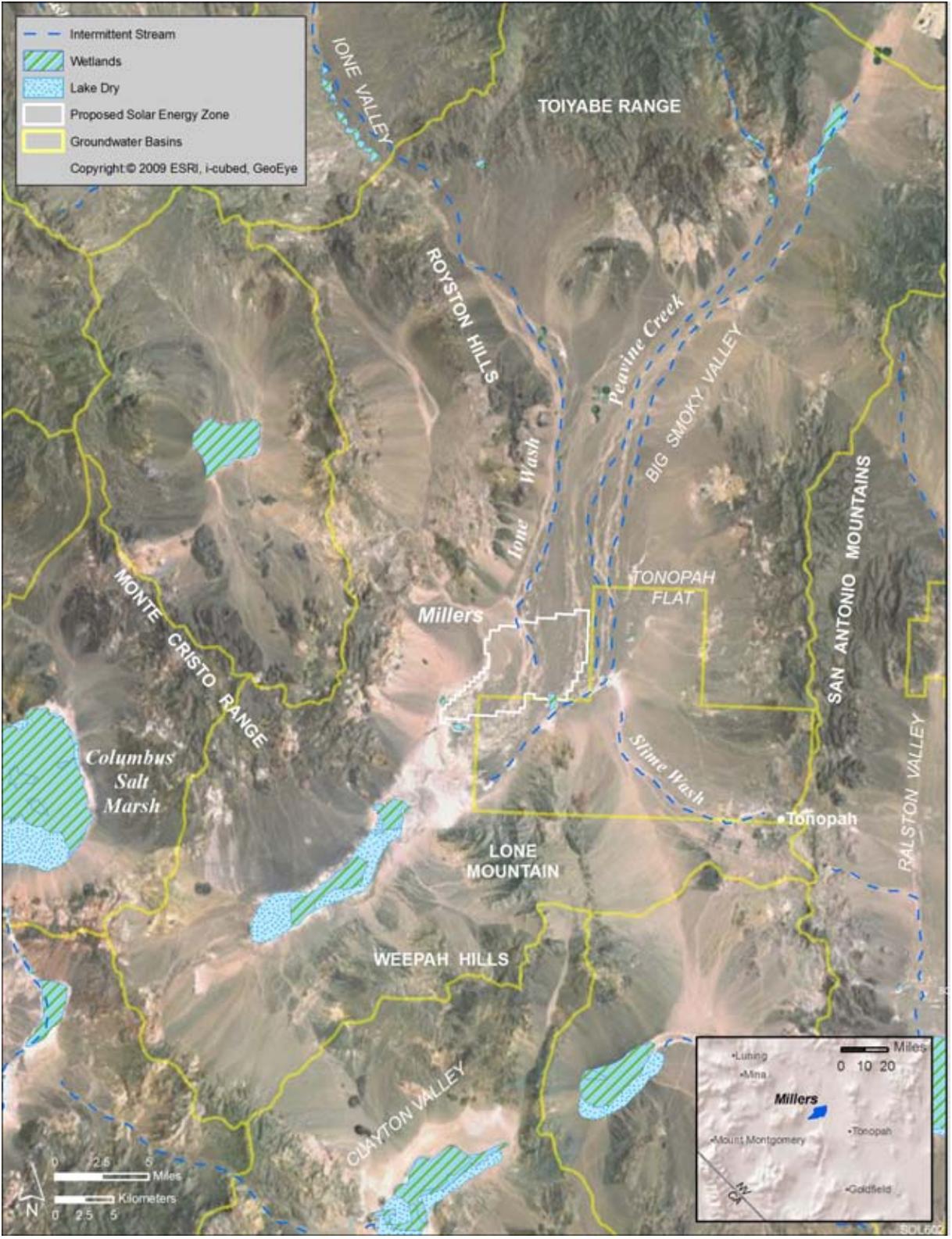
2
3
4 **11.7.9.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Millers SEZ is located within the Central Nevada Desert subbasin of the
7 Great Basin hydrologic region (USGS 2010a) and the Basin and Range physiographic province
8 characterized by intermittent mountain ranges and desert valleys (Planert and Williams 1995).
9 Big Smoky Valley is an elongated valley with a northeast–southwest orientation that covers an
10 area of 2,926 mi² (7,578 km²), and the proposed Millers SEZ is located in the southern half of
11 the valley known as the “Tonopah Flat.” The northern part of Big Smoky Valley is internally
12 drained with a shallow surface divide between the northern part and the Tonopah Flat, which
13 connects with Ione Valley to the north through a narrow mountain pass (Meinzer 1917). The
14 Tonopah Flat region covers an area of 1,603 mi² (4,512 km²) and has a general slope from
15 northeast to southwest. Surface elevations within the vicinity of the proposed SEZ range from
16 4,775 to 4,865 ft (1,455 to 1,483 m), and surface elevations in the surrounding Monte Cristo
17 Range and San Antonio Mountains reach greater than 7,500 ft (2,286 m) (Figure 11.7.9.1-1). The
18 climate in this region of Nevada is characterized as having low humidity and precipitation, with
19 mild winters and hot summers (Planert and Williams 1995; WRCC 2010a). The average annual
20 precipitation is 5 in. (13 cm), and the average annual snowfall is 13 in. (33 cm) near the town of
21 Tonopah, located at a slightly higher elevation than the proposed SEZ at 5,395 ft (1,644 m)
22 (WRCC 2010b). In the mountain regions, the average annual precipitation is on the order of 7 in.
23 (18 cm), with annual snowfalls of 50 in. (127 cm) (WRCC 2010c). Pan evaporation rates are
24 estimated to be 94 in./yr (239 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010d), and reference crop
25 evapotranspiration has been estimated at 58 in./yr (147 cm) (Huntington and Allen 2010) in the
26 Big Smoky Valley.

27
28
29 **11.7.9.1.1 Surface Waters (Including Drainages, Floodplains, and Wetlands)**

30
31 There are no perennial surface water features in the proposed Millers SEZ. Three
32 intermittent streams form braided stream channels and flow from north to south into the
33 proposed Millers SEZ. The Ione Wash drains the Ione Valley to the north of Big Smoky Valley,
34 and Peavine Creek and an unnamed wash flow out of the Toiyabe Range near the boundary of
35 the northern part of Big Smoky Valley and Tonopah Flat (Figure 11.7.9.1-1). The Ione Wash
36 contributes approximately 300 ac-ft/yr (370,000 m³/yr), and together Peavine Creek and the
37 unnamed wash contribute approximately 2,800 ac-ft/yr (3.5 million m³/yr) of surface runoff to
38 the Tonopah Flat (Rush and Schroer 1971). In the vicinity of the proposed SEZ is Slime Wash,
39 an intermittent stream that flows from east to west out of the town of Tonopah and ends
40 approximately 3 mi (5 km) east of the proposed SEZ. An elongated dry lake is located between
41 5 and 15 mi (8 and 24 km) southwest of the proposed SEZ and covers an area of 8,960 acres
42 along the axis of the valley.

43
44 Approximately 2,200 acres (9 km²) of the northwestern portion of the proposed
45 Millers SEZ is located at the base of an alluvial fan coming out of the pass between the
46 Monte Cristo Range and Royston Hills with several ephemeral washes present along the fan



1

2 **FIGURE 11.7.9.1-1 Surface Water Features near the Proposed Millers SEZ**

3

1 (Figure 11.7.9.1-1). Smaller alluvial fans southwest of the proposed SEZ are generated by
2 several ephemeral washes originating in the Monte Cristo Range. Peak discharges in these
3 mountain washes can range from 2 to 460 ft³/s (0.06 to 13 m³/s) (USGS 2010b; stream
4 gauge 10249680).

5
6 Several lacustrine wetlands in the Tonopah Flat area range in size from 43 to 2,770 acres
7 (0.2 to 11 km²), according to the NWI (USFWS 2009). Wetlands near the proposed Millers SEZ
8 are typically small, less than 200 acres (0.8 km²), and have sparse vegetation with water levels
9 below the land surface for most of the year. Two larger wetland areas are located within the large
10 dry lake bed southeast of the SEZ, and the Columbus Salt Marsh is located in the adjacent valley
11 west of Big Smoky Valley. These playa features can contain a high amount of dissolved salts in
12 certain areas (Meinzer 1917). Further information on wetlands within the region of the proposed
13 SEZ is presented in Section 11.7.10.1.

14
15 Flood hazards have not been identified in Esmeralda County but have been mapped for
16 Nye County just 1 mi (1.6 km) north and east of the proposed Millers SEZ (FEMA 2009). In
17 Nye County, the braided stream channels of the intermittent Ione Wash, Peavine Creek, and the
18 unnamed wash are all identified as being within a 100-year floodplain. It is very likely that these
19 100-year floodplains extend into Esmeralda County, and preliminary estimates using aerial
20 photography suggest that approximately 2,000 acres (8 km²) of the proposed Millers SEZ would
21 potentially be classified as within a 100-year floodplain. Additionally, erosion and sedimentation
22 along the alluvial fan in the northwestern corner of the proposed SEZ, as well as temporary
23 flooding in low-lying areas, may occur during large rainfall events.

24 25 26 **11.7.9.1.2 Groundwater**

27
28 The proposed Millers SEZ is located within the Big Smoky Valley-Tonopah Flat
29 groundwater basin (simply referred to as Tonopah Flat groundwater basin), which covers an area
30 of 1,025,900 acres (4,152 km²) (NDWR 2010a). The mountains surrounding the Tonopah Flat
31 area are principally composed of volcanic and sedimentary rocks. Groundwater in the Tonopah
32 Flat groundwater basin is primarily within the basin-fill aquifer, which comprises lenses of
33 gravels, sands, and clays of Quaternary and late Tertiary age sediments (Rush and Schroer 1971;
34 Whitebread and John 1992). The basin-fill deposits are typically 1,500 to 2,500 ft (457 to 762 m)
35 in thickness near the proposed SEZ and reach a maximum thickness of 5,000 ft (1,524 m) toward
36 the southern portion of the valley; transmissivity values range from 3,300 to 6,600 ft²/day
37 (307 to 613 m²/day) (Rush and Schroer 1971).

38
39 The bedrock that contains the basin-fill deposits in the Big Smoky Valley is highly
40 impervious, thus groundwater recharge is principally derived from precipitation and snow
41 runoff to the valley (Meinzer 1917). Groundwater recharge from precipitation and snowfall,
42 both on the valley surface and as runoff from the surrounding mountains, has been estimated to
43 be 12,000 ac-ft/yr (14.8 million m³/yr) in the Tonopah Flat basin (Rush and Schroer 1971);
44 however, more recent estimates of recharge range from 2,807 to 4,060 ac-ft/yr (3.5 million to
45 5.0 million m³/yr) (Flint et al. 2004). Subsurface inflow from the northern part of the Big Smoky
46 Valley was estimated to be 2,000 ac-ft/yr (2.5 million m³/yr) (Rush and Schroer 1971), and

1 subsurface inflow from Ralston Valley to the east was estimated to be less than 500 ac-ft/yr
2 (616,700 m³/yr) (NDWR 1971). Groundwater discharge processes in the Big Smoky Valley
3 include evapotranspiration, discharge to springs, groundwater withdrawals, and subsurface
4 outflow. Evapotranspiration by phreatic vegetation was estimated at 6,000 ac-ft/yr
5 (7.4 million m³/yr); discharge to springs was estimated at 230 ac-ft/yr (283,700 m³/yr); and
6 groundwater extractions totaled 260 ac-ft/yr (320,700 m³/yr) in 1968 (Rush and Schroer 1971).
7 Subsurface outflow is primarily to the Clayton Valley directly south of the Tonopah Flat basin,
8 with an estimated annual discharge of 8,000 ac-ft/yr (9.9 million m³/yr) (NDWR 1971).
9

10 The general groundwater flow pattern in the Tonopah Flat basin is from northeast to
11 southwest along the axis of the valley. Depth to groundwater ranges from 8 to 78 ft (2 to 24 m)
12 below the land surface within a 5-mi (8-km) radius of the proposed SEZ (USGS 2010b; well
13 numbers 380645117315801, 38083011727200, 381345117230501). In general, depth to
14 groundwater is greater in the northern portion of the Tonopah Flat basin and is near surface
15 levels in the vicinity of the dry lake playas in the southern portion of the basin (Meinzer 1917;
16 Rush and Schroer 1971). Groundwater surface elevations range from 4,695 to 5,233 ft (1,431 to
17 1,595 m) along the axis of the valley, resulting in an approximate slope of 0.3% in groundwater
18 surface elevations (USGS 2010b; well numbers 375821117440201, 381906117232001).
19 Groundwater quality generally meets drinking water standards, except for the dry lake playa
20 regions in the southern portion of the Tonopah Flat basin, where there are elevated sulfate,
21 chloride, and dissolved solids concentrations (Rush and Schroer 1971).
22
23

24 ***11.7.9.1.3 Water Use and Water Rights Management***

25
26 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Esmeralda County
27 were 46,786 ac-ft/yr (57.7 million m³/yr), of which 9% came from surface waters and 91% came
28 from groundwater. The largest water use categories for groundwater were irrigation and mining
29 at 28,235 and 14,202 ac-ft/yr (34.8 million and 17.5 million m³/yr), respectively. The remaining
30 groundwater withdrawals were used for domestic and livestock (Kenny et al. 2009). In the
31 Tonopah Flat basin, groundwater extractions totaled 260 ac-ft/yr (320,700 m³/yr) in 1968 and
32 were used primarily for irrigation purposes (Rush and Schroer 1971).
33

34 All waters in Nevada are the property of the public in the state of Nevada and subject
35 to the laws described in Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapters 532 through 538 (available at
36 <http://leg.state.nv.us/nrs>). The NDWR, led by the Office of the State Engineer, is the agency
37 responsible for managing both the surface water and groundwater resources, and this
38 responsibility includes overseeing water right applications, appropriations, and interbasin
39 transfers (NDWR 2010b). The two principal ideas behind water rights in Nevada are the prior
40 appropriations doctrine and the concept of beneficial use. A water right establishes an
41 appropriation amount and date such that more senior water rights have priority over newer water
42 rights. Additionally, water rights are treated as both real and personal property, such that water
43 rights can be transferred without affecting the land ownership (NDWR 2010b). Water rights
44 applications (new or transfer of existing) are approved if the water is available to be
45 appropriated, if existing water rights will not be affected, and if the proposed use is not deemed
46 to be harmful to the public interest. If these conditions are satisfied according to the Nevada

1 State Engineer, a proof of beneficial use of the approved water must be provided within a certain
2 time period, and following that a certificate of appropriation is issued (BLM 2001).

3
4 Both the northern part and the Tonopah Flat basins within the Big Smoky Valley are
5 designated groundwater basins according to Orders 725 and 827 (NDWR 1979, 1983a).
6 Additionally, approximately 1,300 acres (5.3 km²) of the proposed SEZ in T.3N-R.40E falls
7 under Order 828 (NDWR 1983b), which designates municipal and domestic water uses as the
8 preferred beneficial use. The perennial yield of the Tonopah Flat groundwater basin is set at
9 6,000 ac-ft/yr (7.4 million m³/yr), and water rights in the basin are over-appropriated with a total
10 of 19,588 ac-ft/yr (24.2 million m³/yr) being allotted for irrigation, mining, municipal, and
11 stockwater uses (95% of allotments used for irrigation and mining, NDWR 2010a). As
12 mentioned previously, groundwater extractions totaled 260 ac-ft/yr (320,700 m³/yr) in 1968
13 (Rush and Schroer 1971) in the Tonopah Flat basin. However, a current groundwater extraction
14 inventory is not available (NDWR 2010a), so it is not known how much of the allotted
15 groundwater rights are in use. Solar energy developers would have to purchase and transfer
16 existing water rights through coordination of the NDWR and current water rights holders.

17 18 19 **11.7.9.2 Impacts**

20
21 Potential impacts on water resources related to utility-scale solar energy development
22 include direct and indirect impacts on surface waters and groundwater. Direct impacts occur at
23 the place of origin and at the time of the proposed activity, while indirect impacts occur away
24 from the place of origin or later in time. Impacts on water resources considered in this analysis
25 are the result of land disturbance activities (construction, final developed site plan, as well as
26 off-site activities such as road and transmission line construction) and water use requirements for
27 solar energy technologies that take place during the four project phases: site characterization,
28 construction, operations, and decommissioning/reclamation. Both land disturbance and
29 consumptive water use activities can affect groundwater and surface water flows, cause
30 drawdown of groundwater surface elevations, modify natural drainage pathways, obstruct natural
31 recharge zones, and alter surface water–wetland–groundwater connectivity. Water quality can
32 also be degraded through the generation of wastewater, chemical spills, increased erosion and
33 sedimentation, and increased salinity (e.g., by excessive withdrawal from aquifers).

34 35 36 ***11.7.9.2.1 Land Disturbance Impacts on Water Resources***

37
38 Impacts related to land disturbance activities are common to all utility-scale solar energy
39 facilities, which are described in more detail for the four phases of development in Section 5.9.1;
40 these impacts will be minimized through the implementation of programmatic design features
41 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Land disturbance activities should be minimized in the
42 vicinity of the ephemeral stream channels of Ione Wash located through the middle of the
43 proposed SEZ, as well as in the vicinity of Peavine Creek just east of the proposed SEZ. During
44 large storm events, these intermittent streams have the potential to flood and cause sedimentation
45 and erosion issues (it is suspected that these intermittent streams are within the 100-year
46 floodplain, which will have to be determined during the site characterization phase).

1 Approximately 2,200 acres (9 km²) of the northwestern corner of the proposed SEZ is located on
2 the base of an alluvial fan containing several ephemeral washes. Disturbances to these ephemeral
3 washes could cause erosion impacts and disrupt groundwater recharge. Additionally, site design
4 and land disturbance activities could potentially alter surface water drainage and sedimentation
5 off the proposed SEZ to the southwest of the Tonopah Flat basin, which would potentially impair
6 the dry lake playa regions at the southern edge of Big Smoky Valley.
7
8

9 ***11.7.9.2.2 Water Use Requirements for Solar Energy Technologies***

11 **Analysis Assumptions**

12 A detailed description of the water use assumptions for the four utility-scale solar energy
13 technologies (parabolic trough, power tower, dish engine, and PV systems) is presented in
14 Appendix M. Assumptions regarding water use calculations specific to the proposed Millers SEZ
15 are as follows:
16
17

- 18 • On the basis of a total area of 16,787 acres (68 km²), it is assumed that two
19 solar projects would be constructed during the peak construction year;
20
- 21 • Water needed for making concrete would come from an off-site source;
22
- 23 • The maximum land disturbance for an individual solar facility during the peak
24 construction year is 3,000 acres (12 km²);
25
- 26 • Assumptions on individual facility size and land requirements (Appendix M),
27 along with the assumed number of projects and maximum allowable land
28 disturbance, result in the potential to disturb up to 36% of the SEZ total area
29 during the peak construction year; and
30
- 31 • Water use requirements for hybrid cooling systems are assumed to be
32 on the same order of magnitude as those for dry-cooling systems
33 (see Section 5.9.2.1).
34
35

36 **Site Characterization**

37 During site characterization, water would be used mainly for fugitive dust suppression
38 and the workforce potable water supply. Impacts on water resources during this phase of
39 development are expected to be negligible, since activities would be limited in area, extent,
40 and duration; water needs could be met by trucking water in from an off-site source.
41
42
43

1 **Construction**

2

3 During construction, water would be used mainly for controlling fugitive dust and the

4 workforce potable water supply. Because there are no significant surface water bodies on the

5 proposed Millers SEZ, the water requirements for construction activities could be met by either

6 trucking water to the sites or by using on-site groundwater resources.

7

8 Water requirements for dust suppression and potable water supply during construction,

9 shown in Table 11.7.9.2-1, could be as high as 3,300 ac-ft (4.1 million m³). The assumptions

10 underlying these estimates for each solar energy technology are described in Appendix M.

11 Groundwater wells would have to yield an estimated 1,418 to 2,045 gpm (5,368 to 7,741 L/min)

12 to meet the estimated construction water requirements. These yields are on the same order of

13 magnitude as large municipal and agricultural production wells (Harter 2003), so multiple wells

14 may be needed in order to meet the water requirements. In addition, the up to 148 ac-ft

15 (186,600 m³) of sanitary wastewater that would be generated would need to be treated either

16 on-site or sent to an off-site facility.

17

18 The total water use requirements for the peak construction year, listed in

19 Table 11.7.9.2-1, are approximately one-third to one-half of the perennial yield for the Tonopah

20 Flat groundwater basin. The potential impacts associated with groundwater withdrawals of this

21 magnitude would have to be assessed during the site characterization phase. Significant declines

22 in groundwater surface elevations as the result of groundwater extractions could potentially

23 affect phreatic vegetation within the Big Smoky Valley and impair other groundwater users in

24 the region.

25

26 **TABLE 11.7.9.2-1 Estimated Water Requirements during the Peak Construction Year for the Proposed Millers SEZ**

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	Photovoltaic
Water use requirements ^a				
Fugitive dust control (ac-ft) ^{b,c}	2,140	3,210	3,210	3,210
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft)	148	90	37	19
Total water use requirements (ac-ft)	2,288	3,300	3,247	3,229
Wastewater generated				
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft)	148	90	37	19

^a Assumptions of water use for fugitive dust control, potable supply for workforce, and wastewater generation are presented in Table M.9-1 (Appendix M).

^b Fugitive dust control estimation assumes a local pan evaporation rate of 94 in./yr (239 cm/yr) (Cowherd et al. 1988; WRCC 2010d).

^c To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.

1 **Operations**
2

3 During operations, water would be required for mirror/panel washing, the workforce
4 potable water supply, and cooling (parabolic trough and power tower only) (Table 11.7.9.2-2).
5 Water needs for cooling are a function of the type of cooling used (dry, hybrid, wet). Further
6 refinements to water requirements for cooling would result from the percentage of time that the
7 option was employed (30 to 60% range assumed) and the power of the system. The differences
8 between the water requirements reported in Table 11.7.9.2-2 for the parabolic trough and power
9 tower technologies are attributable to the assumptions of acreage per megawatt. As a result, the
10 water usage for the more energy-dense parabolic trough technology is estimated to be almost
11 twice as large as that for the power tower technology.
12

13 At full build-out capacity, water needs for mirror/panel washing are estimated to range
14 from 75 to 1,343 ac-ft/yr (92,500 to 1.7 million m³/yr), and the workforce potable water supply,
15 from 2 to 38 ac-ft/yr (2,500 to 46,900 m³/yr). The maximum total water usage during normal
16 operation at full build-out capacity would be greatest for those technologies using the wet-
17 cooling option and is estimated to be as high as 40,327 ac-ft/yr (49.7 million m³/yr). Water usage
18 for dry-cooling systems would be as high as 4,067 ac-ft/yr (5.0 million m³/yr), approximately a
19 factor of 10 times less than the wet-cooling option. Non-cooled technologies, dish engine and PV
20 systems, require substantially less water at full build-out capacity at 763 ac-ft/yr (941,100 m³/yr)
21 for dish engine and 77 ac-ft/yr (95,000 m³/yr) for PV (Table 11.7.9.2-2). Operations would
22 produce up to 38 ac-ft/yr (46,900 m³/yr) of sanitary wastewater; in addition, for wet-cooled
23 technologies, 424 to 763 ac-ft/yr (523,000 to 941,100 m³/yr) of cooling system blowdown water
24 would need to be treated either on- or off-site. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have
25 to ensure that treatment ponds are effectively lined in order to prevent any groundwater
26 contamination.
27

28 Groundwater is the primary water resource available for solar energy development at the
29 proposed Millers SEZ. The NDWR has set the perennial yield for the Tonopah Flat groundwater
30 basin at 6,000 ac-ft/yr (7.4 million m³/yr), which is less than half of the amount of water needed
31 to support wet-cooled parabolic trough operations under the full build-out scenario. Water use
32 requirements for wet-cooled power tower operations are also greater than the perennial yield, so
33 wet cooling is not feasible for the proposed Millers SEZ. Water use requirements for dry-cooled
34 parabolic trough and power tower technologies, as well as dish engine and PV, could be
35 supported by groundwater resources in the Tonopah Flats groundwater basin, assuming that
36 groundwater rights could be transferred.
37
38

39 **Decommissioning/Reclamation**
40

41 During decommissioning/reclamation, all surface structures associated with the solar
42 project would be dismantled, and the site reclaimed to its preconstruction state. Activities and
43 water needs during this phase would be similar to those during the construction phase (dust
44 suppression and potable supply for workers) and might also include water to establish vegetation
45 in some areas. However, the total volume of water needed is expected to be less. Because

TABLE 11.7.9.2-2 Estimated Water Requirements during Operations at the Proposed Millers SEZ

Activity	Parabolic Trough	Power Tower	Dish Engine	PV
Full build-out capacity (MW) ^{a,b}	2,686	1,492	1,492	1,492
Water use requirements				
Mirror/panel washing (ac-ft/yr) ^{c,d}	1,343	746	746	75
Potable supply for workforce (ac-ft/yr)	38	17	17	2
Dry cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	537–2,686	298–1,492	NA ^f	NA
Wet cooling (ac-ft/yr) ^e	12,087–38,946	6,715–21,637	NA	NA
Total water use requirements				
Non-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	NA	NA	763	77
Dry-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	1,918–4,067	1,061–2,255	NA	NA
Wet-cooled technologies (ac-ft/yr)	13,468–40,327	7,478–22,400	NA	NA
Wastewater Generated				
Blowdown (ac-ft/yr) ^g	763	424	NA	NA
Sanitary wastewater (ac-ft/yr)	38	17	17	2

- ^a Land area for parabolic trough was estimated at 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW); land area for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies was estimated at 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW).
- ^b Water needs are linearly related to power. Water usage for any other size project can be estimated by using multipliers provided in Table M.9-2 (Appendix M).
- ^c Value assumes a usage rate of 0.5 ac-ft/yr/MW for mirror washing for parabolic trough, power tower, and dish engine technologies and a rate of 0.05 ac-ft/yr/MW for panel washing for PV systems.
- ^d To convert ac-ft to m³, multiply by 1,234.
- ^e Dry-cooling value assumes 0.2 to 1.0 ac-ft/yr/MW, and wet-cooling value assumes 4.5 to 14.5 ac-ft/yr/MW (range in these values represents 30 and 60% operating times) (DOE 2009).
- ^f NA = not applicable.
- ^g Value scaled from 250-MW Beacon Solar project with an annual discharge of 44 gpm (167 L/min) (AECOM 2009). Blowdown estimates are relevant to wet cooling only.

1
2
3 quantities of water needed during the decommissioning/reclamation phase would be less than
4 those for construction, impacts on surface and groundwater resources also would be less.
5
6

7 **11.7.9.2.3 Off-Site Impacts: Roads and Transmission Lines**

8
9 Impacts associated with the construction of roads and transmission lines primarily deal
10 with water use demands for construction, water quality concerns relating to potential chemical
11 spills, and land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology. The extent of the impacts on water
12 resources is proportional to the amount and location of land disturbance needed to connect the

1 proposed SEZ to major roads and existing transmission lines. The proposed Millers SEZ is
2 located adjacent to existing roads and transmission lines, as described in Section 11.7.1.2, so it is
3 assumed that impacts would be negligible.
4
5

6 ***11.7.9.2.4 Summary of Impacts on Water Resources*** 7

8 The impacts on water resources associated with developing solar energy at the proposed
9 Millers SEZ are related to land disturbance effects on the natural hydrology, water quality
10 concerns, and water use requirements for the various solar energy technologies. Land disturbance
11 activities can cause localized erosion and sedimentation issues, as well as alter groundwater
12 recharge and discharge processes. The ephemeral stream channels of Ione Wash, Peavine Creek,
13 and an unnamed wash are likely located within a 100-year floodplain, according to FEMA maps,
14 in the adjacent Nye County (FEMA 2009). The 100-year floodplain would be identified during
15 the site characterization phase, and areas of the proposed SEZ within the 100-year floodplain
16 should be avoided. Additionally, alteration of the surface water drainage pattern off the proposed
17 SEZ toward the southwest could impair the dry lake playa areas through sedimentation and
18 erosion, as well as divert water from these natural drainage lows of the Big Smoky Valley.
19

20 Impacts relating to water use requirements vary depending on the type of solar
21 technology built and, for technologies using cooling systems, the type of cooling (wet, dry, or
22 hybrid) used. Groundwater is the primary water resource available to solar energy facilities in the
23 proposed Millers SEZ. The water use requirements for technologies using wet cooling are greater
24 than the perennial yield for the Tonopah Flats groundwater basin, so wet cooling would not be
25 feasible for the full build-out scenario. For evaluating wet-cooling technologies for the proposed
26 Millers SEZ, an analysis of the maximum power production was done assuming that the water
27 use was limited to the perennial yield of the basin, 6,000 ac-ft/yr (7.4 million m³/yr). This
28 analysis suggests that between 15 and 27% of the full build-out power production potential is
29 possible for wet-cooled parabolic trough and power tower technologies (assuming a
30 60% operating time) if the water supply is limited to the perennial yield of the basin.
31

32 Dry-cooling, dish engine, and PV technologies all have full build-out water use
33 requirements that are lower than the perennial yield of the basin, suggesting that groundwater
34 resources in the Tonopah Flats basin could support their development. However, facilities using
35 these technologies should also implement water conservation practices to limit water needs.
36 Water conservation plans will help solar energy developers in purchasing and transferring
37 needed water rights within the overappropriated Tonopah Flats basin.
38
39

40 **11.7.9.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness** 41

42 The program for solar energy development on BLM-administered lands would require
43 the programmatic design features presented in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, to be implemented,
44 thus mitigating some impacts on water resources. Programmatic design features would focus on
45 coordination with federal, state, and local agencies that regulate the use of water resources to
46 meet the requirements of permits and approvals needed to obtain water for development, and on

1 the performance of hydrological studies to characterize the aquifer from which groundwater
2 would be obtained (including drawdown effects, if a new point of diversion is created). The
3 greatest consideration for mitigating water impacts would be in the selection of solar
4 technologies. The mitigation of impacts would be best achieved by selecting technologies with
5 low water demands.

6
7 Design features specific to the proposed Millers SEZ include the following:

- 8
9 • Water resource analysis indicates that wet-cooling options would not be
10 feasible; other technologies should incorporate water conservation measures;
- 11
12 • Land disturbance activities should minimize impacts on the ephemeral stream
13 channels of Ione Wash and Peavine Creek, as well as alluvial fan features
14 along the western edge of the SEZ;
- 15
16 • Siting of solar facilities and construction activities should avoid any areas
17 identified as within a 100-year floodplain or jurisdictional waters
- 18
19 • Groundwater rights must be obtained through coordination with the NDWR
20 and current water rights holders;
- 21
22 • Stormwater management plans and BMPs should comply with standards
23 developed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
24 (NDEP 2010);
- 25
26 • Groundwater monitoring and production wells should be constructed in
27 accordance with state standards (NDWR 2006); and
- 28
29 • Water for potable uses would have to meet or be treated to meet the water
30 quality standards of the *Nevada Administrative Code* (445A.453-445A.455).
- 31
32

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1 **11.7.10 Vegetation**
2

3 This section addresses vegetation that could occur or is known to occur within the
4 potentially affected area of the proposed Millers SEZ. The affected area considered in this
5 assessment included the areas of direct and indirect effects. The area of direct effects is defined
6 as the area that would be physically modified during project development (i.e., where ground-
7 disturbing activities would occur) and included only the SEZ. No new access roads or
8 transmission projects are expected to be needed to serve development on the SEZ because of the
9 proximity of existing infrastructure (refer to Section 11.7.1.2 for development assumptions). The
10 area of indirect effects was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary, where
11 ground-disturbing activities would not occur but that could be indirectly affected by activities in
12 the area of direct effects.
13

14 Indirect effects considered in the assessment included effects from surface runoff, dust,
15 and accidental spills from the SEZ, but did not include ground-disturbing activities, because
16 these would not take place outside of the SEZ. The potential degree of indirect effects would
17 decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. This area of indirect effects was identified on
18 the basis of professional judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area that
19 would potentially be subject to indirect effects. The affected area is the area bounded by the
20 areas of direct and indirect effects. These areas are defined and the impact assessment approach
21 is described in Appendix M.
22
23

24 **11.7.10.1 Affected Environment**
25

26 The proposed Millers SEZ is located primarily within the Tonopah Basin Level IV
27 ecoregion, which primarily supports sparse shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) communities on
28 broad valleys, hills, bajadas, and alluvial fans (Bryce et al. 2003). Additional commonly
29 occurring shrubs in this ecoregion include bud sagebrush (*Picrothamnus desertorum*), spiny
30 hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*), seepweed (*Suaeda* sp.), fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), spiny
31 menodora (*Menodora spinescens*), Nevada ephedra (*Ephedra nevadensis*), littleleaf horsebrush
32 (*Tetradymia glabrata*), Douglas rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), and winterfat
33 (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), which, along with shadscale, often codominate in highly diverse
34 mosaics. Warm season grasses, such as Indian rice grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) and galleta
35 grass (*Pleuraphis jamesii*), occur in the understory. Stands of inland saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*)
36 and alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*) also occur. Bailey greasewood (*Sarcobatus baileyi*) and
37 Shockley wolfberry (*Lycium* sp.) are widespread and often codominate on lower alluvial slopes
38 in this ecoregion. Black greasewood occurs in saline bottoms. Springs and sporadic precipitation
39 in foothills provide surface water sources. The southwestern portion of the Millers SEZ is
40 located within the Lahontan and Tonopah Playas. This Level IV ecoregion is nearly level and
41 contains mud flats, alkali flats, intermittent saline lakes, and low sand dunes. Marshes, remnant
42 lakes, and playas occur within this ecoregion. Rivers terminate in the playas, which during
43 winter fill with seasonal runoff from nearby mountains. Only scattered, highly salt-tolerant
44 plants, such as alkali sacaton, inland saltgrass, and seepweed, occur in this mostly barren
45 ecoregion. Bordering the playas, black greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*) or fourwing
46 saltbush may form a transition to the salt shrub community. Playas may be sources of

1 wind-generated salt dust. Annual precipitation in the vicinity of the SEZ is very low, averaging
2 5.1 in. (12.9 cm) at Tonopah airport (see Section 11.7.13).

3
4 The Tonopah Basin and Lahontan and Tonopah Playas lie within the Central Basin and
5 Range Level III ecoregion, described in Appendix I, and are part of the Great Basin desertscrub
6 biome.

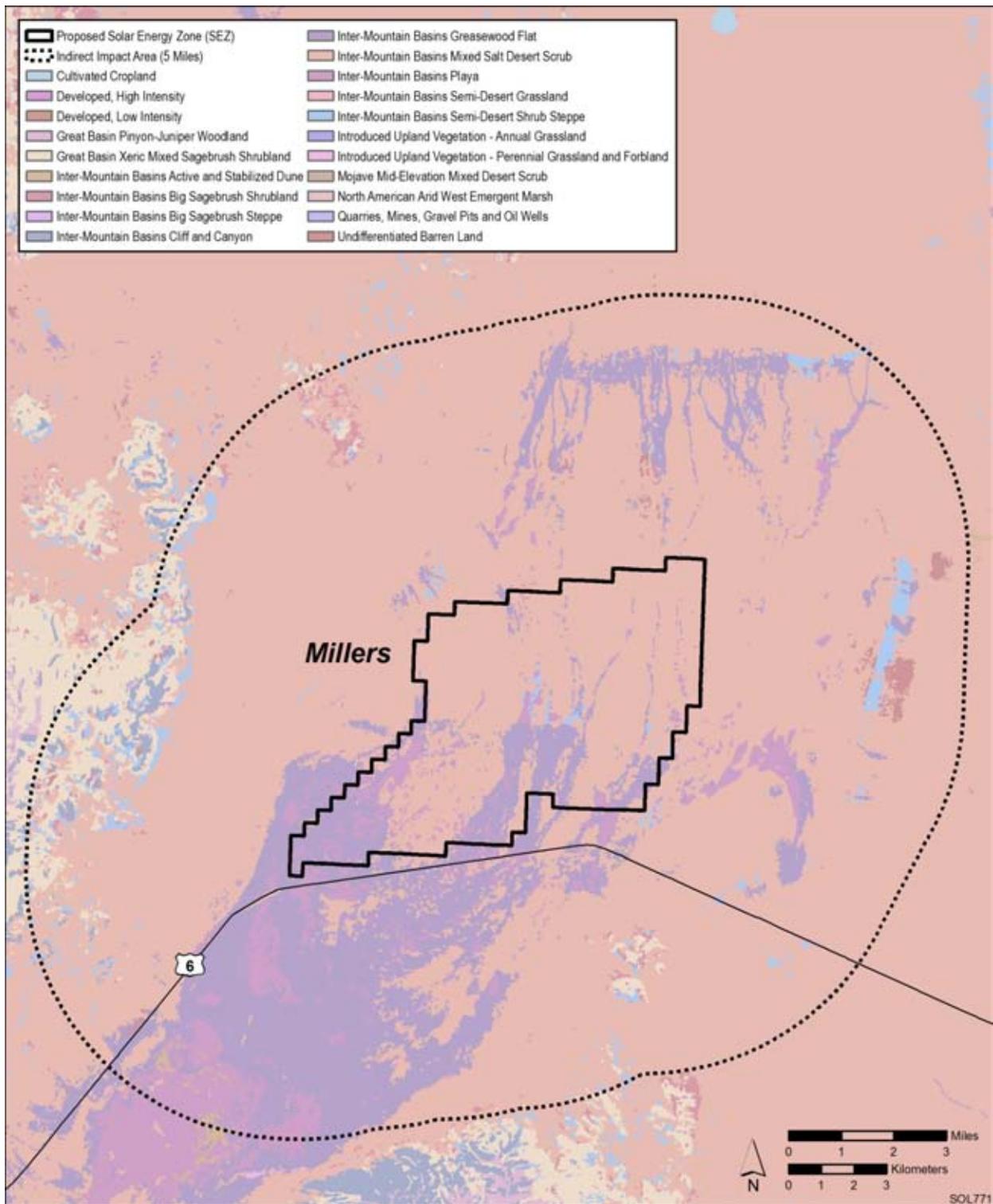
7
8 The area surrounding the SEZ consists of a mosaic of the Tonopah Basin, Lahontan and
9 Tonopah Playas, and the Tonopah Sagebrush Foothills Level IV ecoregions. This area supports
10 black sagebrush (*Artemisia nova*) and Mojave species, such as blackbrush (*Coleogyne*
11 *ramosissima*), Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), and cholla (*Cylindropuntia* sp.), on rocky
12 substrates.

13
14 Land cover types described and mapped under SWReGAP (USGS 2005a) were used to
15 evaluate plant communities in and near the SEZ. Each cover type encompasses a range of
16 similar plant communities. Land cover types occurring within the potentially affected area of
17 the proposed Millers SEZ are shown in Figure 11.7.10.1-1. Table 11.7.10.1-1 provides the
18 surface area of each cover type within the potentially affected area.

19
20 Lands within the proposed Millers SEZ are classified primarily as Inter-Mountain Basins
21 Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. Additional cover types within the SEZ are given in Table 11.7.10.1-1.
22 Dominant species in the sparse low salt scrub communities observed in most portions of the
23 SEZ in August 2009 include shadscale, Nevada ephedra, Bailey's greasewood, and spiny
24 hopsage, with rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus/Ericameria* sp.) in disturbed areas. The SEZ includes
25 many low playa areas, predominantly in the southern portion, containing widely scattered low
26 hummocks of black greasewood, occasionally with Indian ricegrass. The playas are bordered
27 by a predominantly black greasewood community. Much of the SEZ consists of north to south
28 trending broad, barren, gravel-covered washes, with small scattered playa areas, with shadscale
29 and fourwing saltbush along the margins or in isolated stands. Sensitive habitats on the SEZ
30 include desert dry washes, playas, and wetlands. A population of candelaria blazingstar
31 (*Mentzelia candelariae*) occurs approximately 3 mi (4.8 km) east of the SEZ. This species is on
32 the NNHP watch list and may potentially occur on the SEZ.

33
34 The area of indirect effects, including the area surrounding the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km),
35 contains 15 cover types, which are listed in Table 11.7.10.1-1. The predominant cover type is
36 Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. Crescent Dunes, mapped as Inter-Mountain
37 Basins Active and Stabilized Dune, are located about 5 mi (8 km) northeast of the SEZ. Sand
38 dunes are also located about 5 mi (8 km) southwest of the SEZ.

39
40 One wetland mapped by the NWI is located within the southeastern portion of the SEZ
41 (USFWS 2009) (Figure 11.7.10.1-2). This sparsely vegetated lacustrine wetland is mapped
42 primarily as Inter-Mountain Basins Playa, with small areas of Inter-Mountain Basins
43 Greasewood Flat and Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. Approximately 84 acres
44 (0.3 km²) of this 192.9-acre (0.8-km²) wetland is located within the SEZ. The remaining portion
45 is located entirely within the area of indirect effects. Smaller playa areas not mapped by the NWI



1

2 **FIGURE 11.7.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Proposed Millers SEZ (Source: USGS 2004)**

3

TABLE 11.7.10.1-1 Land Cover Types within the Potentially Affected Area of the Proposed Millers SEZ and Potential Impacts

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b		
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Overall Impact Magnitude ^e
Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub: Generally consists of open shrublands that include at least one species of <i>Atriplex</i> , along with other shrubs. Perennial grasses dominate a sparse to moderately dense herbaceous layer.	12,211 acres ^f (0.5%, 0.5%)	93,460 acres (3.6%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat: Dominated or codominated by greasewood (<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>) and generally occurring in areas with saline soils, a shallow water table, and intermittent flooding, although remaining dry for most growing seasons. This community type generally occurs near drainages or around playas. These areas may include, or may be codominated by, other shrubs, and may include a graminoid herbaceous layer.	3,149 acres (3.4%, 3.7%)	19,074 acres (20.4%)	Moderate
Inter-Mountain Basins Playa: Playa habitats are intermittently flooded and generally barren or sparsely vegetated. Depressions may contain small patches of grass, and sparse shrubs may occur around playa margins.	1,290 acres (1.4%, 1.7%)	5,307 acres (5.6%)	Moderate
Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe: Generally consists of perennial grasses with an open shrub and dwarf shrub layer.	137 acres (0.1%, 0.1%)	2,240 acres (0.3%)	Small
Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub: The vegetation composition is quite variable. Dominant species include shrubs forbs and grasses and may include <i>Yucca</i> spp.	4 acres (0.2%, 0.5%)	37 acres (2.3%)	Small
Great Basin Xeric Mixed Sagebrush Shrubland: Generally occurs on level plains, slopes, and ridges. The dominant shrub species are black sagebrush (<i>Artemisia nova</i>) or, at higher elevations, little sagebrush (<i>Artemisia arbuscula</i>), and codominants may be Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata</i> ssp. <i>wyomingensis</i>) or yellow rabbitbrush (<i>Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus</i>). Other shrub species, as well as sparse perennial bunchgrasses, may also be present.	0 acres	3,788 acres (0.6%)	Small

TABLE 11.7.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b		
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Overall Impact Magnitude ^e
Inter-Mountain Basins Cliff and Canyon: Includes barren and sparsely vegetated (generally <10% plant cover) steep cliff faces, narrow canyons, small rock outcrops, and scree and talus slopes. Composed of widely scattered coniferous trees and a variety of shrubs.	0 acres	720 acres (1.8%)	Small
Undifferentiated Barren Land: Includes a variety of barren areas, generally with less than 15% cover of vegetation.	0 acres	683 acres (13.5%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland: Dominated by basin big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata tridentata</i>), Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis</i>), or both. Other shrubs may be present. Perennial herbaceous plants are present but not abundant.	0 acres	541 acres (0.1%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Active and Stabilized Dune: Includes Dune and sandsheet areas that are unvegetated or sparsely vegetated, with up to 30% plant cover, but generally less than 10%. Plant communities consist of patchy or open grassland, shrubland, or shrub steppe, with species often adapted to the shifting sandy substrate.	0 acres	149 acres (6.5%)	Small
Great Basin Pinyon-Juniper Woodland: Occurs on low-elevation slopes and ridges. Singleleaf pinyon (<i>Pinus monophylla</i>), Utah juniper (<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i>), or both are the dominant species, generally associating with curl-leaf mountain mahogany (<i>Cercocarpus ledifolius</i>). Understory species include shrubs and grasses.	0 acres	54 acres (<0.1%)	Small
Introduced Upland Vegetation—Annual Grassland: Dominated by non-native annual grass species.	0 acres	33 acres (1.4%)	Small
Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Grassland: Consists of perennial bunchgrasses as dominants or codominants. Scattered shrubs or dwarf shrubs may also be present.	0 acres	5 acres (0.1%)	Small

TABLE 11.7.10.1-1 (Cont.)

Land Cover Type ^a	Area of Cover Type Affected (acres) ^b		
	Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	Overall Impact Magnitude ^e
Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Steppe: Dominated by basin big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata tridentata</i>), Wyoming big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis</i>), or both. Other shrubs may be present. Perennial grasses are often abundant.	0 acres	4 acres (0.2%)	Small
North American Arid West Emergent Marsh: Occurs in natural depressions, such as ponds, or bordering lakes, or slow-moving streams or rivers. Alkalinity is highly variable. The plant community is characterized by herbaceous emergent, submergent, and floating leaved species.	0 acres	2 acres (1.1%)	Small

^a Land cover descriptions are from USGS (2005a). Full descriptions of land cover types, including plant species, can be found in Appendix I.

^b Area in acres, determined from USGS (2004).

^c Includes the area of the cover type within the SEZ, the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region (i.e., a 50-mi [80-km] radius from the center of the SEZ), and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type on BLM lands within the SEZ region.

^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary where ground-disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, and other factors from projects. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. Includes the area of the cover type within the indirect effects area and the percentage that area represents of all occurrences of that cover type within the SEZ region.

^e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and were (1) *small*: a relatively small proportion ($\leq 1\%$) of the cover type within the SEZ region would be lost; (2) *moderate*: an intermediate proportion (> 1 but $\leq 10\%$) of a cover type would be lost; (3) *large*: $> 10\%$ of a cover type would be lost.

^f To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

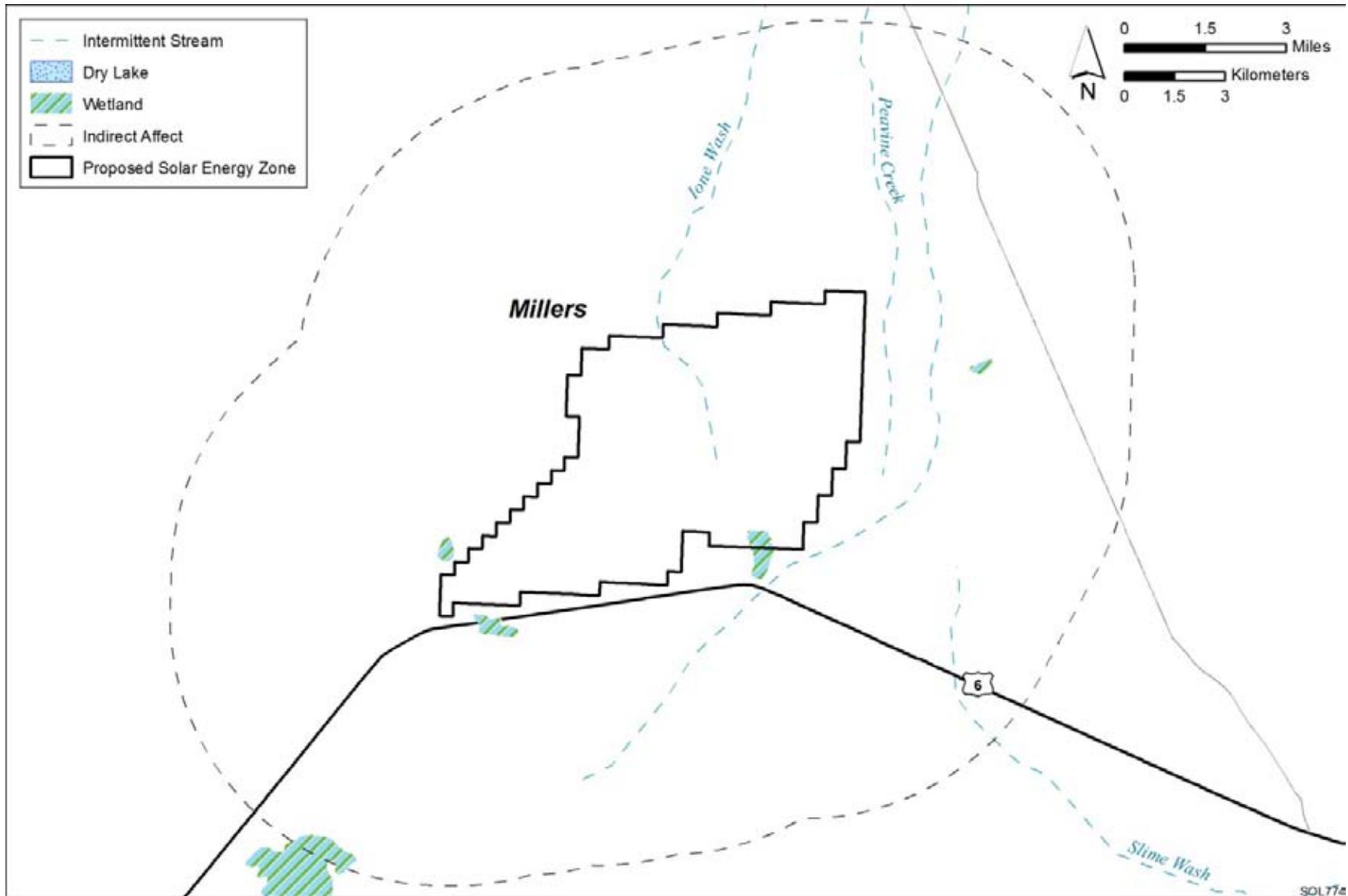


FIGURE 11.7.10.1-2 Wetlands within the Proposed Millers SEZ (Source: USFWS 2009)

1 occur within the SEZ. Numerous dry washes occur within the SEZ, generally flowing to the
2 south and terminating in the playa areas. These washes do not support wetland or riparian
3 habitats. Ione Wash, an intermittent stream, flows south into the SEZ. Two additional
4 intermittent streams, Peavine Creek and an unnamed wash, are located immediately east of the
5 SEZ. These streams generally carry surface flows during spring months. The dry washes and
6 playas typically contain water for short periods during or following precipitation events.

8 Four additional wetlands occur within the area of indirect effects. All of these are
9 sparsely vegetated lacustrine wetlands, which are mapped primarily as Inter-Mountain Basins
10 Playa, with small areas of Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood Flat and Inter-Mountain Basins
11 Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. Large areas of these playa habitats are located southwest of the SEZ.
12 Groundwater is relatively shallow in the vicinity of the playas in the southern portion of the
13 Tonopah Flat basin, which includes the Millers SEZ (see Section 11.7.9), and supports plant
14 communities when surface water is absent. Several springs also occur in the vicinity of the SEZ.

16 The State of Nevada maintains an official list of weed species designated as noxious
17 species (NDA 2010). Table 11.7.10.1-2 provides a summary of the noxious weed species
18 regulated in Nevada that are known to occur in Esmeralda County (USDA 2010), which includes
19 the proposed Millers SEZ. According to Creech et al. (2010), none of the weed species from the
20 Nevada state list occurs in the county. No species included in Table 11.7.10.1-2 were observed
21 on the SEZ in August 2009.

23 The NDA classifies noxious weeds into one of three categories (NDA 2010):

- 25 • “Category A: Weeds not found or limited in distribution throughout the state;
26 actively excluded from the state and actively eradicated wherever found;
27 actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises; control required by the
28 state in all infestations.”

30
**TABLE 11.7.10.1-2 Designated Noxious
Weeds of Nevada Occurring in Esmeralda
County**

Common Name	Scientific Name	Category
Musk thistle	<i>Carduus nutans</i>	B
Puncture vine	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	C
Saltcedar	<i>Tamarix</i> spp.	C

Sources: NDA (2010); USDA (2010).

31
32

- 1 • “Category B: Weeds established in scattered populations in some counties of
2 the state; actively excluded where possible, actively eradicated from nursery
3 stock dealer premises; control required by the state in areas where populations
4 are not well established or previously unknown to occur.”
5
- 6 • “Category C: Weeds currently established and generally widespread in many
7 counties of the state; actively eradicated from nursery stock dealer premises;
8 abatement at the discretion of the state quarantine officer.”
9

10 **11.7.10.2 Impacts**

11
12
13 The construction of solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ would result
14 in direct impacts on plant communities due to the removal of vegetation within the facility
15 footprint during land-clearing and land-grading operations. Approximately 80% of the SEZ
16 (13,430 acres [54.3 km²]) would be expected to be cleared with full development of the SEZ.
17 The plant communities affected would depend on facility locations and could include any of the
18 communities occurring on the SEZ. Therefore, for this analysis, all the area of each cover type
19 within the SEZ is considered to be directly affected by removal with full development of
20 the SEZ.
21

22 Indirect effects (caused, e.g., by surface runoff or dust from the SEZ) have the potential
23 to degrade affected plant communities and may reduce biodiversity by promoting the decline
24 or elimination of species sensitive to disturbance. Indirect effects can also cause an increase
25 in disturbance-tolerant species or invasive species. High impact levels could result in the
26 elimination of a community or the replacement of one community type by another. The proper
27 implementation of programmatic design features, however, would reduce indirect effects to a
28 minor or small level of impact.
29

30 Possible impacts from solar energy facilities on vegetation within the SEZ are described
31 in more detail in Section 5.10.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the
32 implementation of required design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and from
33 any additional mitigation applied. Section 11.7.10.2.3, below, identifies design features of
34 particular relevance to the proposed Millers SEZ.
35
36

37 ***11.7.10.2.1 Impacts on Native Species***

38
39 The impacts of construction, operation, and decommissioning were considered small if
40 the impact affected a relatively small proportion (<1%) of the cover type in the SEZ region
41 (within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ); moderate (>1 but <10%) if the impact could
42 affect an intermediate proportion of cover type; and large if the impact could affect more than
43 10% of a cover type.
44

45 Solar facility construction and operation in the proposed Millers SEZ would primarily
46 affect communities of the Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub cover type. Additional

1 cover types that would be affected within the SEZ include Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood
2 Flat, Inter-Mountain Basins Playa, Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe, and
3 Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub. Table 11.7.10.1-1 summarizes the potential
4 impacts on land cover types resulting from solar energy facilities in the proposed Millers SEZ.
5 Most of these cover types are relatively common in the SEZ region; however, Mojave Mid-
6 Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub is relatively uncommon, representing 0.03% of the land area
7 within the SEZ region. Desert dry washes, playas, and wetlands are important sensitive habitats
8 on the SEZ.

9
10 The construction, operation, and decommissioning of solar projects within the proposed
11 Millers Valley SEZ would result in moderate impacts on the Inter-Mountain Basins Greasewood
12 Flat and Inter-Mountain Basins Playa cover types. Solar project development within the SEZ
13 would result in small impacts on the remaining cover types in the affected area.

14
15 Because of the arid conditions, re-establishment of shrub or shrub steppe communities in
16 temporarily disturbed areas would likely be very difficult and might require extended periods of
17 time. In addition, noxious weeds could become established in disturbed areas and colonize
18 adjacent undisturbed habitats, thus reducing restoration success and potentially resulting in
19 widespread habitat degradation. Cryptogamic soil crusts occur in many of the shrubland
20 communities in the region. Damage to these crusts, by the operation of heavy equipment or
21 other vehicles, can alter important soil characteristics, such as nutrient cycling and availability
22 and affect plant community characteristics (Lovich and Bainbridge 1999).

23
24 The deposition of fugitive dust from large areas of disturbed soil onto habitats outside
25 a solar project area could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community
26 composition. Fugitive dust deposition could affect plant communities of each of the cover
27 types occurring within the area of indirect effects identified in Table 11.7.10.1-1. Solar project
28 development within the SEZ could alter sand transport processes, potentially affecting sand dune
29 plant communities in Crescent Dunes, northeast of the SEZ, or dunes southwest of the SEZ.

30
31 Communities associated with playa habitats, Ione Wash, greasewood flats communities,
32 or other intermittently flooded areas within and downgradient from solar projects could be
33 affected by ground-disturbing activities. Extensive playa habitats southwest of the SEZ could
34 be affected. Site-clearing and-grading could disrupt surface water flow patterns, resulting in
35 changes in the frequency, duration, depth, or extent of inundation or soil saturation and could
36 potentially alter playa or greasewood flats plant communities and affect community function.
37 Increases in surface runoff from a solar energy project site could also affect hydrologic
38 characteristics of these communities. The introduction of contaminants into these habitats could
39 result from spills of fuels or other materials used on a project site. Soil disturbance could result
40 in sedimentation in these areas, which could degrade or eliminate sensitive plant communities.
41 Grading could also affect dry wash habitats within the SEZ. Alteration of surface drainage
42 patterns or hydrology could adversely affect downstream dry wash communities. Vegetation
43 within these communities could be lost by erosion or desiccation. Disturbance of the dry washes
44 within the SEZ could affect groundwater recharge.

1 Potential impacts on wetlands as a result of solar energy development are described in
2 Section 5.6.1. Approximately 84 acres (0.3 km²) of wetland habitat have been identified within
3 the Millers SEZ, associated with playa habitat, and could be affected by project development.
4 Direct impacts on the wetland would occur if fill material is placed within the playa for solar
5 facility construction. Indirect impacts, as described above, could occur if project construction
6 occurs near or upgradient from the playa.
7

8 Although the use of groundwater within the Millers SEZ for technologies with high water
9 requirements, such as wet-cooling systems, may be unlikely, groundwater withdrawals for such
10 systems could reduce groundwater elevations in the Tonopah Flat groundwater basin, or other
11 hydrologically-connected basins. Plant communities that access groundwater, such as those in
12 the vicinity of playas, or habitats associated with springs, could become degraded or lost as a
13 result of lowered groundwater levels. The potential for impacts on springs would need to be
14 evaluated by project-specific hydrological studies.
15

16 Candelaria blazingstar, a plant species on the NNHP watch list, may occur within the
17 SEZ and may be directly affected by solar project development. The population occurring east
18 of the SEZ may be indirectly affected by project activities within the SEZ.
19
20

21 ***11.7.10.2.2 Impacts from Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plant Species***

22

23 Executive Order (E.O.) 13112, “Invasive Species,” directs federal agencies to prevent
24 the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic,
25 ecological, and human health impacts of invasive species (*Federal Register*, Volume 64,
26 page 61836, Feb. 8, 1999). Potential effects of noxious weeds and invasive plant species that
27 could result from solar energy facilities are described in Section 5.10.1. Noxious weeds and
28 invasive species could inadvertently be brought to a project site by equipment previously used in
29 infested areas, or they may be present on or near a project site. Despite required programmatic
30 design features to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, project disturbance could potentially
31 increase the prevalence of noxious weeds and invasive species in the affected area of the
32 proposed Millers SEZ, and increase the probability that weeds could be transported into areas
33 that previously were relatively weed-free. This could result in reduced restoration success and
34 possible widespread habitat degradation.
35

36 Invasive species potentially occur on the SEZ. Species designated as noxious weeds in
37 Nevada, and known to occur in Esmeralda County, are given in Table 11.7.10.1-2. No cover
38 types of introduced species occur within the SEZ. Within the area of indirect effects, 33 acres
39 (0.13 km²) of Introduced Upland Vegetation–Annual Grassland are mapped. Disturbance
40 associated with solar project development may promote the establishment and spread of invasive
41 species associated with this cover type. Past or present land uses, such as OHV activity, may
42 affect the susceptibility of plant communities to the establishment of noxious weeds and invasive
43 species. Disturbance associated with existing roads and transmission lines within the SEZ area
44 of potential impacts also likely contributes to the susceptibility of plant communities to the
45 establishment and spread of noxious weeds and invasive species.
46

11.7.10.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness

In addition to the programmatic design features, SEZ-specific design features would reduce the potential for impacts on plant communities. While the specific practices are best established when project details are being considered, the following SEZ-specific design features can be identified at this time:

- An Integrated Vegetation Management Plan, addressing invasive species control, and an Ecological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan addressing habitat restoration should be approved and implemented to increase the potential for successful restoration of affected habitats and minimize the potential for the spread of invasive species. Invasive species control should focus on biological and mechanical methods where possible to reduce the use of herbicides.
- Dry washes, Ione Wash, playas, and wetlands within the SEZ should be avoided to the extent practicable, and any impacts minimized and mitigated. A buffer area should be maintained around wetlands, playas, and dry washes to reduce the potential for impacts.
- Appropriate engineering controls should be used to minimize impacts on the playa wetland and other playas, as well as Ione Wash shrub communities, dry washes, and greasewood flat habitats within the SEZ, and downstream occurrences, resulting from surface water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, altered hydrology, accidental spills, or fugitive dust deposition to these habitats. Appropriate buffers and engineering controls would be determined through agency consultation.
- Groundwater withdrawals should be limited to reduce the potential for indirect impacts on plant communities that access groundwater, such as those in the vicinity of playas. Potential impacts on springs associated with the Tonopah Flat basin or other hydrologically connected basins should be determined through hydrological studies.
- A qualified botanist or plant ecologist should survey for candelaria blazing star during a period when it is flowering and easily documented prior to any construction activities within the SEZ. If individuals are located, individuals or populations should be avoided through fencing and flagging of the area, including an appropriate buffer zone.

If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to other programmatic design features, it is anticipated that a high potential for impacts from invasive species and impacts on dry washes, playas, wetlands, and springs would be reduced to a minimal potential for impact.

1 **11.7.11 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota**
2

3 This section addresses wildlife (amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals) and aquatic
4 biota that could occur within the potentially affected area of the proposed Millers SEZ. Wildlife
5 known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined from
6 SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from
7 SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). The amount of aquatic habitat within the SEZ region
8 was determined by estimating the length of linear perennial stream and canal features and the
9 area of standing water body features (i.e., ponds, lakes, and reservoirs) within 50 mi (80 km) of
10 the SEZ by using available GIS surface water datasets.
11

12 The affected area considered in this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect
13 effects. The area of direct effects was defined as the area that would be physically modified
14 during project development (i.e., where ground-disturbing activities would occur) within the
15 SEZ. The maximum developed area within the SEZ would be 13,430 acres (54.3 km²). No areas
16 of direct effects would occur for either a new transmission line or a new access road, because
17 existing transmission line and road corridors are adjacent to or pass through the SEZ.
18

19 The area of indirect effects was defined as the area within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ
20 boundary where ground-disturbing activities would not occur, but that could be indirectly
21 affected by activities in the area of direct effects (e.g., surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and
22 accidental spills in the SEZ). Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the
23 maximum of 13,430 acres (54.3 km²) of direct effects was also included as part of the area of
24 indirect effects. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance
25 from the SEZ. The area of indirect effects was identified on the basis of professional judgment
26 and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be subject to
27 indirect effects. These areas of direct and indirect effects are defined and the impact assessment
28 approach is described in Appendix M.
29

30 The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is Inter-Mountain Basins
31 mixed salt desert scrub (see Section 11.7.10). Potentially unique habitats in the affected area
32 include wash and playa habitats. Aquatic habitats that occur in the SEZ and the area of indirect
33 effects include Ione Wash, Peavine Wash, and several small unnamed dry lakes
34 (see Figure 11.7.9.1-1).
35
36

37 **11.7.11.1 Amphibians and Reptiles**
38

39 ***11.7.11.1.1 Affected Environment***
40

41 This section addresses amphibian and reptile species that are known to occur, or for
42 which potentially suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the
43 proposed Millers SEZ. The list of amphibian and reptile species potentially present in the SEZ
44 area was determined from species lists available from the Nevada Natural Heritage Program
45 (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available from SWReGAP
46

1 (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined from SWReGAP
2 (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). Appendix M provides additional information on the approach used.

3
4 Based on species distributions within the area of the SEZ and habitat preferences of the
5 amphibian species, the Great Basin spadefoot (*Spea intermontana*) and red-spotted toad (*Bufo*
6 *punctatus*) would be expected to occur within the SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). They
7 would most likely occur in or near the wash and playa habitats within the SEZ.

8
9 More than 25 reptile species occur within the area that encompasses the proposed Millers
10 SEZ (USGS 2007; Stebbins 2003). The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) is a federal and
11 state-listed threatened species. This species is discussed in Section 11.7.12. Lizard species
12 expected to occur within the SEZ include the desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*),
13 Great Basin collared lizard (*Crotaphytus bicinctores*), long-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia*
14 *wislizenii*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus*
15 *tigris*), and zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus draconoides*). Snake species expected to occur within
16 the SEZ are the coachwhip (*Masticophis flagellum*), glossy snake (*Arizona elegans*),
17 gophersnake (*Pituophis catenifer*), groundsnake (*Sonora semiannulata*), and nightsnake
18 (*Hypsiglena torquata*).

19
20 Table 11.7.11.1-1 provides habitat information for representative amphibian and reptile
21 species that could occur within the proposed Millers SEZ. Special status amphibian and reptile
22 species are addressed in Section 11.7.12.

23 24 25 **11.7.11.1.2 Impacts**

26
27 The types of impacts that amphibians and reptiles could incur from construction,
28 operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in
29 Section 5.10.2.1. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
30 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through any
31 additional mitigation measures applied. Section 11.7.11.1.3 identifies SEZ-specific design
32 features of particular relevance to the proposed Millers SEZ.

33
34 The assessment of impacts on amphibian and reptile species is based on available
35 information on the presence of species in the affected area, as presented in Section 11.7.11.1.1,
36 following the analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and
37 coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific
38 impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional
39 required actions to avoid or mitigate impacts on amphibians and reptiles
40 (see Section 11.7.11.1.3).

41
42 In general, impacts on amphibians and reptiles would result from habitat disturbance
43 (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration) and from disturbance, injury, or mortality
44 to individual amphibians and reptiles. On the basis of the magnitude of the impacts on
45 amphibians and reptiles summarized in Table 11.7.11.1-1, direct impacts on representative

TABLE 11.7.11.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Amphibian and Reptile Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Millers SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Amphibians				
Great Basin spadefoot (<i>Spea intermontana</i>)	Sagebrush flats, semidesert shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and spruce-fir forests. Breeds in temporary and permanent waters including rain pools, pools in intermittent streams, and flooded areas along streams. About 4,548,700 acres ^g of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,211 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,831 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.
Red-spotted toad (<i>Bufo punctatus</i>)	Dry, rocky areas at lower elevations near desert springs and persistent pools along rocky arroyos; desert streams and oases; open grassland; scrubland oaks; and dry woodlands. About 3,274,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,215 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	93,581 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Wash and playa habitats, should be avoided.
Lizards				
Desert horned lizard (<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos</i>)	Deserts dominated by sagebrush, creosotebush, greasewood, or cactus. Occurs on sandy flats, alluvial fans, washes, and edge of dunes. Burrows in soil during periods of inactivity. About 4,114,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,467 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Great Basin collared lizard (<i>Crotaphytus bicinctores</i>)	Usually inhabits alluvia, lava flows, mountain slopes, canyons, buttes, rock outcrops, washes, and rocky plains. Limiting factors are presence of large boulders and open/sparse vegetation. About 3,498,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,352 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	100,237 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.7.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Lizards (Cont.)				
Long-nosed leopard lizard (<i>Gambelia wislizenii</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas with scattered shrubs. Prefers sandy or gravelly flats and plains. Also prefers areas with abundant rodent burrows, which they occupy when inactive. About 3,757,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,215 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,818 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Western fence lizard (<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>)	Disturbed areas, roadsides, gravel beds, rock quarries, lava flows, outcrops, talus slopes, shrublands, riparian areas, and coniferous woodlands. About 4,764,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,348 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	100,795 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Western whiptail (<i>Cnemidophorus tigris</i>)	Arid and semiarid habitats with sparse plant cover. About 4,216,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	120,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Zebra-tailed lizard (<i>Callisaurus draconoides</i>)	Open, warm-desert habitats, especially dry washes and canyons with fine gravel and sand. About 3,288,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,215 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,426 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitat, otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.7.11.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Snakes				
Coachwhip (<i>Masticophis flagellum</i>)	Creosotebush desert, shortgrass prairie, shrub-covered flats and hills. Sandy to rocky substrates. Avoids dense vegetation. About 2,237,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,286 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	26,254 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.
Glossy snake (<i>Arizona elegans</i>)	Light shrubby to barren deserts, sagebrush flats, grasslands, and chaparral-covered slopes and woodlands. Prefers sandy grasslands, shrublands and woodlands. About 846,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	1,427 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	7,936 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.
Gophersnake (<i>Pituophis catenifer</i>)	Plains grasslands, sandhills, riparian areas, marshes, edges of ponds and lakes, rocky canyons, semidesert and mountain shrublands, montane woodlands, rural and suburban areas, and agricultural areas. Likely inhabits pocket gopher burrows in winter. About 1,974,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	1,294 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.07% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	9,575 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.
Groundsnake (<i>Sonora semiannulata</i>)	Arid and semiarid regions with rocky to sandy soils. River bottoms, desert flats, sand hummocks, and rocky hillsides. About 1,996,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	141 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	6,669 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.
Nightsnake (<i>Hypsiglena torquata</i>)	Arid and semiarid desert flats, plains, and woodlands; areas with rocky and sandy soils are preferred. During cold periods of the year, seeks refuge underground, in crevices, or under rocks. About 3,569,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	101,974 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.7.11.1-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 13,430 acres of direct effects within the SEZ was assumed.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 13,430 acres of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ.
- ^e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^f Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^g To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 amphibian and reptile species would be small, because 0.4% or less of potentially suitable
2 habitats identified for the species in the SEZ region would be lost. Larger areas of potentially
3 suitable habitats for the amphibian and reptile species occur within the area of potential indirect
4 effects. Other impacts on amphibians and reptiles could result from surface water and sediment
5 runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental spills,
6 collection, and harassment. These indirect impacts are expected to be negligible with
7 implementation of programmatic design features.
8

9 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
10 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
11 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
12 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
13 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
14 particular importance for amphibian and reptile species would be the restoration of original
15 ground surface contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with semiarid
16 shrublands.
17
18

19 ***11.7.11.1.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

20

21 The successful implementation of required programmatic design features presented in
22 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on amphibians and reptiles,
23 especially for those species that utilize habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., washes and
24 playas). Indirect impacts could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing programmatic
25 design features, especially those engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation,
26 spills, and fugitive dust. While SEZ-specific design features are best established when
27 considering specific project details, one design feature can be identified at this time:
28

- 29 • Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.
30

31 If this SEZ-specific design feature is implemented in addition to the programmatic design
32 features, impacts on amphibian and reptile species could be reduced. However, because
33 potentially suitable habitats for a number of the representative amphibian and reptile species
34 occur throughout much of the SEZ, additional species-specific mitigation of direct effects for
35 those species would be difficult or infeasible.
36
37

38 **11.7.11.2 Birds**

39

40 ***11.7.11.2.1 Affected Environment***

41

42 This section addresses bird species that are known to occur, or for which potentially
43 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Millers SEZ.
44 The list of bird species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined from the Nevada
45 Natural Heritage Program (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available
46

1 from SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined
2 from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). Appendix M provides additional information on
3 the approach used.

4
5 Five bird species that could occur on or in the affected area of the SEZ are considered
6 focal species in the *Desert Bird Conservation Plan* (CalPIF 2009): ash-throated flycatcher
7 (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), common raven (*Corvus corax*),
8 ladder-backed woodpecker (*Picoides scalaris*), and Le Conte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*).
9 Habitats for most of these species are described in Table 11.7.11.2-1. Because of its special
10 species status, the burrowing owl is discussed in Section 11.7.12.

11 12 13 **Waterfowl, Wading Birds, and Shorebirds**

14
15 As discussed in Section 4.10.2.2.2,
16 waterfowl (ducks, geese, and swans), wading
17 birds (herons and cranes), and shorebirds
18 (avocets, gulls, plovers, rails, sandpipers, stilts,
19 and terns) are among the most abundant groups
20 of birds in the six-state solar study area.

21 However, within the proposed Millers SEZ,
22 waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebird species
23 would be mostly absent to uncommon. Playa and wash habitats within the SEZ may attract
24 shorebird species, but the larger dry lake habitats within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ would
25 provide more viable habitat for this group of birds. The killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) is the
26 shorebird species most likely to occur within the SEZ.

Desert Focal Bird Species

Bird species whose requirements define spatial attributes, habitat characteristics, and management regimes representative of a healthy desert system (Chase and Geupel 2005).

27 28 29 **Neotropical Migrants**

30
31 As discussed in Section 4.10.2.2.3, neotropical migrants represent the most diverse
32 category of birds within the six-state study area. Species expected to occur within the proposed
33 Millers SEZ include the ash-throated flycatcher, Bewick's wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*), common
34 poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), common raven, greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx*
35 *californianus*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), ladder-backed woodpecker, Le Conte's
36 thrasher, lesser nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*),
37 northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), rock wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), sage sparrow
38 (*Amphispiza belli*), Say's phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), and western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)
39 (USGS 2007).

40 41 42 **Birds of Prey**

43
44 Section 4.10.2.2.4 provides an overview of the birds of prey (raptors, owls, and vultures)
45 within the six-state study area. Raptor species that could occur within the proposed Millers SEZ

TABLE 11.7.11.2-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Bird Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Millers SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Shorebirds				
Killdeer (<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>)	Open areas such as fields, meadows, lawns, mudflats, and shores. Nests on ground in open dry or gravelly locations. About 122,100 acres ^g of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	1,290 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (1.1% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	5,147 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.2% of potentially suitable habitat)	Moderate overall impact. Wash and playa habitats should be avoided. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Neotropical Migrants				
Ash-throated flycatcher (<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>)	Common in scrub and woodland habitats including desert riparian and desert washes. Requires hole/cavity for nesting. Uses shrubs or small trees for foraging perches. About 4,517,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	118,559 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Bewick's wren (<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>)	Generally associated with dense, brushy habitats. A permanent resident of lowland deserts and pinyon-juniper forests of southern Utah. Breeding occurs in brushy areas of open woodlands and other open habitats. A cavity nester with nests constructed in small enclosed areas such as tree cavities, nesting boxes, rock crevices, or the center of a brush pile. About 2,356,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	4,576 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	31,246 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.7.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants</i> (Cont.)				
Common poorwill (<i>Phalaenoptilus nuttallii</i>)	Scrubby and brushy areas, prairie, desert, rocky canyons, open woodlands, and broken forests. Mostly in arid and semi-arid habitats. Nests in open areas on a bare site. About 4,627,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	118,518 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation also provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Common raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	Occurs in most habitats. Trees and cliffs provide cover. Roosts primarily in trees. Nests on cliffs, bluffs, tall trees, or human-made structures. Forages in sparse, open terrain. About 4,908,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	121,695 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.7.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants</i> <i>(Cont.)</i>				
Greater roadrunner (<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>)	Desert scrub, chaparral, edges of cultivated lands, and arid open areas with scattered brush. Fairly common in all desert habitats. Requires thickets, large bushes, or small trees for shade, refuge, and roosting. Usually nests low in trees, shrubs, or clumps of cactus. Rarely nests on ground. About 4,474,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,215 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	98,592 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Horned lark (<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>)	Common to abundant resident in a variety of open habitats. Breeds in grasslands, sagebrush, semidesert shrublands, and alpine tundra. During migration and winter, inhabits the same habitats other than tundra, and occurs in agricultural areas. Usually occurs where plant density is low and there are exposed soils. About 4,225,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,323 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.7.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants</i> (Cont.)				
Ladder-backed woodpecker (<i>Picoides scalaris</i>)	Fairly common in Mojave and Colorado Deserts. Variety of habitats including deserts, arid scrub, riparian woodlands, mesquite, scrub oak, pinyon-juniper woodlands. Digs nest hole in rotted stub or dead or dying branches of various trees. Also nests in saguaro, agave, yucca, fence posts, and utility poles. Nests on ledges; branches of trees, shrubs, and cactus; and holes in trees or walls. About 3,307,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,215 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	94,412 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Le Conte's thrasher (<i>Toxostoma lecontei</i>)	Open desert wash, alkali desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats. Prefers to nest and forage in arroyos and washes lined with dense stands of creosotebush and salt bush. About 2,600,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,215 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	93,489 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.7.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants</i> (Cont.)				
Lesser nighthawk (<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>)	Open country, desert regions, scrub, savanna, and cultivated areas. Usually near water including open marshes, salt ponds, large rivers, rice paddies, and beaches. Roosts on low perches or the ground. Nests in the open on bare sites. About 3,760,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,215 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	97,967 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Loggerhead shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	Open country with scattered trees and shrubs, savanna, desert scrub, desert riparian, Joshua tree, and occasionally, open woodland habitats. Perches on poles, wires, or fence posts (suitable hunting perches are important aspect of habitat). Nests in shrubs and small trees. About 4,848,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	121,661 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.7.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants</i> <i>(Cont.)</i>				
Northern mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	Parkland, cultivated lands, second-growth habitats, desert scrub, and riparian areas at low elevations. Forages on ground in short, grassy to nearly barren substrates. About 4,932,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	128,098 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Rock wren (<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>)	Arid and semi-arid habitats. Breeds in areas with talus slopes, scrublands, or dry washes. Nests, constructed of plant materials, are located in rock crevices and the nest entrance is paved with small rocks and stones. About 4,593,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	128,780 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.7.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Neotropical Migrants</i> <i>(Cont.)</i>				
Sage sparrow (<i>Amphispiza belli</i>)	Prefers shrubland, grassland, and desert habitats. The nest, constructed of twigs and grasses, is located either low in a shrub or on the ground. About 4,856,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	121,765 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Say's phoebe (<i>Sayornis saya</i>)	Arid open country, deserts, sagebrush plains, dry barren foothills, canyons, cliffs, ranches, and rural homes. Nests in cliff crevices, holes in banks, sheltered ledges, tree cavities, under bridges and roofs, and in mines. About 1,428,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,153 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	23,843 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
Western kingbird (<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>)	Occurs in a variety of habitats including riparian forests and woodlands, savannahs, shrublands, agricultural lands, deserts, and urban areas. Nesting occurs in trees, bushes, and other raised areas, such as buildings. Migrates to Central America or the southeastern United States for the winter. About 4,074,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,352 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	100,778 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

TABLE 11.7.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Birds of Prey				
American kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius</i>)	Occurs in most open habitats, in various shrub and early successional forest habitats, forest openings, and various ecotones. Perches on trees, snags, rocks, utility poles and wires, and fence posts. Uses cavities in trees, snags, rock areas, banks, and buildings for nesting and cover. About 4,875,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	121,657 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)	Grasslands, shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine forests. Occasionally in most other habitats, especially during migration and winter. Nests on cliffs and sometimes trees in rugged areas, with breeding birds ranging widely over surrounding areas. About 4,862,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	121,661 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. Some measure of mitigation provided by the requirements of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
Great horned owl (<i>Bubo virginianus</i>)	Needs large abandoned bird nest or large cavity for nesting. Usually lives on forest edges and hunts in open areas. In desert areas, requires wooded cliff areas for nesting. About 5,024,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	128,963 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.7.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Birds of Prey (Cont.)				
Long-eared owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)	Nests and roosts in dense vegetation and hunts in open areas (e.g., creosotebush-bursage flats, desert scrub, grasslands, and agricultural fields). About 4,809,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	121,090 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Red-tailed hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	Wide variety of habitats from deserts, mountains, and populated valleys. Open areas with scattered, elevated perch sites such as scrub desert, plains and montane grassland, agricultural fields, pastures urban parklands, broken coniferous forests, and deciduous woodland. Nests on cliff ledges or in tall trees. About 3,305,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,352 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	96,991 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Turkey vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>)	Occurs in open stages of most habitats that provide adequate cliffs or large trees for nesting, roosting, and resting. Migrates and forages over most open habitats. Roosts communally in trees, exposed boulders, and occasionally transmission line support towers. About 3,321,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,215 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	94,263 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.7.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Upland Game Birds				
Chukar (<i>Alectoris chukar</i>)	Steep, semi-arid slopes with rocky outcrops and shrubs with a grass and forb understory. Sources of water are required during hot, dry periods, with most birds during the brooding period found within 0.25 mi (0.4 km) of water. About 4,727,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,352 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	100,150 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash and playa habitats; otherwise no species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects. However, avoidance of Ione Wash and an unnamed dry lake would protect potential occasional sources of water.
Gambel's quail (<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>)	Deserts, especially in areas with brushy or thorny growth, and adjacent cultivated areas. Usually occurs near water. Nests on the ground under cover of small trees, shrubs, and grass tufts. About 1,467,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,290 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	26,088 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash and playa habitats.
Mourning dove (<i>Zenaida macroura</i>)	Habitat generalist, occurring in grasslands, shrublands, croplands, lowland and foothill riparian forests, ponderosa pine forests, deserts, and urban and suburban areas. Rarely in aspen and other forests, coniferous woodlands, and alpine tundra. Nests on ground or in trees. Winters mostly in lowland riparian forests adjacent to cropland. About 4,219,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,622 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.7.11.2-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Upland Game Bird</i> (Cont.)				
Wild turkey (<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>)	Lowland riparian forests, foothill shrubs, pinyon-juniper woodlands, foothill riparian forests, and agricultural areas. About 2,259,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	1,427 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.06% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	12,494 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.

- ^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.
- ^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 13,430 acres of direct effects within the SEZ was assumed.
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 13,340 acres of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ.
- ^e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: ≤1% of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but ≤10% of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: >10% of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects, because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^f Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^g To convert to acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 include the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), great horned
2 owl (*Bubo virginianus*), long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), and
3 turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*) (USGS 2007). Several other special status birds of prey are
4 discussed in Section 11.7.12.1, including the burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*),
5 prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), and Swainson's hawk (*B. swainsoni*).

8 Upland Game Birds

9
10 Section 4.10.2.2.5 provides an overview of the upland game birds (primarily pheasants,
11 grouse, quail, and doves) that occur within the six-state study area. Upland game species that
12 could occur within the proposed Millers SEZ include the chukar (*Alectoris chukar*), Gambel's
13 quail (*Callipepla gambelii*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), and wild turkey (*Meleagris*
14 *gallopavo*) (USGS 2007).

15
16 Table 11.7.11.2-1 provides habitat information for representative bird species that could
17 occur within the proposed Millers SEZ. Special status bird species are discussed in
18 Section 11.7.12.

21 11.7.11.2.2 Impacts

22
23 The types of impacts that birds could incur from construction, operation, and
24 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
25 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
26 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the applications of any additional
27 mitigation measures. Section 11.7.11.2.3, below, identifies design features of particular
28 relevance to the proposed Millers SEZ.

29
30 The assessment of impacts on bird species is based on available information on the
31 presence of species in the affected area, as presented in Section 11.7.11.2.1, following the
32 analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination
33 with federal or state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts
34 more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional required actions
35 to avoid or mitigate impacts on birds (see Section 11.7.11.2.3).

36
37 In general, impacts on birds would result from habitat disturbance (i.e., habitat reduction,
38 fragmentation, and alteration) and from disturbance, injury, or mortality to individual birds.
39 Table 11.7.11.2-1 summarizes the magnitude of potential impacts on representative bird species
40 resulting from solar energy development in the proposed Millers SEZ. Direct impacts on
41 representative bird species would be moderate for the killdeer (loss of 1.1% of potentially
42 suitable habitat) and small for all other bird species (ranging from 0.06% for the wild turkey to
43 0.5% for Le Conte's thrasher (Table 11.7.11.2-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitat for
44 bird species occur within the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 4.2% of potentially
45 suitable habitat for the killdeer). Other impacts on birds could result from collision with vehicles
46 and infrastructure (e.g., buildings and fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed

1 areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species,
2 accidental spills, and harassment. Indirect impacts on areas outside the SEZ (e.g., impacts caused
3 by dust generation, erosion, and sedimentation) are expected to be negligible with
4 implementation of programmatic design features.

5
6 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
7 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
8 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
9 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
10 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
11 particular importance for bird species would be the restoration of original ground surface
12 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with semiarid shrublands.

13 14 15 ***11.7.11.2.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***

16
17 The successful implementation of programmatic design features presented in
18 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on birds, especially for those
19 species that depend on habitat types that can be avoided (e.g., washes and playas). Indirect
20 impacts could be reduced to negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those
21 engineering controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While
22 SEZ-specific design features important to reducing impacts on birds are best established when
23 project details are considered, some design features can be identified at this time:

- 24
25 • The requirements contained within the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding
26 between the BLM and USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds
27 will be followed.
- 28
29 • Take of golden eagles and other raptors should be avoided. Mitigation
30 regarding the golden eagle should be developed in consultation with the
31 USFWS and the NDOW. A permit may be required under the Bald and
32 Golden Eagle Protection Act.
- 33
34 • Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.

35
36 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to the programmatic
37 design features, impacts on bird species could be reduced. However, because potentially suitable
38 habitats for a number of the bird species occur throughout much of the SEZ, additional species-
39 specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.

1 **11.7.11.3 Mammals**

2
3
4 **11.7.11.3.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section addresses mammal species that are known to occur, or for which potentially
7 suitable habitat occurs, on or within the potentially affected area of the proposed Millers SEZ.
8 The list of mammal species potentially present in the SEZ area was determined from the Nevada
9 Natural Heritage Program (NDCNR 2002) and range maps and habitat information available
10 from SWReGAP (USGS 2007). Land cover types suitable for each species were determined
11 from SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007). Appendix M provides additional information on
12 the approach used.

13
14 More than 55 species of mammals have ranges that encompass the area of the proposed
15 Millers SEZ (NDCNR 2002; USGS 2007); however, suitable habitats for a number of these
16 species are limited or nonexistent within the SEZ (USGS 2007). Similar to the overview of
17 mammals provided for the six-state study area (Section 4.6.2.3), the following discussion
18 emphasizes big game and other mammal species that (1) have key habitats within or near the
19 SEZ, (2) are important to humans (e.g., big game, small game, and furbearer species), and/or
20 (3) are representative of other species that share important habitats.

21
22
23 **Big Game**

24
25 The big game species that could occur within the area of the proposed Millers SEZ
26 include cougar (*Puma concolor*), elk (*Cervis canadensis*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*),
27 Nelson’s bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*), and pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*)
28 (USGS 2007). Because of its special species status, the Nelson’s bighorn sheep is addressed in
29 Section 11.7.12.1. Among the other big game species, potentially suitable habitat for the cougar,
30 mule deer, and pronghorn occurs within the SEZ (Table 11.7.11.3-1). No potentially suitable
31 habitat for elk occurs within the SEZ. Figures 11.7.11.3-1 and 11.7.11.3-2 show the location of
32 the SEZ relative to mapped ranges of mule deer and pronghorn, respectively.

33
34
35 **Other Mammals**

36
37 A number of mid-size mammal species (e.g., carnivores and rabbits) occur within the
38 area of the proposed Millers SEZ. Species that could occur within the area of the SEZ include the
39 American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), bobcat (*Lynx*
40 *rufus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*, common), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), gray fox
41 (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*), and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)
42 (USGS 2007).

43
44 The nongame (small) mammals include bats, rodents, and shrews. Representative species
45 for which potentially suitable habitat occurs within the proposed Millers SEZ include Botta’s
46 pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), cactus mouse (*Peromyscus eremicus*), deer mouse

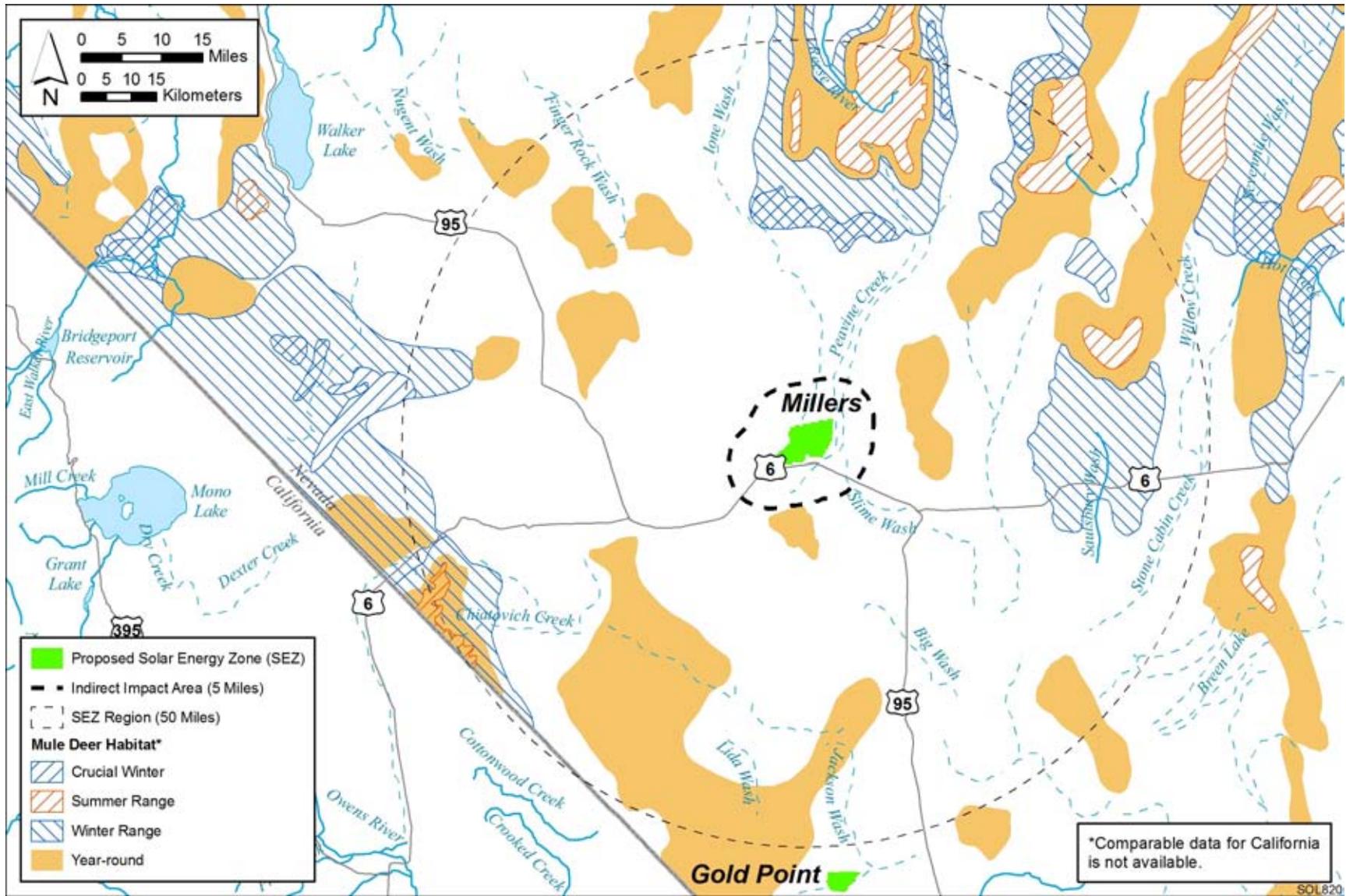


FIGURE 11.7.11.3-1 Location of the Proposed Millers SEZ Relative to the Mapped Range of Mule Deer (Source: NDOW 2010)

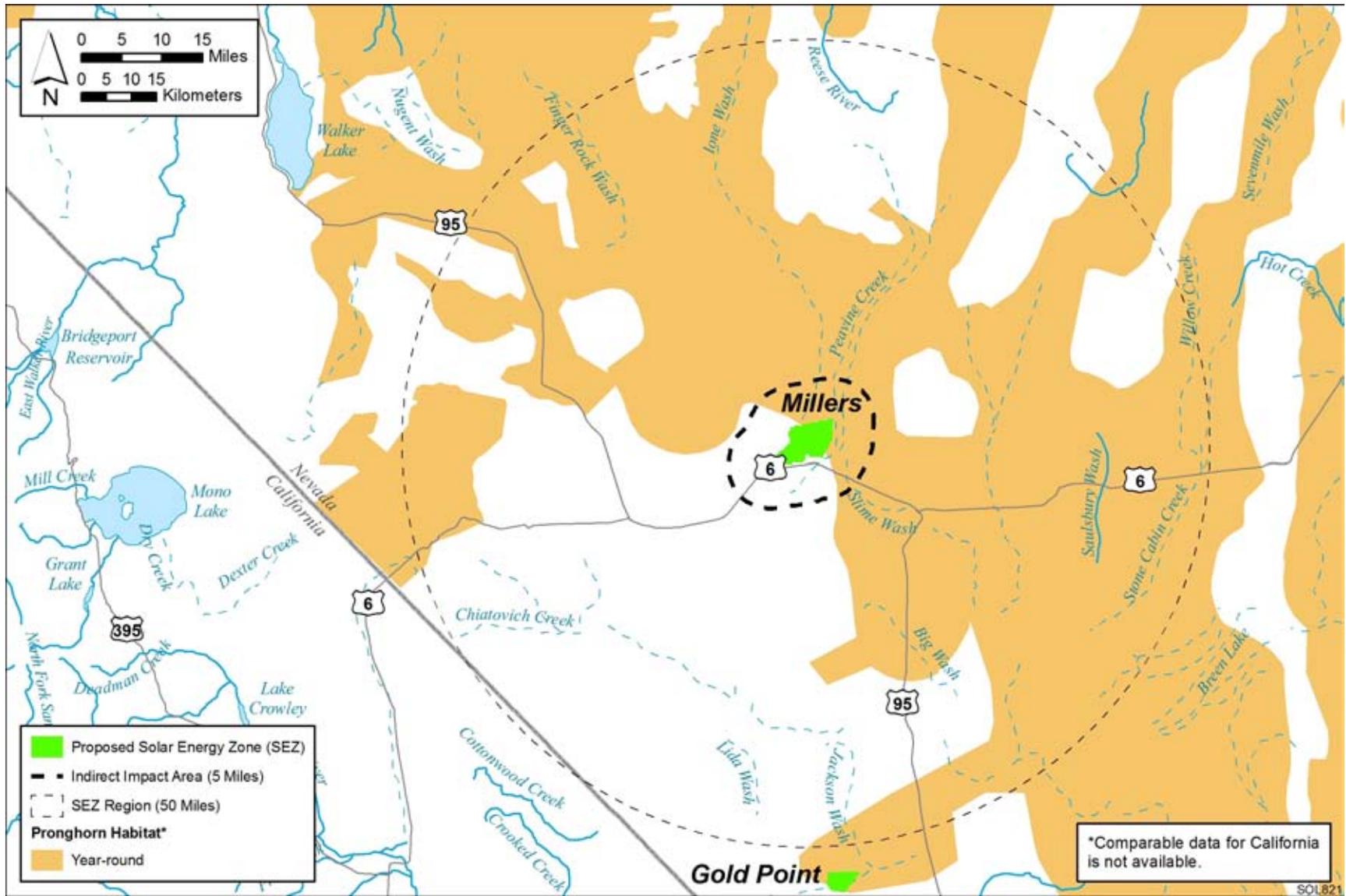


FIGURE 11.7.11.3-2 Location of the Proposed Millers SEZ Relative to the Mapped Range of Pronghorn (Source: NDOW 2010)

1 (*P. maniculatus*), desert shrew (*Notiosorex crawfordi*), desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida*), little
2 pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris*), long-tailed pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus formosus*),
3 Merriam's pocket mouse (*Dipodomys merriami*), northern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys*
4 *leucogaster*), southern grasshopper mouse (*O. torridus*), western harvest mouse
5 (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*), and white-tailed antelope squirrel (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*)
6 (USGS 2007). Bat species that may occur within the area of the SEZ include the big brown bat
7 (*Eptesicus fuscus*), Brazilian free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*), California myotis (*Myotis*
8 *californicus*), hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), little brown myotis (*M. lucifugus*), long-legged
9 myotis (*M. volans*), silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), and western pipistrelle
10 (*Parastrellus hesperus*) (USGS 2007). However, roost sites for the bat species (e.g., caves,
11 hollow trees, rock crevices, or buildings) would be limited to absent within the SEZ. Several
12 other special status bat species that could occur within the SEZ area are described in
13 Section 11.7.12.1.

14
15 Table 11.7.11.3-1 provides habitat information for representative mammal species that
16 could occur within the proposed Millers SEZ. Special status mammal species are discussed in
17 Section 11.7.12.

18 19 20 **11.7.11.3.2 Impacts**

21
22 The types of impacts that mammals could incur from construction, operation, and
23 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.2.1. Any
24 such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design
25 features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the application of any additional
26 mitigation measures. Section 11.7.11.3.3, below, identifies design features of particular
27 relevance to mammals for the proposed Millers SEZ.

28
29 The assessment of impacts on mammal species is based on available information on
30 the presence of species in the affected area, as presented in Section 11.7.11.3.1, following the
31 analysis approach described in Appendix M. Additional NEPA assessments and coordination
32 with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address project-specific impacts more
33 thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result in additional actions required to
34 avoid or mitigate impacts on mammals (see Section 11.7.11.3.3). Table 11.7.11.3-1 summarizes
35 the magnitude of potential impacts on representative mammal species resulting from solar energy
36 development (with the inclusion of required programmatic design features) in the proposed
37 Millers SEZ.

38 39 40 **Cougar**

41
42 Up to 12,352 acres (50 km²) of potentially suitable cougar habitat could be lost by solar
43 energy development within the proposed Millers SEZ. This represents about 0.3% of potentially
44 suitable cougar habitat within the SEZ region. About 100,800 acres (408 km²) of potentially
45 suitable cougar habitat occurs within the area of indirect effects. Overall, impacts on cougar from
46 solar energy development in the SEZ would be small.

TABLE 11.7.11.3-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Representative Mammal Species That Could Occur on or in the Affected Area of the Proposed Millers SEZ

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ Direct Effects ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Big Game				
Cougar (<i>Puma concolor</i>)	Most common in rough, broken foothills and canyon country, often in association with montane forests, shrublands, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. About 4,795,400 acres ^g of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,352 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	100,837 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Mule deer (<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>)	Most habitats including coniferous forests, desert shrub, chaparral, and grasslands with shrubs. Greatest densities in shrublands on rough, broken terrain that provides abundant browse and cover. About 4,168,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	120,888 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Pronghorn (<i>Antilocapra americana</i>)	Grasslands and semidesert shrublands on rolling topography that affords good visibility. Most abundant in shortgrass or midgrass prairies and least common in xeric habitats. About 1,542,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,286 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	25,327 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.
Small Game and Furbearers				
American badger (<i>Taxidea taxus</i>)	Open grasslands and deserts, meadows in subalpine and montane forests, alpine tundra. Digs burrows in friable soils. Most common in areas with abundant populations of ground squirrels, prairie dogs, and pocket gophers. About 4,950,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	128,098 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.7.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)				
Black-tailed jackrabbit (<i>Lepus californicus</i>)	Open plains, fields, and deserts with scattered thickets or patches of shrubs. Also open, early stages of forests and chaparral habitats. Rests during the day in shallow depressions, and uses shrubs for cover. About 4,952,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	128,780 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Bobcat (<i>Lynx rufus</i>)	Most habitats except subalpine coniferous forest and montane meadow grasslands. Most common in rocky country from deserts through ponderosa forests. About 2,237,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,580 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	30,718 acres of potentially suitable habitat (1.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.
Coyote (<i>Canis latrans</i>)	All habitats at all elevations. Least common in dense coniferous forest. Where human control efforts occur, restricted to broken, rough country with abundant shrub cover and a good supply of rabbits or rodents. About 5,023,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	128,963 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Desert cottontail (<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>)	Abundant to common in grasslands, open forests, and desert shrub habitats. Can occur in areas with minimal vegetation as long as adequate cover (e.g., rock piles, fallen logs, fence rows) is present. Thickets and patches of shrubs, vines, and brush also used as cover. About 4,812,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	121,583 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.7.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Small Game and Furbearers (Cont.)				
Gray fox (<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>)	Deserts, open forests and brush. Prefers wooded areas, broken country, brushlands, and rocky areas. Tolerant of low levels of residential development. About 3,716,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,877 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Kit fox (<i>Vulpes macrotis</i>)	Desert and semidesert areas with relatively open vegetative cover and soft soils. Seeks shelter in underground burrows. About 4,127,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	105,416 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Red fox (<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>)	Most common in open woodlands, pasturelands, riparian areas, and agricultural lands. About 2,267,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	1,427 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.06% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	12,499 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.
Nongame (small) Mammals				
Big brown bat (<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>)	Most habitats from lowland deserts to timberline meadows. Roosts in hollow trees, rock crevices, mines, tunnels, and buildings. About 3,700,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,876 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.7.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Botta's pocket gopher (<i>Thomomys bottae</i>)	Variety of habitats including shortgrass plains, oak savanna, agricultural lands, and deserts. Burrows are more common in disturbed areas such as roadways and stream floodplains. About 3,559,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,494 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Brazilian free-tailed bat (<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>)	Cliffs, deserts, grasslands, old fields, savannas, shrublands, woodlands, and suburban/urban areas. Roosts in buildings, caves, and hollow trees. May roost in rock crevices, bridges, signs, or cliff swallow nests during migration. Large maternity colonies inhabit caves, buildings, culverts, and bridges. About 4,260,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,380 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Cactus mouse (<i>Peromyscus eremicus</i>)	Variety of areas including desert scrub, semidesert chaparral, desert wash, semidesert grassland, and cliff and canyon habitats. About 982,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	3,290 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	21,963 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Avoid wash habitats.
California myotis (<i>Myotis californicus</i>)	Desertscrub, semidesert shrublands, lowland riparian, swamps, riparian suburban areas, plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, woodlands, and forests. Roosts in caves, mine tunnels, hollow trees, and loose rocks. About 3,541,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,644 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.7.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Deer mouse (<i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i>)	Tundra; alpine and subalpine grasslands; plains grasslands; open, sparsely vegetated deserts; warm temperate swamps and riparian forests; and Sonoran Desert scrub habitats. About 4,785,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	121,811 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Desert shrew (<i>Notiosorex crawfordi</i>)	Usually in arid areas with adequate cover such as semiarid grasslands, shortgrass plains, desert scrub, chaparral slopes, shortgrass plains, oak savannas and woodlands, and alluvial fans. About 3,079,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	122,995 acres of potentially suitable habitat (4.0% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Desert woodrat (<i>Neotoma lepida</i>)	Sagebrush scrub; chaparral; deserts and rocky slopes with scattered cactus, yucca, pine-juniper, or other low vegetation; creosotebush desert; Joshua tree woodlands; scrub oak woodlands, pinyon-juniper woodlands; and riparian zones. Most abundant in rocky areas with Joshua trees. Dens built of debris on ground, among cacti or yucca, along cliffs, among rocks, or occasionally in trees. About 4,863,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	121,661 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Hoary bat (<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>)	Chaparral, shortgrass plains, scrub-grassland, desertscrub, forests and woodlands. Usually roosts in trees, also in caves, rock crevices, and houses. About 1,092,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	4,576 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	27,071 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.

TABLE 11.7.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Little pocket mouse (<i>Perognathus longimembris</i>)	Mostly sandy and gravelly soils, but also stony soils and rarely rocky sites. About 3,927,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,352 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	100,207 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Long-legged myotis (<i>Myotis volans</i>)	Prefers pine forest, desert, and riparian habitats. Old buildings, rock crevices, and hollow trees used for daytime roosting and winter hibernation. It forages in open areas, such as forest clearings. About 3,794,200 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,728 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Long-tailed pocket mouse (<i>Chaetodipus formosus</i>)	Common in sagebrush, desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats with rocky or stony groundcover. About 3,964,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	12,352 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	100,778 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Merriam's kangaroo rat (<i>Dipodomys merriami</i>)	Plains grasslands, scrub-grasslands, desertscrub, shortgrass plains, oak and juniper savannahs, mesquite dunes, and creosote flats. About 4,120,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	127,472 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.7.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
Nongame (small)				
Mammals (Cont.)				
Northern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys leucogaster</i>)	Occurs in grasslands, sagebrush deserts, overgrazed pastures, weedy roadside ditches, sand dunes, and other habitats with sandy soil and sparse vegetation. About 2,107,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	141 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.01% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	6,818 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact.
Silver-haired bat (<i>Lasiurus noctivagus</i>)	Urban areas, chaparral, alpine and subalpine grasslands, forests, scrub-grassland, oak savannah and desertscrub habitats. Roosts under bark, in hollow trees, caves and mines. Forages over clearings and open water. About 4,167,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	102,362 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Southern grasshopper mouse (<i>Onychomys torridus</i>)	Low, arid, shrub and semiscrub vegetation of deserts. About 2,774,100 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,352 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	95,883 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Western harvest mouse (<i>Reithrodontomys megalotis</i>)	Various habitats, including scrub-grasslands, temperate swamps and riparian forests, salt marshes, shortgrass plains, oak savannah, dry fields, agricultural areas, deserts, and desertscrub. Grasses are the preferred cover. About 3,658,700 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	123,691 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

TABLE 11.7.11.3-1 (Cont.)

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat ^a	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^b		Overall Impact Magnitude ^e and Species-Specific Mitigation ^f
		Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^c	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^d	
<i>Nongame (small)</i>				
<i>Mammals (Cont.)</i>				
Western pipitrelle (<i>Parastrellus hesperus</i>)	Deserts and lowlands, desert mountain ranges, desert scrub flats, and rocky canyons. Roosts mostly in rock crevices, sometimes in mines and caves, and rarely in buildings. Suitable roosts occur in rocky canyons and cliffs. Most abundant bat in desert regions. About 3,550,400 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	124,177 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
White-tailed antelope squirrel (<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>)	Low deserts, semidesert and montane shrublands, plateaus, and foothills in areas with sparse vegetation and hard gravelly surfaces. Spends nights and other periods of inactivity in underground burrows. About 3,646,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	126,782 acres of potentially suitable habitat (3.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.
Yuma myotis (<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>)	Riparian areas, grasslands, semidesert shrubland, mountain brush, woodlands, and deserts. Occurs where there is open water, regardless of the habitat. Roosts in caves, mines, cliffs, crevices, buildings, and swallow nests. About 3,463,900 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the SEZ region.	13,430 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat) during construction and operations	101,742 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. No species-specific mitigation of direct effects is feasible, because suitable habitat is widespread in the area of direct effects.

^a Potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

^b Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. A maximum of 13,430 acres of direct effects within the SEZ was assumed.

Footnotes continued on next page

TABLE 11.7.11.3-1 (Cont.)

-
- ^c Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^d Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Potentially suitable habitat within the SEZ greater than the maximum of 13,430 acres of direct effects was also added to the area of indirect effects. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and so on from the SEZ, but do not include ground-disturbing activities. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance away from the SEZ.
- ^e Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects, because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^f Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^g To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.

Sources: CDFG (2008); NatureServe (2010); NDCNR (2002); USGS (2004, 2005a, 2007).

1 **Elk**

2
3 Potentially suitable elk habitat does not occur within the proposed Millers SEZ. Thus,
4 solar energy development would not directly affect elk habitat. About 4,330 acres (17.5 km²) of
5 potentially suitable elk habitat occurs within the area of indirect effects. This is only about 0.3%
6 of potentially suitable elk habitat within the SEZ region. No mapped elk ranges occur within
7 23 mi (37 km) of the SEZ (NDOW 2010). Overall, impacts on elk from solar energy
8 development in the SEZ would be small.
9

10 **Mule Deer**

11
12
13 Based on land cover analyses, up to 13,430 acres (54.3 km²) of potentially suitable mule
14 deer habitat could be lost by solar energy development within the proposed Millers SEZ. This
15 represents about 0.3% of potentially suitable mule deer habitat within the SEZ region. About
16 120,900 acres (489.3 km²) of potentially suitable mule deer habitat occurs within the area of
17 indirect effects. No mapped mule deer ranges occur within the SEZ. The closest year-round
18 habitat is about 5 mi (8 km) from the SEZ. The closest summer, winter, and crucial winter ranges
19 are over 20 mi (324 km) from the SEZ (Figure 11.7.11.3-1). Thus, no direct or indirect effect to
20 these mule deer ranges would occur. Overall, impacts on mule deer from solar energy
21 development in the SEZ would be small.
22

23 **Pronghorn**

24
25
26 Based on land cover analyses, up to 3,286 acres (13.3 km²) of potentially suitable
27 pronghorn habitat could be lost by solar energy development within the proposed Millers SEZ.
28 This represents about 0.2% of potentially suitable mule deer habitat within the SEZ region.
29 About 25,325 acres (102.5 km²) of potentially suitable pronghorn habitat occurs within the area
30 of indirect effects. Based on mapped range, year-round pronghorn habitat occurs within the SEZ
31 (Figure 11.7.11.3-2). About 5,215 acres (21.1 km²) of year-round habitat occurs within the SEZ.
32 Loss of this range would total about 0.2% of the year-round pronghorn range within the SEZ
33 region. About 60,445 acres (244.6 km²) of year-round pronghorn habitat occurs within the area
34 of indirect effect. This is about 2.3% of the year-round pronghorn habitat within the SEZ region.
35 Overall, impacts on pronghorn from solar energy development in the SEZ would be small.
36

37 **Other Mammals**

38
39 Direct impacts on all other representative mammal species would be small, because
40 0.4% or less of their potentially suitable habitat within the proposed Millers SEZ region would
41 be lost (Table 11.7.11.3-1). Larger areas of potentially suitable habitat for these species occur
42 within the area of potential indirect effects (e.g., up to 4.0% of potentially suitable habitat for the
43 desert shrew).
44
45
46

1 **Summary of Impacts**
2

3 Overall, direct impacts on mammal species from habitat loss would be small
4 (Table 11.7.11.3-1). Other impacts on mammals could result from collision with vehicles and
5 infrastructure (e.g., fences), surface water and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust
6 generated by project activities, noise, lighting, spread of invasive species, accidental spills, and
7 harassment. Indirect impacts on areas outside the SEZ (e.g., impacts caused by dust generation,
8 erosion, and sedimentation) would be negligible with implementation of programmatic design
9 features.

10
11 Decommissioning after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts on
12 individuals and habitats within and adjacent to the SEZ. The negative impacts of
13 decommissioning would be reduced or eliminated as reclamation proceeds. Potentially long-term
14 benefits could accrue as habitats are restored in previously disturbed areas. Section 5.10.2.1.4
15 provides an overview of the impacts of decommissioning and reclamation on wildlife. Of
16 particular importance for mammal species would be the restoration of original ground surface
17 contours, soils, and native plant communities associated with semi-arid shrublands.
18
19

20 ***11.7.11.3.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness***
21

22 The implementation of required programmatic design features presented in Appendix A,
23 Section A.2.2, would reduce the potential for effects on mammals. Indirect impacts would be
24 reduced to negligible levels by implementing design features, especially those engineering
25 controls that would reduce runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust. While SEZ-specific
26 design features important for reducing impacts on mammals are best established when
27 considering specific project details, design features that can be identified at this time are:
28

- 29 • The fencing around the solar energy development should not block the free
30 movement of mammals, particularly big game species.
31
32 • Wash and playa habitats should be avoided.
33

34 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to the programmatic
35 design features, impacts on mammals could be reduced. However, potentially suitable habitats
36 for a number of the mammal species occur throughout much of the SEZ; therefore, species-
37 specific mitigation of direct effects for those species would be difficult or infeasible.
38
39

40 **11.7.11.4 Aquatic Biota**
41

42
43 ***11.7.11.4.1 Affected Environment***
44

45 This section addresses aquatic habitats and biota known to occur on the proposed Millers
46 SEZ itself or within an area that could be affected, either directly or indirectly, by activities

1 associated with solar energy development within the SEZ. There are no permanent streams or
2 water bodies within the proposed Millers SEZ. There is one intermittent/ephemeral wash
3 (Ione Wash), which runs for approximately 3 mi (5 km) through the center of the proposed SEZ.
4 Several other ephemeral washes also cross the Millers SEZ, but based on site visits these
5 drainages contain water only for brief periods following rainfall and do not support wetland or
6 riparian habitats. Ione Wash does not drain into any permanent surface waters and therefore does
7 not provide habitat for fish populations from perennial waters. There are also wetlands along the
8 southern edge of the SEZ. However, wetlands in the southwest rarely have surface water or
9 contain water for only brief periods and typically do not support aquatic communities. The
10 assumed access road corridor does not intersect any intermittent or permanent surface water
11 features. Overall, aquatic habitat and communities are not likely to be present in ephemeral and
12 intermittent desert wetland and surface water features. However, opportunistic crustaceans and
13 aquatic insect larvae adapted to desert conditions may be present even under dry conditions.
14 More detailed site survey data is needed to characterize the aquatic biota, if present, in Millers
15 SEZ.

16
17 Six miles (10 km) of Ione Wash and 29 mi (47 km) of additional unnamed intermittent
18 washes are located within the area of indirect effects, as are wetlands along the southern border
19 of the proposed SEZ. The washes are typically dry and are not expected to contain permanent
20 aquatic habitat or communities. Like Ione Wash, the intermittent washes in the area of indirect
21 effects do not connect to any permanent water bodies but rather terminate in dry lakes.

22
23 Outside of the area of indirect effects, but within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed Millers
24 SEZ, are 63,486 acres (257 km²) of dry lakes, 43 mi (69 km) of perennial streams, and 434 mi
25 (698 km) of intermittent streams. Intermittent streams are the only surface water feature present
26 in the area of direct and indirect effects and account for about 8% of the total amount of
27 intermittent stream present in the SEZ region.

28 29 30 ***11.7.11.4.2 Impacts***

31
32 Because surface water habitats are a unique feature in the arid landscape in the vicinity
33 of the proposed Millers SEZ, the maintenance and protection of such habitats is important to
34 the survival of aquatic and terrestrial organisms. The types of impacts that aquatic habitats and
35 biota could incur from the development of utility-scale solar energy facilities are described in
36 detail in Section 5.10.3. Aquatic habitats present on or near the locations selected for
37 construction of solar energy facilities could be affected in a number of ways, including (1) direct
38 disturbance, (2) deposition of sediments, (3) changes in water quantity, and (4) degradation of
39 water quality.

40
41 The intermittent Ione Wash is present in the proposed Millers SEZ, and direct effects
42 such as ground disturbance are possible. However, Ione Wash is typically dry and impacts on
43 aquatic habitat and communities are not likely. Sediment deposition into intermittent/ephemeral
44 washes in the area of direct and indirect effects is possible via runoff and airborne particulate
45 deposition, especially if ground disturbance occurs near Ione Wash and the intermittent streams
46 and wetlands. However, no aquatic habitats or aquatic communities are present. Although

1 ephemeral and intermittent surface waters are not likely to contain aquatic habitat, more detailed
2 site surveys for biota in would be necessary to determine whether solar energy development
3 activities would result in direct or indirect impacts to aquatic biota. The streams and wetlands in
4 the SEZ and area of indirect effects are not connected to any permanent surface water features,
5 and the nearest perennial surface water feature is greater than 35 mi (56 km) from the Millers
6 SEZ. Therefore, impacts from runoff on aquatic habitat and communities outside of the area of
7 direct and indirect effects are not likely.
8

9 In arid environments, reductions in the quantity of water in aquatic habitats are of
10 particular concern. Water quantity in aquatic habitats could also be affected if significant
11 amounts of surface water or groundwater were utilized for power plant cooling water, for
12 washing mirrors, or for other needs. The greatest need for water would occur if technologies
13 employing wet cooling, such as parabolic trough or power tower, were developed at the site; the
14 associated impacts would ultimately depend on the water source used (including groundwater
15 from aquifers at various depths). Obtaining cooling water from other perennial surface water
16 features in the region could affect water levels and, as a consequence, aquatic organisms in those
17 water bodies located outside the SEZ. Additional details on the volume of water required and the
18 types of organisms present in potentially affected water bodies would be required in order to
19 further evaluate the potential for impacts from water withdrawals.
20

21 As identified in Section 5.10.3, water quality in aquatic habitats could be affected by the
22 introduction of contaminants such as fuels, lubricants, or pesticides/herbicides during site
23 characterization, construction, operation, or decommissioning for a solar energy facility. There
24 is the potential for contaminants to enter intermittent streams and wetlands, especially if heavy
25 machinery is used in or nearby these surface water features. Thus, the introduction of
26 contaminants can be minimized by avoiding construction near intermittent streams like Ione
27 Wash. The intermittent streams within the SEZ region are typically dry, do not support aquatic
28 communities, and are not connected to any permanent surface water features. Therefore
29 contaminant effects on aquatic habitat and biota inside and outside of the area of direct and
30 indirect effects are not likely.
31
32

33 ***11.7.11.4.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness*** 34

35 No SEZ-specific design features are identified at this time. If programmatic project
36 design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, are implemented as needed and if the
37 utilization of water from groundwater or surface water sources is adequately controlled to
38 maintain sufficient water levels in aquatic habitats, the potential impacts on aquatic biota and
39 habitats from solar energy development at the proposed Millers SEZ would be negligible.
40

1 **11.7.12 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Rare Species)**
2

3 This section addresses special status species that are known to occur, or for which
4 suitable habitat occurs, within the potentially affected area of the proposed Millers SEZ. Special
5 status species include the following types of species:³
6

- 7 • Species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA;
- 8
- 9 • Species that are proposed for listing, under review, or are candidates for
10 listing under the ESA;
- 11
- 12 • Species that are listed by the BLM as sensitive;
- 13
- 14 • Species that are listed by the State of Nevada;⁴ and
- 15
- 16 • Species that have been ranked by the State of Nevada as S1 or S2, or species
17 of concern by the State of Nevada or the USFWS; hereafter referred to as
18 “rare” species.
19

20 Special status species known to occur within 50 mi (80 km) of the center of the proposed
21 Millers SEZ (i.e., the SEZ region) were determined from natural heritage records available
22 through NatureServe Explorer (NatureServe 2010), information provided by the NDOW, the
23 NNHP (Miskow 2009; NDCNR 2004, 2005, 2009a,b), SWReGAP (USGS 2004, 2005a, 2007),
24 and the USFWS Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS) (USFWS 2010).
25 Information reviewed consisted of county-level occurrences as determined from Nature Serve,
26 element occurrences provided by the NNHP, as well as modeled land cover types and predicted
27 suitable habitats for the species within the 50-mi (80-km) region as determined from SWReGAP.
28 The 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region intersects Esmeralda, Mineral, and Nye Counties, Nevada.
29 However, the SEZ occurs only in Esmeralda County, Nevada. The affected area occurs within
30 Esmeralda and Nye Counties, Nevada. See Appendix M for additional information on the
31 approach used to identify species that could be affected by development within the SEZ.
32
33

34 **11.7.12.1 Affected Environment**
35

36 The affected area considered in this assessment included the areas of direct and indirect
37 effects for solar development within the proposed SEZ. The area of direct effects was defined
38 as the area that would be physically modified during project development (i.e., where ground-
39 disturbing activities would occur). For the proposed Millers SEZ, the area of direct effect was
40 limited to the SEZ itself. Due to the proximity of existing infrastructure, the impacts of

³ See Section 4.6.4 for definitions of these species categories. Note that some of the categories of species included here do not fit BLM’s definition of special status species as defined in BLM Manual 6840 (BLM 2008b). These species are included here to ensure broad consideration of species that may be most vulnerable to impacts.

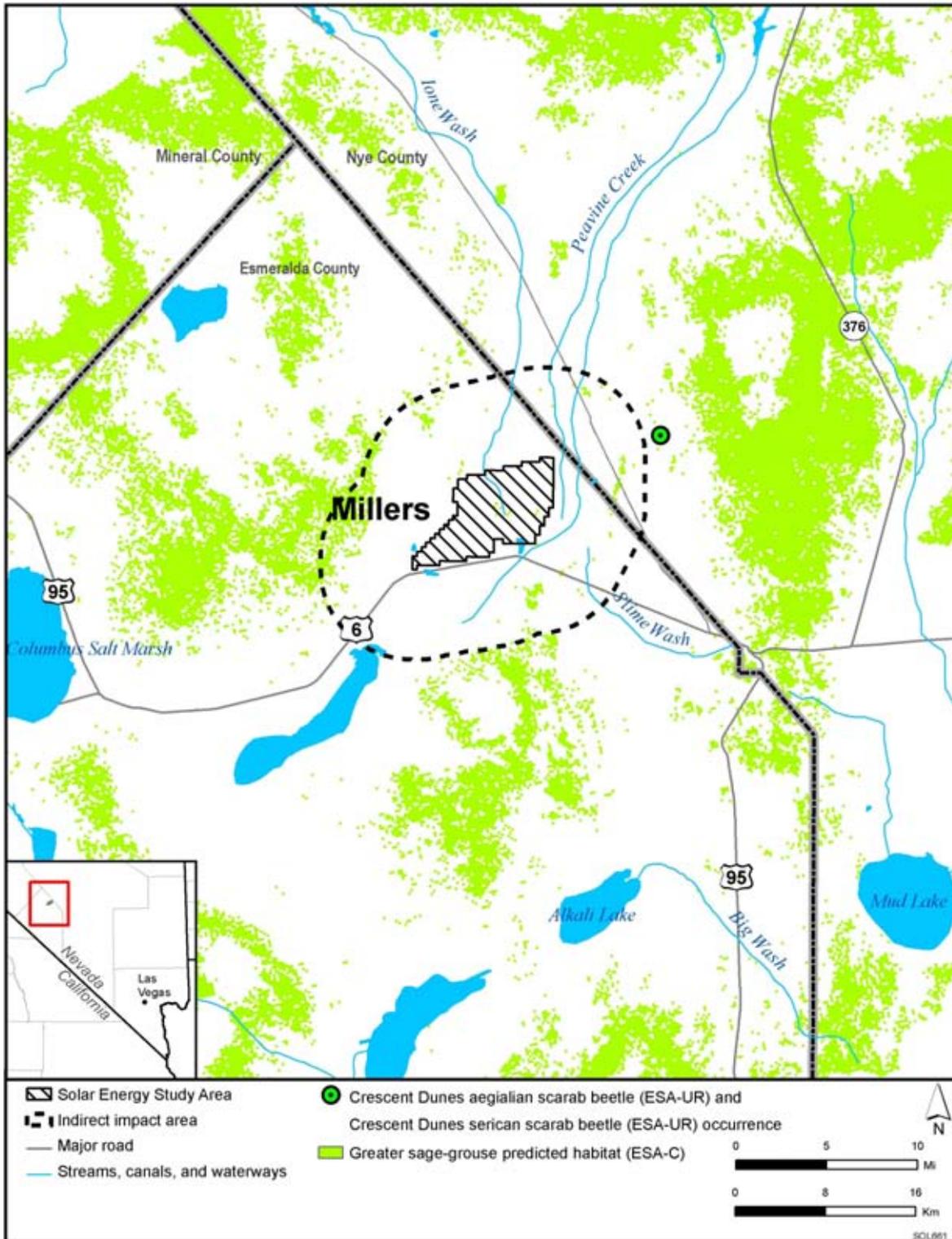
⁴ State listed species for the state of Nevada are those protected under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants).

1 construction and operation of transmission lines outside of the SEZ are not assessed, assuming
2 that the existing transmission infrastructure might be used to connect some new solar facilities to
3 load centers, and that additional project-specific analysis would be conducted for new
4 transmission construction or line upgrades. Similarly, the impacts of construction or upgrades to
5 access roads were not assessed for this SEZ due to the proximity of an existing federal highway
6 (see Section 11.7.1.2 for a discussion of development assumptions for this SEZ). The area of
7 indirect effects was defined as the area within 5 mi [8 km] of the SEZ boundary where ground-
8 disturbing activities would not occur but that could be indirectly affected by activities in the area
9 of direct effect. Indirect effects considered in the assessment included effects from surface
10 runoff, dust, noise, lighting, and accidental spills from the SEZ, but do not include ground
11 disturbing activities. The potential magnitude of indirect effects would decrease with increasing
12 distance from the SEZ. This area of indirect effect was identified on the basis of professional
13 judgment and was considered sufficiently large to bound the area that would potentially be
14 subject to indirect effects.

15
16 The primary land cover habitat type within the affected area is inter-mountain basins
17 mixed salt desert scrub (see Section 11.7.10). Potentially unique habitats in the affected area in
18 which special status species may reside include desert dune, cliff and rock outcrop, wash, and
19 playa habitats. Aquatic habitats that occur on the SEZ and the area of indirect effects include
20 unnamed playa habitats and the Ione Wash, Peavine Creek, Slime Wash, and an unnamed
21 intermittent stream (Figure 11.7.12.1-1).

22
23 All special status species that are known to occur within the proposed Millers SEZ region
24 (i.e., the area within 50 mi [80 km] of the center of the SEZ) are listed, along with their status,
25 nearest recorded occurrence, and habitats in Appendix J. Nineteen of those species could be
26 affected by solar energy development on the SEZ, based on recorded occurrences or the presence
27 of potentially suitable habitat in the area. These species, their status, and their habitats are
28 presented in Table 11.7.12.1-1. The predicted potential occurrence in the affected area of many
29 of the species listed in the table (especially plants and invertebrates), is based only on a general
30 correspondence between mapped SWReGAP land cover types and descriptions of species habitat
31 preferences. This overall approach to identifying species potentially present in the affected area
32 probably overestimates the number of species that actually occur there. For many of the species
33 identified as having potentially suitable habitat in the affected area, the nearest known actual
34 occurrence is more than 20 mi (32 m) away from the SEZ.

35
36 Based on NNHP records, two special status species are known to occur within the
37 affected area of the proposed Millers SEZ: Tonopah milkvetch and western small-footed bat.
38 The Tonopah milkvetch is considered a rare species (state rank S2 in Nevada); the western
39 small-footed bat is a BLM-designated sensitive species (the USFWS considers it a species of
40 concern). There are no groundwater-dependent species in the vicinity of the SEZ based upon
41 NNHP records, comments provided by the USFWS (Stout 2009), and the evaluation of
42 groundwater resources in the Millers SEZ region (Section 11.7.9).



1

2

3

4

5

FIGURE 11.7.12.1-1 Known or Potential Occurrences of Species Listed as Endangered or Threatened under the ESA, Candidate for Listing under the ESA, or Species under Review for ESA Listing in the Affected Area of the Proposed Millers SEZ (Sources: Miskow 2009; NDCNR 2005; USFWS 2010; USGS 2007)

TABLE 11.7.12.1-1 Habitats, Potential Impacts, and Potential Mitigation for Special Status Species That Could be Affected by Solar Energy Development on the Proposed Millers SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants						
Eastwood milkweed	<i>Asclepias eastwoodiana</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada from public and private lands in Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, and Nye Counties in open areas on a wide variety of basic (pH usually >8) soils, including calcareous clay knolls, sand, carbonate or basaltic gravels, or shale outcrops, generally barren and lacking competition. Frequently in small washes or other moisture-accumulating microsities at elevations between 4,700 and 7,100 ft ^h . Nearest recorded occurrence is 12 mi ⁱ southeast of the SEZ. About 379,398 acres ^j of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,300 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	22,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat (5.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoidance or minimization of disturbance to occupied habitats in the areas of direct effect; translocation of individuals from areas of direct effect; or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. Note that these same potential mitigations apply to all special status plants.
Nevada dune beardtongue	<i>Penstemon arenarius</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Endemic to western Nevada on sand dunes or deep sand occurring on deep, loose, sandy soils of valley bottoms, aeolian deposits, and dune skirts, often in alkaline areas, sometimes on road banks and other recovering disturbances crossing such soils, in shadscale communities. Nearest recorded occurrence is along Peavine Creek, approximately 17 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 97,638 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	150 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.7.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Ripley biscuitroot	<i>Cymopterus ripleyi</i> var. <i>ripleyi</i>	FWS-SC; NV-S2	Restricted to southeastern California and western Nevada in deep loose, sandy soils of stabilized dunes, dune skirt areas, aeolian deposits, and alluvial drainage areas at elevations between 4,400 and 6,000 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 14 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 2,281 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	150 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Sanicle biscuitroot	<i>Cymopterus ripleyi</i> var. <i>saniculoides</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Endemic to Nevada on loose, sandy to gravelly, often somewhat alkaline soils on volcanic tuff deposits and mixed valley alluvium within blackbrush, mixed-shrub, sagebrush, and lower pinyon-juniper communities. Elevation ranges between 3,150 and 6,700 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 12 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 4,039,523 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,475 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	102,500 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See Eastwood milkweed for a list of other potential mitigations.

TABLE 11.7.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Plants (Cont.)						
Squalid milkvetch	<i>Astragalus serenoii</i> var. <i>sordescens</i>	NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada on dry, open, gravelly or sandy soils along gentle slopes of alluvial fans or light-colored clay hills, within mixed-shrub, sagebrush, and lower pinyon-juniper communities at elevations between 5,000 and 6,800 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Toiyabe National Forest, about 17 mi northeast of the SEZ. About 4,416,115 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,175 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	97,800 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. See Eastwood milkweed for a list of other potential mitigations.
Tonopah milkvetch^k	<i>Astragalus pseudiodanthus</i>	NV-S2	Restricted to southeastern California and western Nevada in deep, loose, sandy soils of stabilized and active dune margins, old beaches, valley floors, or drainages at elevations between 4,500 and 6,000 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 4 mi southeast of the SEZ. About 2,281 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	150 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.
Toquima milkvetch	<i>Astragalus toquimanus</i>	BLM-S; NV-S2	Endemic to Nevada on dry, stiff, sandy to gravelly, basic or calcareous soils along gentle slopes or flats at elevations between 6,500 and 7,500 ft. Nearest recorded occurrence is 21 mi east of the SEZ. About 1,156,759 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	4,320 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. No species-specific mitigation is warranted.

TABLE 11.7.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Invertebrates						
Crescent Dunes aegialian scarab beetle	<i>Aegialia crescenta</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-S1	Sand dune obligate species endemic to Nevada on the Crescent Dunes and possibly also to the San Antonio and Game Range Dunes. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Crescent Dunes SRMA, about 6 mi east of the SEZ. About 2,281 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	150 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. A review of mitigation effectiveness to avoid indirect effects (e.g., site runoff and erosion, disruption of sand transport systems) on this species should be conducted during the project design phase and in coordination with the USFWS and NDOW. Coordination would identify the need for mitigation, which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or compensation.
Crescent Dunes serican scarab beetle	<i>Serica ammomenisco</i>	ESA-UR; BLM-S; NV-S1	Sand dune obligate species endemic to Nevada on the Crescent Dunes. Nearest recorded occurrence is from the Crescent Dunes SRMA, approximately 6 mi east of the SEZ. About 2,281 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	150 acres of potentially suitable habitat (6.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. A review of mitigation effectiveness to avoid indirect effects (e.g., site runoff and erosion, disruption of sand transport systems) on this species should be conducted during the project design phase and in coordination with the USFWS and NDOW. Coordination would identify the need for mitigation, which may include avoidance, minimization, translocation, or compensation.

TABLE 11.7.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Birds						
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in the SEZ region. Grasslands, sagebrush, and saltbrush habitats, as well as the periphery of pinyon-juniper woodland. Nests in tall trees or on rock outcrops along cliff faces. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 1,403,676 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	3,125 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.2% of available potentially suitable habitat)	24,000 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat (1.7% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Greater sage-grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	ESA-C; BLM-S	Plains, foothills, and mountain valleys dominated by sagebrush. Lek sites are located in relatively open areas surrounded by sagebrush or in areas where sagebrush density is low. Nesting usually occurs on the ground where sagebrush density is higher. Some populations may travel up to 60 mi between summer and winter habitats. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 1,264,279 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	125 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	6,450 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoidance or minimization of disturbance to occupied and/or suitable leks and nesting sites in the areas of direct effect or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts. The potential for impact and need for mitigation should be determined in coordination with the USFWS and NDOW.

TABLE 11.7.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Birds (Cont.)						
Prairie falcon	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	BLM-S	Year-round resident in open habitats in mountainous areas, steppe, grasslands, or cultivated areas. Nests in well-sheltered ledges of rocky cliffs and outcrops. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 3,612,314 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	12,050 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	100,300 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat (2.8% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Swainson's hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S2	Summer breeding resident in the SEZ region. Savanna, open pine-oak woodlands, grasslands, and cultivated lands. Nests in solitary trees, bushes, or small groves. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 847,596 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	125 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (<0.1% of available potentially suitable habitat)	2,225 acres of potentially suitable foraging and nesting habitat (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia hypugaea</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Summer breeding resident in SEZ region in open grasslands and prairies, as well as disturbed sites such as golf courses, cemeteries, and airports. Nests in burrows constructed by mammals (prairie dog, badger, etc.). Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 4,035,785 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	105,600 acres of potentially suitable habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact on foraging and nesting habitat. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoidance or minimization of disturbance to occupied burrows in the area of direct effect or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on occupied habitats could reduce impacts.

TABLE 11.7.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Mammals						
Fringed myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in SEZ region in wide range of habitats, including lowland riparian, desert shrub, pinyon-juniper, and sagebrush habitats. Roosts in buildings and caves. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 4,549,929 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	15,200 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	119,600 acres of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat (2.6% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Nelson's bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis nelsoni</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Open, steep rocky terrain in mountainous habitats of the eastern Mojave and Sonoran Deserts in California. Uses desert lowland as corridors for travel between mountain ranges. Known to occur in Esmeralda County, Nevada. About 1,866,606 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	0 acres	17,250 acres of potentially suitable habitat (0.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact; no direct effect. Pre-disturbance surveys and avoidance or minimization of disturbance of habitats within the area of direct effects that serve as movement corridors could further reduce impacts.
Spotted bat	<i>Euderma maculatum</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; FWS-SC; NV-S2	Year-round resident in SEZ region near forests and shrubland habitats. Roosts and hibernates in caves and rock crevices. Nearest recorded occurrence is 30 mi south of the SEZ. About 3,863,972 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	15,075 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	114,000 acres of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

TABLE 11.7.12.1-1 (Cont.)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status ^a	Habitat ^b	Maximum Area of Potential Habitat Affected ^c		Overall Impact Magnitude ^f and Species-Specific Mitigation ^g
				Within SEZ (Direct Effects) ^d	Outside SEZ (Indirect Effects) ^e	
Mammals (Cont.)						
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	BLM-S; NV-P; NV-S2	Year-round resident in SEZ region near forests and shrubland habitats below 9,000 ft elevation. Roosts and hibernates in caves, mines, and buildings. Nearest recorded occurrence is 7 mi south of the SEZ. About 3,580,069 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region.	13,600 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.4% of available potentially suitable habitat)	102,100 acres of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat (2.9% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.
Western small-footed bat	<i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i>	BLM-S; FWS-SC	Year-round resident in woodlands and riparian habitats at elevations below 9,000 ft (2,750 m). Roosts in caves, buildings, mines, and crevices of cliff faces. Nearest recorded occurrence is 4 mi north of the SEZ. About 4,949,592 acres of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the SEZ region	16,725 acres of potentially suitable foraging habitat lost (0.3% of available potentially suitable habitat)	125,275 acres of potentially suitable foraging and roosting habitat (2.5% of available potentially suitable habitat)	Small overall impact. Direct impact on foraging habitat only. Avoidance of direct impacts on all foraging habitat is not feasible because suitable foraging habitat is widespread in the area of direct effect.

^a BLM-S = listed as a sensitive species by the BLM; ESA-E = listed as endangered under the ESA; ESA-T = listed as threatened under the ESA; ESA-UR = under review for listing under the ESA; FWS-SC = USFWS species of concern; NV-P = protected in the state of Nevada under NRS 501.110 (animals) or NRS 527 (plants); NV-S1 = ranked as S1 in the state of Nevada; NV-S2 = ranked as S2 in the state of Nevada.

^b For plant species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP land cover types. For terrestrial vertebrate species, potentially suitable habitat was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. Area of potentially suitable habitat for each species is presented for the SEZ region, which is defined as the area within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ center.

^c Maximum area of potentially suitable habitat that could be affected relative to availability within the SEZ region. Habitat availability for each species within the region was determined by using SWReGAP habitat suitability and land cover models. This approach probably overestimates the amount of suitable habitat in the project area. Impacts of access road and transmission line construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this evaluation due to the proximity of existing infrastructure to the SEZ.

Footnotes continued on next page.

TABLE 11.7.12.1-1 (Cont.)

- ^d Direct effects within the SEZ consist of the ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and the maintenance of an altered environment associated with operations.
- ^e Area of indirect effects was assumed to be the area adjacent to the SEZ within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary and the portions of the road and transmission corridors where ground disturbing activities would not occur. Indirect effects include effects from surface runoff, dust, noise, lighting, etc. from projects. The potential degree of indirect effects would decrease with increasing distance from the SEZ. Indirect effects on groundwater-dependent species were considered outside these defined areas.
- ^f Overall impact magnitude categories were based on professional judgment and are as follows: (1) *small*: $\leq 1\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would not result in a measurable change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (2) *moderate*: >1 but $\leq 10\%$ of the population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a measurable but moderate (not destabilizing) change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area; (3) *large*: $>10\%$ of a population or its habitat would be lost and the activity would result in a large, measurable, and destabilizing change in carrying capacity or population size in the affected area. Note that much greater weight was given to the magnitude of direct effects because those effects would be difficult to mitigate. Programmatic design features would reduce most indirect effects to negligible levels.
- ^g Species-specific mitigations are suggested here, but final mitigations should be developed in consultation with state and federal agencies and should be based on pre-disturbance surveys.
- ^h To convert ft to m, multiply by 0.3048.
- ⁱ To convert mi to km, multiply by 1.609.
- ^j To convert acres to km^2 , multiply by 0.004047.
- ^k Species in bold text have been recorded or have designated critical habitat within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary.

1 ***11.7.12.1.1 Species Listed under the Endangered Species Act That Could***
2 ***Occur in the Affected Area***
3

4 In their scoping comments on the proposed Millers SEZ, the USFWS (Stout 2009) did
5 not express concern for impacts of project development within the SEZ on any species listed as
6 threatened or endangered under the ESA. There are no NNHP records of or potentially suitable
7 habitats for any ESA-listed species within the affected area. According to SWReGAP and USGS
8 habitat suitability models, potentially suitable habitat for the desert tortoise, a species listed as
9 threatened under the ESA, does not occur within the affected area of the proposed Millers SEZ.
10

11
12 ***11.7.12.1.2 Species That Are Candidates for Listing under the ESA***
13

14 In their scoping comments on the proposed Millers SEZ, the USFWS did not identify any
15 candidate species for listing under the ESA that may be directly or indirectly affected by solar
16 energy development on the SEZ (Stout 2009). However, one candidate species, the greater sage-
17 grouse, may occur within the affected area. This species inhabits primarily sagebrush habitats in
18 plains, foothills, and mountain valley regions. This species occurs in Esmeralda County, Nevada,
19 and potentially suitable year-round sagebrush habitat is expected to occur within the SEZ and
20 other portions of the affected area (Figure 11.7.12.1-1). According to the SWReGAP habitat
21 suitability model, about 125 acres (0.5 km²) of potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs
22 on the SEZ; about 6,450 acres (26 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
23 indirect effects (Table 11.7.12.1-1). Additional basic information on life history, habitat needs,
24 and threats to populations of the greater sage-grouse is provided in Appendix J.
25

26
27 ***11.7.12.1.3 Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA***
28

29 In their scoping comments on the proposed Millers SEZ, the USFWS did not identify
30 any species under ESA review that may be directly or indirectly affected by solar energy
31 development on the SEZ (Stout 2009). However, on the basis of occurrence records, two such
32 species, the Crescent Dunes aegialian scarab beetle and the Crescent Dunes serican scarab beetle,
33 may occur within the affected area. These species are sand dune obligates endemic to Nevada,
34 where they are restricted primarily to the Crescent Dunes in Esmeralda County. The nearest
35 recorded occurrences of these two species are from the Crescent Dunes, approximately 6 mi
36 (10 km) east of the SEZ (Figure 11.7.12.1-1). According to the SWReGAP land cover model,
37 potentially suitable sand dune habitat for these species does not occur on the SEZ; however,
38 approximately 150 acres (0.6 km²) of potentially suitable sand dune habitat occurs in the area of
39 indirect effects (Table 11.7.12.1-1). Additional basic information on life history, habitat needs,
40 and threats to populations of these species is provided in Appendix J.
41

42
43 ***11.7.12.1.4 BLM-Designated Sensitive Species***
44

45 There are 16 BLM-designated sensitive species that may occur in the affected area of the
46 proposed Millers SEZ (Table 11.7.12.1-1). These BLM-designated sensitive species include the

1 following (1) plants: Eastwood milkweed, Nevada dune beardtongue, sanicle biscuitroot, and
2 Toquima milkvetch; (2) invertebrates: Crescent Dunes aegialian scarab beetle and Crescent
3 Dunes serican scarab beetle; (3) birds: ferruginous hawk, greater sage-grouse, prairie falcon,
4 Swainson’s hawk, and western burrowing owl; and (3) mammals: fringed myotis, Nelson’s
5 bighorn sheep, spotted bat, Townsend’s big-eared bat, and western small-footed bat. Of these
6 BLM-designated sensitive species with potentially suitable habitat in the affected area, only the
7 western small-footed bat has been recorded within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ boundary. Habitats in
8 which BLM-designated sensitive species are found, the amount of potentially suitable habitat for
9 each in the affected area, and known locations of the species relative to the SEZ are presented in
10 Table 11.7.12.1-1. Three of these species—Crescent Dunes aegialian scarab beetle, Crescent
11 Dunes serican scarab beetle, and greater sage-grouse—were discussed above because of their
12 known or pending status under the ESA (Sections 11.7.12.1.2 and 11.7.12.1.3). The remaining
13 species as related to the SEZ are described in the remainder of this section. Additional life
14 history information for these species is provided in Appendix J.

17 **Eastwood Milkweed**

18
19 The Eastwood milkweed is a perennial forb endemic to Nevada found on public and
20 private lands in Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, and Nye Counties. It occurs in open areas on a wide
21 variety of basic (pH usually >8) soils, including calcareous clay knolls, sand, carbonate or
22 basaltic gravels, washes, or shale outcrops at elevations between 4,700 and 7,100 ft (1,430 and
23 2,150 m). The species is known to occur about 12 mi (19 km) southeast of the SEZ. Although it
24 is not known to occur in the affected area, potentially suitable shrubland and desert wash habitat
25 may occur in the SEZ and other portions of the affected area (Table 11.7.12.1-1).

27 **Nevada Dune Beardtongue**

28
29 The Nevada dune beardtongue is a perennial forb endemic to sandy habitats in western
30 Nevada. The species occurs primarily on dunes or deep sand in valley bottoms, alkaline areas,
31 or road banks. Nearest recorded occurrences are from Peavine Creek, about 17 mi (27 km)
32 northeast of the SEZ. The species is not known to occur within the affected area of the SEZ, and
33 potentially suitable habitat does not occur on the SEZ. However, potentially suitable dune habitat
34 may occur in the area of indirect effects (Table 11.7.12.1-1).

36 **Sanicle Biscuitroot**

37
38 The sanicle biscuitroot is a perennial forb endemic to Nevada occurring in mixed desert
39 scrub and pinyon-juniper woodland communities on sandy to gravelly alkaline substrates and
40 volcanic deposits. The nearest recorded occurrences are about 12 mi (19 km) northeast of the
41 SEZ. Although it is not known to occur in the affected area, potentially suitable desert scrub
42 habitats may occur in the SEZ and other portions of the affected area (Table 11.7.12.1-1).

1 **Toquima Milkvetch**

2
3 The Toquima milkvetch is a perennial forb endemic to Nevada on sandy to gravelly
4 slopes or flats at elevations between 6,500 and 7,500 ft (1,980 and 2,280 m). The nearest
5 recorded occurrences are about 21 mi (34 km) east of the SEZ. This species is not known to
6 occur in the affected area, and potentially suitable habitat does not occur on the SEZ. However,
7 potentially suitable sagebrush habitat may occur in the area of indirect effects
8 (Table 11.7.12.1-1).
9

10
11 **Ferruginous Hawk**

12
13 The ferruginous hawk occurs throughout the western United States. According to the
14 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable year-round habitat for the ferruginous
15 hawk may occur within the affected area of the proposed Millers SEZ. This species inhabits open
16 grasslands, sagebrush flats, desert scrub, and the edges of pinyon-juniper woodlands. It occurs in
17 Esmeralda County, Nevada, and potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and in
18 other portions of the affected area (Table 11.7.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of
19 SWReGAP land cover types, no suitable nesting habitat occurs within the area of direct effects,
20 but about 54 acres (0.2 km²) of pinyon-juniper woodlands and 720 acres (3 km²) of cliffs and
21 rock outcrops that may be potentially suitable nesting habitat occur in the area of indirect effects.
22

23
24 **Prairie Falcon**

25
26 The prairie falcon occurs throughout the western United States. According to the
27 SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable year-round habitat for the prairie falcon
28 may occur within the affected area of the proposed Millers SEZ. The species occurs in open
29 habitats in mountainous areas, sagebrush-steppe, grasslands, or cultivated areas. Nests are
30 typically constructed in well-sheltered ledges of rocky cliffs and outcrops. This species occurs in
31 Esmeralda County, Nevada, and potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and in
32 other portions of the affected area (Table 11.7.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of
33 SWReGAP land cover types, there is no suitable nesting habitat within the area of direct effects,
34 but about 720 acres (3 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially suitable
35 nesting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
36

37
38 **Swainson's Hawk**

39
40 The Swainson's hawk occurs throughout the southwestern United States. According to
41 the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, only potentially suitable summer foraging and nesting
42 habitat occurs in the affected area of the proposed Millers SEZ. This species inhabits desert,
43 savanna, open pine-oak woodland, grassland, and cultivated habitats. Nests are typically
44 constructed in solitary trees, bushes, or small groves. This species occurs in Esmeralda County,
45 Nevada, and potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs on the SEZ and in other portions of the
46 affected area (Table 11.7.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types,

1 there is no suitable nesting habitat (solitary trees) within the area of direct effects, but about
2 54 acres (0.2 km²) of pinyon-juniper woodland that may be potentially suitable nesting habitat
3 occurs in the area of indirect effects.
4
5

6 **Western Burrowing Owl**

7

8 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the western burrowing owl,
9 only potentially suitable summer breeding habitat may occur in the affected area of the proposed
10 Millers SEZ. The species forages in grasslands, shrublands, open disturbed areas, and nests in
11 burrows typically constructed by mammals. The species occurs in Esmeralda County, Nevada,
12 and potentially suitable breeding habitat is expected to occur in the SEZ and in other portions of
13 the affected area (Table 11.7.12.1-1). The availability of nest sites (burrows) within the affected
14 area has not been determined, but shrubland habitat that may be suitable for either foraging or
15 nesting occurs throughout the affected area.
16
17

18 **Fringed Myotis**

19

20 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident in the proposed Millers SEZ region. It
21 occurs in a variety of habitats, including riparian, shrubland, sagebrush, and pinyon-juniper
22 woodlands. The species roosts in buildings and caves. It occurs in Esmeralda County, Nevada,
23 and the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the species indicates that potentially suitable
24 foraging habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area
25 (Table 11.7.12.1-1). On the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, no suitable
26 roosting habitat occurs within the SEZ, but about 720 acres (3 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop
27 habitat that may be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
28
29

30 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

31

32 The Nelson's bighorn sheep (also called the desert bighorn sheep) is a subspecies of
33 bighorn sheep known to occur in the proposed Millers SEZ region. This species occurs in desert
34 mountain ranges in Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah. The Nelson's bighorn sheep
35 uses primarily montane shrubland, forest, and grassland habitats, and may utilize desert valleys
36 as corridors for travel between range habitats. It occurs in Esmeralda County, Nevada. According
37 to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model for the species, potentially suitable habitat does not
38 occur on the SEZ; but portions of the affected area may provide important range and migratory
39 habitat for the Nelson's bighorn sheep (Table 11.7.12.1-1).
40
41

42 **Spotted Bat**

43

44 The spotted bat is a year-round resident in the proposed Millers SEZ region, where it
45 occurs in a variety of forested and shrubland habitats. It roosts in caves and rock crevices. The
46 species occurs about 30 mi (56 km) south of the SEZ. Potentially suitable foraging habitat may

1 occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.7.12.1-1). On the basis of
2 an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, there is no suitable roosting habitat within the
3 SEZ, but about 720 acres (3 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially
4 suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
5
6

7 **Townsend's Big-Eared Bat**

8

9 The Townsend's big-eared bat is a year-round resident in the proposed Millers SEZ
10 region, where it forages in a wide variety of desert and non-desert habitats. The species roosts
11 in caves, mines, tunnels, buildings, and other man-made structures. The nearest recorded
12 occurrences of this species are about 7 mi (11 km) south of the SEZ. Potentially suitable foraging
13 habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.7.12.1-1). On
14 the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, no suitable roosting habitat occurs
15 within the SEZ, but about 720 acres (3 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may be
16 potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
17
18

19 **Western Small-Footed Bat**

20

21 The western small-footed bat is a year-round resident in the proposed Millers SEZ region,
22 where it occupies a wide variety of desert and non-desert habitats, including cliffs and rock
23 outcrops, grasslands, shrubland, and mixed woodlands. The species roosts in caves, mines,
24 tunnels, buildings, and other man-made structures and beneath boulders or loose bark. The
25 species is known to occur as near as 4 mi (6 km) north of the SEZ. Potentially suitable foraging
26 habitat may occur on the SEZ and in other portions of the affected area (Table 11.7.12.1-1). On
27 the basis of an evaluation of SWReGAP land cover types, no suitable roosting habitat occurs
28 within the SEZ, but about 720 acres (3 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may be
29 potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.
30
31

32 ***11.7.12.1.5 State-Listed Species***

33

34 There are 5 species listed by the State of Nevada that may occur in the proposed Millers
35 SEZ affected area (Table 11.7.12.1-1). These species are (1) birds: ferruginous hawk and
36 Swainson's hawk; and (2) mammals: fringed myotis, spotted bat, and Townsend's big-eared bat.
37 All of these species are protected in the state of Nevada under NRS 501.110. Each of these
38 species has been previously discussed because of its status under the BLM (Section 11.7.12.1.4).
39 Appendix J provides additional life history information for these species.
40
41

42 ***11.7.12.1.6 Rare Species***

43

44 There are 17 rare species (i.e., state rank of S1 or S2 in Nevada or a species of concern by
45 the State of Nevada or USFWS) that may be affected by solar energy development on the
46 proposed Millers SEZ (Table 11.7.12.1-1). Of these species, three rare plants have not been

1 discussed previously—Ripley biscuitroot, squalid milkvetch, and Tonopah milkvetch. The only
2 rare species known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the proposed Millers SEZ are the Tonopah
3 milkvetch and western small-footed bat (Table 11.7.12.1-1).
4

6 **11.7.12.2 Impacts**

7
8 The potential for impacts on special status species from utility-scale solar energy
9 development within the proposed Millers SEZ is discussed in this section. The types of impacts
10 that special status species could incur from construction and operation of utility-scale solar
11 energy facilities are discussed in Section 5.10.4.
12

13 The assessment of impacts to special status species is based on available information on
14 the presence of species in the affected area as presented in Section 11.7.12.1 following the
15 analysis approach described in Appendix M. It is assumed that pre-disturbance surveys would
16 be conducted to determine the presence of special status species and their habitats in and near
17 areas where ground-disturbing activities would occur. Additional NEPA assessments, ESA
18 consultations, and coordination with state natural resource agencies may be needed to address
19 project-specific impacts more thoroughly. These assessments and consultations could result
20 in additional required actions to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts on special status species
21 (see Section 11.7.12.3).
22

23 Solar energy development within the proposed Millers SEZ could affect a variety of
24 habitats (see Sections 11.7.9 and 11.7.10). These impacts on habitats could in turn affect special
25 status species dependent on those habitats. Based on NNHP records, two special status species
26 are known to occur within 5 mi (8 km) of the proposed Millers SEZ boundary: Tonopah
27 milkvetch and western small-footed bat (listed in bold in Table 11.7.12.1-1). Other special status
28 species may occur on the SEZ or within the affected area based on the presence of potentially
29 suitable habitat. As discussed in Section 11.7.12.1, this approach to identifying the species that
30 could occur in the affected area probably overestimates the number of species that actually occur
31 there and, therefore, may overestimate impacts to some special status species.
32

33 Impacts on special status species could occur during all phases of development
34 (construction, operation, and decommissioning and reclamation) of a utility-scale solar energy
35 project within the SEZ. Construction and operation activities could result in short- or long-term
36 impacts on individuals and their habitats, especially if those activities are sited in areas where
37 special status species are known to or could occur. As presented in Section 11.7.1.2, impacts of
38 access road and transmission line construction, upgrade, or operation are not assessed in this
39 evaluation due to the proximity of existing infrastructure to the SEZ.
40

41 Direct impacts would result from habitat destruction or modification. It is assumed that
42 direct impacts would occur only within the SEZ where ground disturbing activities are expected
43 to occur. Indirect impacts could result from depletion of groundwater resources, surface water
44 and sediment runoff from disturbed areas, fugitive dust generated by project activities, accidental
45 spills, harassment, and lighting. No ground disturbing activities associated with projects are
46 anticipated to occur within the area of indirect effects. Decommissioning of facilities and

1 reclamation of disturbed areas after operations cease could result in short-term negative impacts
2 to individuals and habitats adjacent to project areas, but long-term benefits would accrue if
3 original land contours and native plant communities were restored in previously disturbed areas.
4

5 The successful implementation of programmatic design features (discussed in
6 Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would reduce direct impacts on some special status species,
7 especially those that depend on habitat types that can be easily avoided (e.g., dunes and playa
8 habitats). Indirect impacts on special status species could be reduced to negligible levels by
9 implementing programmatic design features, especially those engineering controls that would
10 reduce groundwater consumption, runoff, sedimentation, spills, and fugitive dust.
11

12 13 ***11.7.12.2.1 Impacts on Species Listed under the ESA*** 14

15 In their scoping comments on the proposed Millers SEZ, the USFWS did not express
16 concern for impacts of project development within the SEZ on any species listed as threatened
17 or endangered under the ESA (Stout 2009). There are no NNHP records or potentially suitable
18 habitats for any ESA-listed species within the affected area. For these reasons, solar energy
19 development within the proposed Millers SEZ is not likely to affect any species currently listed
20 under the ESA.
21

22 23 ***11.7.12.2.2 Impacts on Species That Are Candidates for Listing under the ESA*** 24

25 The greater sage-grouse is the only ESA candidate species that could occur in the
26 affected area of the proposed Millers SEZ, based upon information provided by the NNHP
27 (NDCNR 2004, 2005) and SWReGAP (USGS 2007). This species is known to occur in
28 Esmeralda County, Nevada, and potentially suitable year-round sagebrush habitat is expected to
29 occur within the SEZ and other portions of the affected area (Figure 11.7.12.1-1). According to
30 the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, about 125 acres (0.5 km²) of potentially suitable habitat
31 on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.7.12.1-1). This
32 direct effects area represents less than 0.1% of available suitable habitat for the greater sage-
33 grouse in the SEZ region. About 6,450 acres (26 km²) of suitable habitat occurs in the area of
34 potential indirect effects; this area represents about 0.5% of the available suitable habitat in the
35 SEZ region (Table 11.7.12.1-1).
36

37 The overall impact on the greater sage-grouse from construction, operation, and
38 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
39 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
40 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
41 implementation of programmatic design features alone may not be sufficient to reduce impacts
42 because potentially suitable sagebrush habitats may not be avoided in the area of direct effects.
43

44 Efforts to mitigate the impacts of solar energy facilities in the proposed Millers SEZ on
45 the greater sage-grouse should be developed in consultation with the USFWS and NDOW
46 following the *Strategic Plan for Management of Sage Grouse* (UDWR 2002) and *Guidelines to*

1 *Manage Sage Grouse Populations and Their Habitats* (Connelly et al. 2000). Impacts could be
2 reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to
3 occupied habitats in the areas of direct effects. If avoidance or minimization is not feasible, a
4 compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on
5 occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the protection and enhancement of existing
6 occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats lost to development. Any mitigation
7 plans should be developed in coordination with the USFWS and NDOW.
8
9

10 ***11.7.12.2.3 Impacts on Species That Are under Review for Listing under the ESA***

11

12 Two species under review for ESA listing may occur in the affected area of the proposed
13 Millers SEZ: Crescent Dunes aegialian scarab beetle and Crescent Dunes serican scarab beetle.
14 Both species are sand dune obligates, and they are restricted primarily to the Crescent Dunes,
15 about 6 mi (10 km) east of the SEZ (Figure 11.7.12.1-1). According to the SWReGAP land
16 cover model, potentially suitable sand dune habitat for these species does not occur on the SEZ.
17 However, about 150 acres (0.6 km²) of dune habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this
18 area represents about 0.5% of the available suitable habitat for both of these species in the SEZ
19 region (Table 11.7.12.1-1).
20

21 The overall impact on the Crescent Dunes aegialian scarab beetle and Crescent Dunes
22 serican scarab beetle from construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar
23 energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is considered small because no potentially
24 suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of direct effects, and only indirect effects are
25 possible. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
26 reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels. However, given the location of these species and
27 their habitat adjacent to the SEZ boundary, a review of mitigation effectiveness to avoid indirect
28 effects (e.g., site runoff and erosion, disruption of sand transport systems) on these species
29 should be conducted during the project design phase and in coordination with the USFWS and
30 NDOW. Coordination would identify the need for mitigation, which may include avoidance,
31 minimization, translocation, or compensation.
32
33

34 ***11.7.12.2.4 Impacts on BLM-Designated Sensitive Species***

35

36 BLM-designated sensitive species that may be affected by solar energy development on
37 the proposed Millers SEZ and that have not previously been discussed are discussed below.
38
39

40 **Eastwood Milkweed**

41

42 The Eastwood milkweed is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed
43 Millers SEZ; however, about 3,300 acres (13 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ
44 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.7.12.1-1). This direct impact
45 area represents about 0.9% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 22,000 acres

1 (89 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
2 about 5.8% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.7.12.1-1).

3
4 The overall impact on the Eastwood milkweed from construction, operation, and
5 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
6 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
7 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
8 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
9 impacts to negligible levels.

10
11 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible option for mitigating
12 impacts on the Eastwood milkweed because potentially suitable sagebrush and mixed shrubland
13 habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effects. For this species and other special
14 status plants, impacts could be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and avoiding or
15 minimizing disturbance to occupied habitats in the area of direct effects. If avoidance or
16 minimization is not feasible, plants could be translocated from the area of direct effects to
17 protected areas that would not be affected directly or indirectly by future development.
18 Alternatively, or in combination with translocation, a compensatory mitigation plan could be
19 developed and implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could
20 involve the protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate
21 for habitats lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or more of
22 these options could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development.

23 24 25 **Nevada Dune Beardtongue**

26
27 The Nevada dune beardtongue is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed
28 Millers SEZ, and potentially suitable sand dune habitat does not occur in the area of direct
29 effects. However, about 150 acres (0.6 km²) of potentially suitable sand dune habitat occurs in
30 the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 0.4% of the potentially suitable habitat in
31 the SEZ region (Table 11.7.12.1-1).

32
33 The overall impact on the Nevada dune beardtongue from construction, operation, and
34 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
35 considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
36 direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design
37 features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

38 39 40 **Sanicle Biscuitroot**

41
42 The sanicle biscuitroot is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed Millers
43 SEZ; however, about 13,475 acres (55 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could be
44 directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.7.12.1-1). This direct impact area
45 represents about 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 102,500 acres

1 (415 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents
2 about 2.5% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.7.12.1-1).

3
4 The overall impact on the sanicle biscuitroot from construction, operation, and
5 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
6 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
7 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
8 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
9 impacts to negligible levels.

10
11 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible option for mitigating
12 impacts on the sanicle biscuitroot because potentially suitable shrubland habitat is widespread
13 throughout the area of direct effect. However, impacts could be reduced with the implementation
14 of programmatic design features and the mitigation options described previously for the
15 Eastwood milkweed. The need for mitigation, other than programmatic design features, should
16 be determined by conducting pre-disturbance surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.

17 18 19 **Toquima Milkvetch**

20
21 The Toquima milkvetch is not known to occur in the affected area of the proposed
22 Millers SEZ and potentially suitable sand dune habitat does not occur in the area of direct
23 effects. However, approximately 150 acres (0.6 km²) of potentially suitable sand dune habitat
24 occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 0.4% of the potentially suitable
25 habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.7.12.1-1).

26
27 The overall impact on the Toquima milkvetch from construction, operation, and
28 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
29 considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species occurs in the area of
30 direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic design
31 features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.

32 33 34 **Ferruginous Hawk**

35
36 According to the SWReGAP habitat suitability model, potentially suitable year-round
37 habitat for the ferruginous hawk exists in the affected area of proposed Millers SEZ. About
38 3,125 acres (13 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by
39 construction and operations (Table 11.7.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents 0.2% of
40 potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 24,000 acres (97 km²) of potentially
41 suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 1.7% of the
42 available suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.7.12.1-1). Most of the suitable habitat in
43 the affected area could serve as foraging habitat (open shrublands). On the basis of SWReGAP
44 land cover data, suitable nesting habitat (large trees and rock outcrops) does not occur on the
45 SEZ. However, about 54 acres (0.2 km²) of woodland habitat (pinyon-juniper) and 720 acres

1 (0.6 km²) of cliffs and rock outcrops that may be potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in
2 the area of indirect effects.

3
4 The overall impact on the ferruginous hawk from construction, operation, and
5 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
6 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in
7 the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the
8 SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
9 reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
10 foraging habitats (desert shrublands) is not a feasible option for mitigating impacts on this
11 species because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effects
12 and in other portions of the SEZ region.

13 14 15 **Prairie Falcon**

16
17 The prairie falcon is a year-round resident in the proposed Millers SEZ region, and
18 potentially suitable foraging habitat is expected to occur in the affected area. About 12,050 acres
19 (49 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and
20 operations (Table 11.7.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents 0.3% of potentially suitable
21 habitat in the SEZ region. About 100,300 acres (406 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs
22 in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about 2.8% of the potentially suitable habitat in
23 the SEZ region (Table 11.7.12.1-1). Most of this area could serve as foraging habitat (open
24 shrublands). On the basis of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable nesting habitat
25 (cliffs and rock outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ. However, about 720 acres (3 km²) of cliff
26 and rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the area of
27 indirect effects.

28
29 The overall impact on the prairie falcon from construction, operation, and
30 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
31 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in
32 the area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the
33 SEZ region. The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to
34 reduce indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
35 foraging habitats (desert shrublands) is not a feasible option for mitigating impacts on this
36 species because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effects
37 and in other portions of the SEZ region.

38 39 40 **Swainson's Hawk**

41
42 Potentially suitable summer foraging and nesting habitat for the Swainson's hawk is
43 expected to occur throughout much of the proposed Millers SEZ region, and potentially suitable
44 habitat is expected to occur in the affected area. About 125 acres (0.5 km²) of potentially suitable
45 foraging habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and operations
46 (Table 11.7.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents <0.1% of potentially suitable habitat in

1 the SEZ region. About 2,225 acres (9 km²) of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of
2 indirect effects; this area represents about 0.3% of the available suitable foraging habitat in the
3 SEZ region (Table 11.7.12.1-1). On the basis of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable
4 nesting habitat (solitary trees) does not occur on the SEZ. However, about 54 acres (0.2 km²) of
5 woodland habitat (pinyon-juniper) that may be potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in the
6 area of indirect effects.

7
8 The overall impact on the Swainson's hawk from construction, operation, and
9 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
10 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of
11 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the SEZ region.
12 The implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce
13 indirect impacts on this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable
14 foraging habitats (desert shrublands) is not a feasible option for mitigating impacts on this
15 species because potentially suitable habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effects
16 and in other portions of the SEZ region.

17 18 19 **Western Burrowing Owl**

20
21 Potentially suitable breeding habitat for the western burrowing owl occurs throughout
22 much of the proposed Millers SEZ region, and potentially suitable habitat is expected to occur in
23 the affected area. About 13,600 acres (55 km²) of potentially suitable habitat on the SEZ could
24 be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.7.12.1-1). This direct impact area
25 represents 0.3% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. About 105,600 acres (427 km²)
26 of potentially suitable habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects; this area represents about
27 2.6% of the potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region (Table 11.7.12.1-1). Most of this area
28 could serve as foraging and nesting habitat (shrublands). The abundance of burrows suitable for
29 nesting on the SEZ and in the area of indirect effects has not been determined.

30
31 The overall impact on the western burrowing owl from construction, operation, and
32 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
33 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area of
34 direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the SEZ region. The
35 implementation of programmatic design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect
36 impacts on this species to negligible levels.

37
38 Avoidance of all potentially suitable habitats is not a feasible option for mitigating
39 impacts on the western burrowing owl because potentially suitable desert scrub habitats are
40 widespread throughout the area of direct effect and readily available in other portions of the SEZ
41 region. Impacts on the western burrowing owl could be reduced to negligible levels through the
42 implementation of programmatic design features and by conducting pre-disturbance surveys and
43 avoiding or minimizing disturbance to occupied burrows on the SEZ. If avoidance or
44 minimization is not feasible, a compensatory mitigation plan could be developed and
45 implemented to mitigate direct effects on occupied habitats. Compensation could involve the
46 protection and enhancement of existing occupied or suitable habitats to compensate for habitats

1 lost to development. A comprehensive mitigation strategy that used one or both of these options
2 could be designed to completely offset the impacts of development. The need for mitigation,
3 other than programmatic design features, should be determined by conducting pre-disturbance
4 surveys for the species and its habitat on the SEZ.
5
6

7 **Fringed Myotis**

8

9 The fringed myotis is a year-round resident within the proposed Millers SEZ region. On
10 the basis of SWReGAP land cover data, suitable roosting habitats (caves) do not occur on the
11 SEZ. However, about 720 acres (3 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially
12 suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects. About 15,200 acres (62 km²) of
13 potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by construction and
14 operations (Table 11.7.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents about 0.3% of potentially
15 suitable foraging habitat in the region. About 119,600 acres (484 km²) of potentially suitable
16 foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effect; this area represents about 2.6% of the
17 available suitable foraging habitat in the region (Table 11.7.12.1-1). Most of the suitable habitat
18 in the affected area could serve as foraging habitat (open shrublands). On the basis of SWReGAP
19 land cover data, potentially suitable roosting habitat (cliffs and rock outcrops) does not occur on
20 the SEZ. However, about 720 acres (3 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the
21 area of indirect effects.
22

23 The overall impact on the fringed myotis from construction, operation, and
24 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
25 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the
26 area of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
27 implementation of programmatic design features may be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on
28 this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitats (desert
29 shrublands) is not a feasible option for mitigating impacts on this species because potentially
30 suitable habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effects and in other portions of the
31 SEZ region.
32

33 **Nelson's Bighorn Sheep**

34

35 The Nelson's bighorn sheep is not known to occur on the proposed Millers SEZ and
36 potentially suitable habitat does not occur on the site. However, about 17,250 acres (70 km²)
37 of potentially suitable habitat occurs within the area of indirect effect; this area represents
38 about 0.9% of the potentially suitable habitat in the region (Table 11.7.12.1-1).
39
40

41 The overall impact on the Nelson's bighorn sheep from construction, operation, and
42 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
43 considered small because no potentially suitable habitat for this species has been identified in the
44 area of direct effects, and only indirect effects are possible. The implementation of programmatic
45 design features is expected to be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts to negligible levels.
46 Impacts on the Nelson's bighorn sheep may be reduced by conducting pre-disturbance surveys

1 and avoiding or minimizing disturbance to important movement corridors within the area of
2 direct effects.

3 4 5 **Spotted Bat**

6
7 The spotted bat is a year-round resident within the proposed Millers SEZ region. On the
8 basis of SWReGAP land cover data, suitable roosting habitats (caves and rock outcrops) do not
9 occur on the SEZ. However, about 720 acres (3 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may
10 be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects. About 15,075 acres
11 (61 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by
12 construction and operations (Table 11.7.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents about 0.4% of
13 potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region. About 114,000 acres (461 km²) of potentially
14 suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effect; this area represents about 2.9% of
15 the potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region (Table 11.7.12.1-1). Most of the suitable
16 habitat in the affected area could serve as foraging habitat (open shrublands). On the basis of
17 SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable roosting habitat (cliffs and rock outcrops) does
18 not occur on the SEZ. However, about 720 acres (3 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat
19 occurs in the area of indirect effects.

20
21 The overall impact on the spotted bat from construction, operation, and decommissioning
22 of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is considered small
23 because the amount of potentially suitable foraging habitat for this species in the area of direct
24 effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The implementation
25 of programmatic design features may be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on this species to
26 negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitats (desert shrublands) is not
27 a feasible option for mitigating impacts on this species because potentially suitable habitat is
28 widespread throughout the area of direct effects and in other portions of the SEZ region.

29 30 31 **Townsend's Big-Eared Bat**

32
33 The Townsend's big-eared bat is a year-round resident within the proposed Millers SEZ
34 region. On the basis of SWReGAP land cover data, suitable roosting habitats (caves) do not
35 occur on the SEZ. However, about 720 acres (3 km²) of cliff and rock outcrop habitat that may
36 be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects. About 13,600 acres
37 (55 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ could be directly affected by
38 construction and operations (Table 11.7.12.1-1). This direct impact area represents about 0.4% of
39 potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region. About 102,100 acres (413 km²) of potentially
40 suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect effect; this area represents about 2.9% of
41 the potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region (Table 11.7.12.1-1). Most of the suitable
42 habitat in the affected area could serve as foraging habitat (open shrublands). On the basis of
43 SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable roosting habitat (cliffs and rock outcrops) does
44 not occur on the SEZ. However, about 720 acres (3 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat
45 occurs in the area of indirect effects.

1 The overall impact on the Townsend's big-eared bat from construction, operation, and
2 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
3 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
4 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
5 implementation of programmatic design features may be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on
6 this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitats (desert
7 shrublands) is not a feasible option for mitigating impacts on this species because potentially
8 suitable habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effects and in other portions of the
9 SEZ region.

12 **Western Small-Footed Bat**

14 The western small-footed bat is a year-round resident within the proposed Millers SEZ
15 region. On the basis of SWReGAP land cover data, suitable roosting habitats (caves, rock
16 outcrops, and buildings) do not occur on the SEZ. However, about 720 acres (3 km²) of cliff
17 and rock outcrop habitat that may be potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of
18 indirect effects. About 16,725 acres (68 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat on the SEZ
19 could be directly affected by construction and operations (Table 11.7.12.1-1). This direct impact
20 area represents about 0.3% of potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region. About
21 125,275 acres (507 km²) of potentially suitable foraging habitat occurs in the area of indirect
22 effect; this area represents about 2.5% of the potentially suitable foraging habitat in the region
23 (Table 11.7.12.1-1). Most of the suitable habitat in the affected area could serve as foraging
24 habitat (open shrublands). On the basis of SWReGAP land cover data, potentially suitable
25 roosting habitat (cliffs and rock outcrops) does not occur on the SEZ. However, about 720 acres
26 (3 km²) of potentially suitable roosting habitat occurs in the area of indirect effects.

28 The overall impact on the western small-footed bat from construction, operation, and
29 decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ is
30 considered small because the amount of potentially suitable habitat for this species in the area
31 of direct effects represents less than 1% of potentially suitable habitat in the region. The
32 implementation of programmatic design features may be sufficient to reduce indirect impacts on
33 this species to negligible levels. Avoidance of all potentially suitable foraging habitats (desert
34 shrublands) is not a feasible option for mitigating impacts on this species because potentially
35 suitable habitat is widespread throughout the area of direct effects and in other portions of the
36 SEZ region.

39 ***11.7.12.2.5 Impacts on State-Listed Species***

41 There are five species listed by the State of Nevada that may occur in the proposed
42 Millers SEZ affected area or may be affected by solar energy development on the SEZ
43 (Table 11.7.12.1-1). Impacts to these species have been previously discussed because of their
44 designation by the BLM as sensitive species (Section 11.7.12.2.4).

1 **11.7.12.2.6 Impacts on Rare Species**
2

3 There are 17 rare species (state rank of S1 or S2 in Nevada or listed as a species of
4 concern by the State of Nevada or USFWS) that may be affected by solar energy development on
5 the proposed Millers SEZ. Impacts have been previously discussed for 14 of these species that
6 are under review for ESA listing (Section 11.7.12.2.3) or that are BLM-designated sensitive
7 (Section 11.7.12.2.4). Impacts to the following three rare species have not been previously
8 discussed: Ripley biscuitroot, squalid milkvetch, and Tonopah milkvetch. Impacts and
9 potentially applicable mitigation measures (if necessary) for each of these species are provided
10 in Table 11.7.12.1-1.
11

12
13 **11.7.12.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
14

15 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
16 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for effects of utility-scale solar
17 energy development on special status species. While some SEZ-specific design features are best
18 established when project details are being considered, some design features can be identified at
19 this time, including the following:
20

- 21 • Pre-disturbance surveys should be conducted within the SEZ to determine the
22 presence and abundance of special status species, including those identified in
23 Table 11.7.12.1-1; disturbance to occupied habitats for these species should be
24 avoided or minimized to the extent practicable. If avoiding or minimizing
25 impacts on occupied habitats is not possible, translocation of individuals from
26 areas of direct effects, or compensatory mitigation of direct effects on
27 occupied habitats could reduce impacts. A comprehensive mitigation strategy
28 for special status species that used one or more of these options to offset the
29 impacts of development should be developed in coordination with the
30 appropriate federal and state agencies
31
- 32 • Coordination should be conducted with the USFWS and NDOW for the
33 Crescent Dunes aegialian scarab beetle, Crescent Dunes serican scarab beetle,
34 and greater sage-grouse – species that are candidates or under review for ESA
35 listing. Coordination would identify an appropriate survey protocol, and
36 mitigation requirements, which may include avoidance, minimization,
37 translocation, or compensation.
38
- 39 • Harassment or disturbance of special status species and their habitats in the
40 affected area should be avoided or minimized. This can be accomplished by
41 identifying any additional sensitive areas and implementing necessary
42 protection measures based upon consultation with the USFWS and NDOW.
43

44 If these SEZ-specific design features are implemented in addition to required
45 programmatic design features, impacts on the special status and rare species could be reduced.
46

1 **11.7.13 Air Quality and Climate**

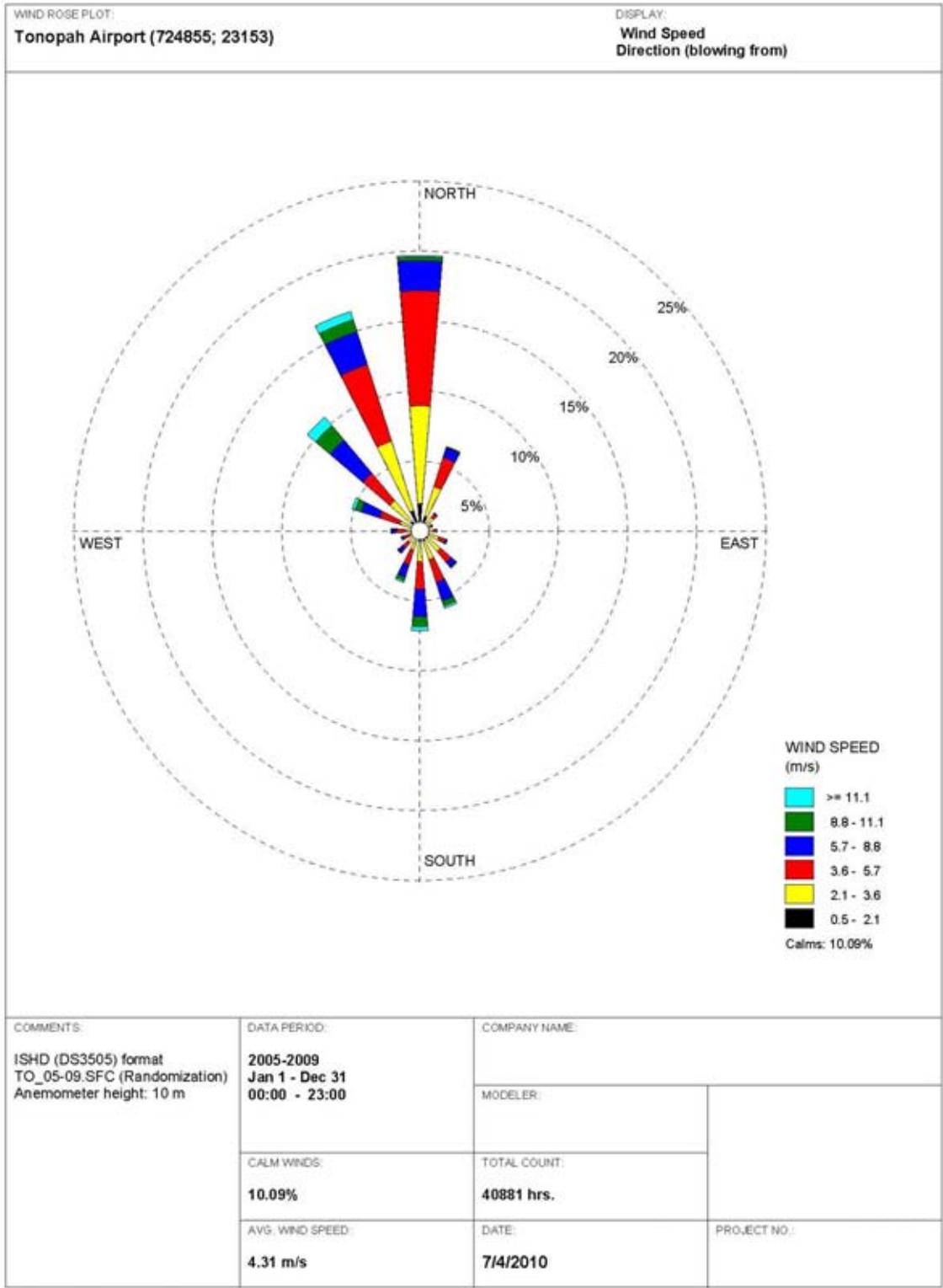
2
3
4 **11.7.13.1 Affected Environment**

5
6
7 **11.7.13.1.1 Climate**

8
9 The proposed Millers SEZ is located in southwestern Nevada, in the northern portion of
10 Esmeralda County. Nevada lies on the eastern lee side of the Sierra Nevada Range, which
11 markedly influences the climate of the state under the prevailing westerlies (NCDC 2010a). In
12 addition, the mountains east and north of Nevada act as barriers to the cold arctic air masses; thus
13 making long periods of extremely cold weather uncommon. The SEZ lies at an average elevation
14 of about 4,830 ft (1,470 m) in the southwestern portion of the Great Basin Desert, which has an
15 high desert climate marked by pleasant weather (mild winters and warm summers) with large
16 daily temperature swings due to dry air, scant precipitation, low relative humidity, and abundant
17 sunshine. Meteorological data collected at the Tonopah Airport, about 20 mi (32 km) east-
18 southeast of the Millers SEZ boundary, are summarized below.

19
20 A wind rose from the Tonopah Airport for the 5-year period 2005 to 2009, taken at a
21 level of 33 ft (10 m), is presented in Figure 11.7.13.1-1 (NCDC 2010b). During this period, the
22 annual average wind speed at the airport was about 9.6 mph (4.3 m/s), with a prevailing wind
23 direction from the north (about 19.7% of the time) and secondarily from the north-northwest
24 (about 16.4% of the time). The northerly wind component predominates, with about 46.7% of
25 wind directions from the northwest clockwise to north. Winds blew predominantly from the
26 north every month throughout the year, except in January and April, when wind blew more
27 frequently from the north-northwest. Wind speeds categorized as calm (less than 1.1 mph
28 [0.5 m/s]) occurred frequently (about 10% of the time) because of the stable conditions caused
29 by strong radiative cooling from late night to sunrise. Average wind speeds by season were
30 relatively uniform: the highest in spring at 11.2 mph (5.0 m/s); lower in summer and fall at
31 9.2 mph (4.1 m/s); and lowest in winter at 9.0 mph (4.0 m/s).

32
33 For the 1954 to 2009 period, the annual average temperature at Tonopah Airport was
34 51.6°F (10.9°C) (WRCC 2010e). January was the coldest month, with an average minimum
35 temperature of 19.1°F (-7.2°C), and July was the warmest month with an average maximum of
36 91.5°F (33.1°C). In summer, daytime maximum temperatures were frequently in the 90s, and
37 minimums were in the 50s. The minimum temperatures recorded were below freezing ($\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$
38 [0°C]) during the colder months (most days from November through March), but subzero
39 temperatures were recorded about 2 days per year, mostly in December and January. During the
40 same period, the highest temperature, 104°F (40.0°C), was reached in July 1960, and the lowest,
41 -15°F (-26.1°C), in January 1962. In a typical year, about 50 days had a maximum temperature
42 of $\geq 90^{\circ}\text{F}$ (32.2°C), while about 158 days had minimum temperatures at or below freezing.



1

2

3

4

FIGURE 11.7.13.1-1 Wind Rose at 33 ft (10 m) at Tonopah Airport, Nevada, 2005 to 2009 (Source: NCDC 2010b)

1 Along with prevailing westerlies, Pacific air masses lose most of their moisture on
2 the windward side of the Sierra Nevada Range parallel to Nevada’s western boundary with
3 California (NCDC 2010a). Thus, leeward areas like the Millers SEZ vicinity experience a lack of
4 precipitation. For 1954 to 2009, annual precipitation at Tonopah Airport averaged about 5.08 in.
5 (12.9 cm) (WRCC 2010e). On average, 36 days annually have measurable precipitation (0.01 in.
6 [0.025 cm] or higher). Precipitation is relatively evenly distributed by season, although it is
7 slightly higher in spring and summer than in winter and fall. Snow falls as early as October and
8 continues as late as May; most of the snow falls from December to March. The annual average
9 snowfall at Tonopah Airport is about 13.0 in. (33.0 cm).

10
11 Because the area surrounding the proposed Millers SEZ is far from major water bodies
12 (more than 250 mi [402 km]) and because surrounding mountain ranges block air masses from
13 penetrating into the area, severe weather events, such as thunderstorms and tornadoes, are rare.

14
15 In Nevada, flooding could occur from melting of heavy snowpack. On occasion, heavy
16 summer thunderstorms also cause flooding of local streams, usually in sparsely populated
17 mountainous areas, but these are seldom destructive (NCDC 2010a). Since 1997, four flash
18 floods have been reported in Esmeralda County, all of which occurred far from the SEZ and one
19 of which caused minor property damage.

20
21 In Esmeralda County, no hail storms have been reported (NCDC 2010c). Forty-two high-
22 wind events have been reported since 1999, which caused some property damage. Such events,
23 with a maximum wind speed of up to 127 mph (57 m/s), have occurred any time of the year, with
24 peaks in March and June (NCDC 2010c). In addition, one thunderstorm wind event with a
25 maximum wind speed of 52 mph (23 m/s) was reported in 2010, which caused minor property
26 damage.

27
28 No dust storm events have been reported in Esmeralda County (NCDC 2010c). However,
29 the SEZ is covered primarily with gravelly sands and sandy loams, which have a relatively low
30 dust storm potential. On occasion, high winds and dry soil conditions result in blowing dust in
31 Esmeralda County. Dust storms can deteriorate air quality and visibility and have adverse effects
32 on health.

33
34 Hurricanes and tropical storms formed off the coast of Central America and Mexico
35 weaken over the cold waters off the California coast. Accordingly, hurricanes never hit Nevada.
36 Historically, no tropical storm has passed within 100 mi (160 km) of the proposed Millers SEZ
37 (CSC 2010). Tornadoes in Esmeralda County, which encompasses the proposed Millers SEZ,
38 occur infrequently. Only one tornado has been reported; it occurred in 1982 (NCDC 2010c).
39 However, the tornado occurred far from the SEZ and was relatively weak (i.e., F1 on the Fujita
40 tornado scale). It did not cause property damage, injuries, or deaths.

41 42 43 ***11.7.13.1.2 Existing Air Emissions***

44
45 Esmeralda County has a few industrial emission sources, related to minerals and mining,
46 but their emissions are relatively small. All industrial sources are located far from the proposed

1 Millers SEZ. Because of the sparse population, only a handful of major roads, such as U.S. 6
 2 and U.S. 95 and several State Routes (264, 265, 266, and 773) are present in Esmeralda County.
 3 Thus, onroad mobile source emissions are not substantial. Data on annual emissions of criteria
 4 pollutants and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in Esmeralda County are presented in
 5 Table 11.7.13.1-1 for 2002 (WRAP 2009). Emission data are classified into six source
 6 categories: point, area, onroad mobile, nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire (wildfires, prescribed
 7 fires, agricultural fires, structural fires). In 2002, point sources were major contributors to total
 8 emissions of SO₂ (about 78%). Biogenic sources (i.e., vegetation—including trees, plants, and
 9 crops—and soils) that release naturally occurring emissions primarily contributed to NO_x and
 10 CO emissions (about 62% and 64%, respectively) and accounted
 11 for most of VOC emissions (about 99%). Area sources were
 12 major contributors to total emissions of PM₁₀ (about 96%) and
 13 PM_{2.5} (about 91%), and secondary contributors to SO₂ emissions
 14 (about 20%). Onroad sources were secondary contributors to NO_x
 15 and CO emissions (about 30% and 35%, respectively). In
 16 Esmeralda County, nonroad sources were minor contributors to
 17 criteria pollutants and VOCs. (Fire emissions were not estimated
 18 in Esmeralda County in 2002.)

19
 20 In 2005, Nevada produced about 56.3 MMT of *gross*⁵
 21 carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e)⁶ emissions, which is about
 22 0.8% of total U.S. GHG emissions in that year (NDEP 2008).
 23 Gross GHG emissions in Nevada increased by about 65% from
 24 1990 to 2005 because of Nevada’s rapid population growth,
 25 compared to 16.3% growth in U.S. GHG emissions during the
 26 same period. In 2005, electrical generation (48%) and
 27 transportation (30%) were the primary contributors to gross
 28 GHG emission sources in Nevada. Fuel use in the residential,
 29 commercial, and industrial sectors combined accounted for about
 30 12% of total state emissions. Nevada’s *net* emissions were about
 31 51.3 MMT CO₂e, considering carbon sinks from forestry activities
 32 and agricultural soils throughout the state. The EPA (2009a) also
 33 estimated 2005 emissions in Nevada. Its estimate of CO₂
 34 emissions from fossil fuel combustion was 49.6 MMT, which was
 35 comparable to the state’s estimate. Electric power generation and
 36 transportation accounted for about 52.7% and 33.6% of the CO₂
 37 emissions total, respectively, while the residential, commercial,
 38 and industrial sectors accounted for the remainder (about 13.7%).
 39

TABLE 11.7.13.1-1 Annual Emissions of Criteria Pollutants and VOCs in Esmeralda County, Nevada, Encompassing the Proposed Millers SEZ, 2002^a

Pollutant	Emissions (tons/yr)
SO ₂	106
NO _x	1,116
CO	13,832
VOCs	59,144
PM ₁₀	937
PM _{2.5}	202

^a Includes point, area, onroad and nonroad mobile, biogenic, and fire emissions.

^b Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO_x = nitrogen oxides; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 μm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 μm; SO₂ = sulfur dioxide; and VOCs = volatile organic compounds.

Source: WRAP (2009).

⁵ Excluding GHG emissions removed as a result of forestry and other land uses and excluding GHG emissions associated with exported electricity.

⁶ A measure used to compare the emissions from various GHGs on the basis of their global warming potential, defined as the cumulative radiative forcing effects of a gas over a specified time horizon resulting from the emission of a unit mass of gas relative to a reference gas, CO₂. The CO₂e for a gas is derived by multiplying the mass of the gas by the associated global warming potential.

1 **11.7.13.1.3 Air Quality**
2

3 The EPA set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six criteria pollutants
4 (EPA 2010a): SO₂, NO₂, CO, O₃, PM (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and Pb. Nevada has its own State
5 Ambient Air Quality Standards (SAAQS), which are generally similar to the NAAQS but with
6 some differences (NAC 445B.22097). In addition, Nevada has set standards for 1-hour H₂S
7 emissions, which are not addressed by the NAAQS. The NAAQS and Nevada SAAQS for
8 criteria pollutants are presented in Table 11.7.13.1-2.
9

10 Esmeralda County is located administratively in the Nevada Intrastate AQCR, along with
11 10 other counties in Nevada. Not included are Las Vegas Intrastate AQCR, including Clark
12 County only, which encompasses Las Vegas; and Northwest Nevada Intrastate AQCR, including
13 five northwest counties, which encompasses Reno. Currently, the area surrounding the proposed
14 SEZ is designated as being in unclassifiable/attainment of NAAQS for all criteria pollutants
15 (Title 40, Part 81, Section 329 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* [40 CFR 81.329]).
16

17 Because of Esmeralda County's low population density, it has no significant emission
18 sources of its own and only minor mobile emissions along major highways. Accordingly,
19 ambient air quality in Esmeralda County is relatively good. No ambient air-monitoring stations
20 are located in Esmeralda County. To characterize ambient air quality around the SEZ, one
21 monitoring station in Clark County was chosen: Jean, about 200 mi (322 km) southeast of the
22 SEZ. The Jean station, which is located upwind of the Las Vegas area, can be considered
23 representative of the proposed SEZ, although its air quality is, to some extent, influenced by
24 transport of air pollutants from the South Coast Air Basin, which includes Los Angeles, along
25 with prevailing westerlies. Ambient concentrations of NO₂, O₃, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5} are recorded
26 at Jean. The East Sahara Avenue station, which is on the outskirts of Las Vegas, has only one
27 SO₂ monitor in the area. The CO concentrations at the East Tonopah Avenue station in
28 Las Vegas, which is the farthest downwind of Las Vegas among CO monitoring stations, were
29 presented. No Pb measurements have been made in the state of Nevada because of low Pb
30 concentration levels after the phase-out of leaded gasoline. The background concentrations of
31 criteria pollutants at these stations for the period 2004 to 2008 are presented in Table 11.7.13.1-2
32 (EPA 2010b). Monitored concentration levels at either station were lower than their respective
33 standards (up to 44%), except O₃, which approaches the 1-hour NAAQS/SAAQS and exceeds
34 the 8-hour NAAQS. However, ambient concentrations around the SEZ are anticipated to be
35 lower than those presented in the table, except PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, which can be either higher or
36 lower.
37

38 The Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) regulations (see 40 CFR 52.21),
39 which are designed to limit the growth of air pollution in clean areas, apply to a major
40 new source or modification of an existing major source within an attainment or unclassified area
41 (see Section 4.11.2.3). As a matter of policy, EPA recommends that the permitting authority
42 notify the Federal Land Managers when a proposed PSD source would locate within 62 mi
43 (100 km) of a sensitive Class I area. Several Class I areas are located around the Millers SEZ,
44 but none of these is situated within 62-mi (100-km) distance in Nevada and California. The
45 nearest Class I area is the John Muir WA in California (40 CFR 81.405), about 73 mi (118 km)
46 southwest of the proposed Millers SEZ. This Class I area is not located downwind of prevailing

TABLE 11.7.13.1-2 NAAQS, SAAQS, and Background Concentration Levels Representative of the Proposed Millers SEZ in Esmeralda County, Nevada, 2004 to 2008

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	NAAQS	SAAQS	Background Concentration Level	
				Concentration ^{b,c}	Data Source ^d
SO ₂	1-hour	75 ppb ^e	– ^f	–	–
	3-hour	0.5 ppm	0.5 ppm	0.009 ppm (1.8%)	Las Vegas, 2005
	24-hour	0.14 ppm	0.14 ppm	0.008 ppm (5.7%)	Las Vegas, 2005
	Annual	0.030 ppm	0.030 ppm	0.006 ppm (20%)	Las Vegas, 2005
NO ₂	1-hour	100 ppb ^g	–	–	–
	Annual	0.053 ppm	0.053 ppm	0.004 ppm (7.5%)	Jean Station, 2007
CO	1-hour	35 ppm	35 ppm	5.7 ppm (16%)	Las Vegas, 2004
	8-hour	9 ppm	9 ppm	3.9 ppm (43%)	Las Vegas, 2005
O ₃	1-hour	0.12 ppm ^h	0.12 ppm	0.098 ppm (82%)	Jean, 2005
	8-hour	0.075 ppm	–	0.083 ppm (111%)	Jean, 2007
PM ₁₀	24-hour	150 µg/m ³	150 µg/m ³	66 µg/m ³ (44%)	Jean, 2008
	Annual	–	50 µg/m ³	17 µg/m ³ (34%)	Jean, 2005
PM _{2.5}	24-hour	35 µg/m ³	–	12.9 µg/m ³ (37%)	Jean, 2008
	Annual	15.0 µg/m ³	–	4.93 µg/m ³ (33%)	Jean, 2008
Pb	30-day	–	1.5 µg/m ³	–	–
	Calendar quarter	1.5 µg/m ³	–	–	–
	Rolling 3-month	0.15 µg/m ³ ⁱ	–	–	–

^a Notation: CO = carbon monoxide; NO₂ = nitrogen dioxide; O₃ = ozone; Pb = lead; PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤2.5 µm; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of ≤10 µm; and SO₂ = sulfur dioxide.

^b Monitored concentrations are the second-highest for all averaging times less than or equal to 24-hour averages, except fourth-highest daily maximum for 8-hour O₃ and the 98th percentile for 24-hour PM_{2.5}; and arithmetic mean for annual SO₂, NO₂, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}.

^c Values in parentheses are background concentration levels as a percentage of NAAQS or SAAQS. Calculation of 1-hour SO₂ and NO₂ compared to NAAQS was not made, because no measurement data based on new NAAQS are available.

^d All air monitoring stations listed are located in Clark County.

^e Effective August 23, 2010.

^f A hyphen denotes not applicable or not available.

^g Effective April 12, 2010.

^h The EPA revoked the 1-hour O₃ standard in all areas, although some areas have continuing obligations under that standard (“anti-backsliding”).

ⁱ Effective January 12, 2009.

Sources: EPA (2010a,b); NAC 445B.22097.

1
2

1 winds at the Millers SEZ (Figure 11.7.13.1-1). The next nearest Class I areas are Ansel Adams
2 WA, Kings Canyon NP, Yosemite NP, and Hoover WA, which are about 86 mi (139 km)
3 west-southwest, 88 mi (141 km) southwest, 89 mi (143 km) west, and 91 mi (146 km) west of
4 the Millers SEZ, respectively.
5
6

7 **11.7.13.2 Impacts**

8

9 Potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with a solar project would be of
10 most concern during the construction phase. Impacts on ambient air quality from fugitive dust
11 emissions resulting from soil disturbances are anticipated, but they would be of short duration.
12 During the operations phase, only a few sources with generally low-level emissions would exist
13 for any of the four types of solar technologies evaluated. A solar facility would either not burn
14 fossil fuels or burn only small amounts during operation. (For facilities using heat transfer
15 fluids [HTFs], fuel could be used to maintain the temperature of the HTFs for more efficient
16 daily start-up.) Conversely, solar facilities could displace air emissions that would otherwise
17 be released from fossil fuel power plants to generate an equivalent amount of electricity.
18

19 Air quality impacts shared by all solar technologies are discussed in detail in
20 Section 5.11.1, and technology-specific impacts are discussed in Section 5.11.2. Impacts specific
21 to the proposed Millers SEZ are presented in the following sections. Any such impacts would be
22 minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design features described in
23 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the application of any additional mitigation measures.
24 Section 11.7.13.3 below identifies SEZ-specific design features of particular relevance to the
25 Millers SEZ.
26

27 **11.7.13.2.1 Construction**

28

29 The Millers SEZ has a relatively flat terrain; thus only a minimum number of site
30 preparation activities, perhaps with no large-scale earthmoving operations, would be required.
31 However, fugitive dust emissions from soil disturbances during the entire construction phase
32 would be a major concern because of the large areas that would be disturbed in a region that
33 experiences windblown dust problems. Fugitive dusts, which are released near ground level,
34 typically have more localized impacts than emissions from an elevated stack with additional
35 plume rise induced by buoyancy and momentum effects.
36
37

38 **Methods and Assumptions**

39

40 Air quality modeling for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions associated with construction
41 activities was performed using the EPA-recommended AERMOD model (EPA 2009b). Details
42 for emissions estimation, the description of AERMOD, input data processing procedures, and
43 modeling assumption are described in Section M.13 of Appendix M. Estimated air
44 concentrations were compared with the applicable NAAQS/SAAQS levels at the site boundaries
45 and nearby communities and with Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) increment
46

1 levels at nearby Class I areas.⁷ However, no receptors were modeled for PSD analysis at the
2 nearest Class I area, John Muir WA in California, because it is about 73 mi (118 km) from the
3 SEZ, which is over the maximum modeling distance of 31 mi (50 km) for the AERMOD. Rather,
4 several regularly spaced receptors in the direction of the John Muir WA were selected as
5 surrogates for the PSD analysis. For the Millers SEZ, the modeling was conducted based on the
6 following assumptions and input:

- 7
- 8 • Uniformly distributed emissions of 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) each and
9 6,000 acres (24.3 km²) in total, in the southeastern portion of the SEZ, close
10 to the nearest residences and the town of Tonopah,
11
- 12 • Surface hourly meteorological data from Tonopah Airport⁸ and upper air
13 sounding data from the Mercury/Desert Rock Airport for the 2005 to 2009
14 period, and
15
- 16 • A regularly spaced receptor grid over a modeling domain of 62 × 62 mi
17 (100 km × 100 km) centered on the proposed SEZ, and additional discrete
18 receptors at the SEZ boundaries.
19

20

21 **Results**

22

23 The modeling results for both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentration increments and total
24 concentrations (modeled plus background concentrations) that would result from construction-
25 related fugitive emissions are summarized in Table 11.7.13.2-1. Maximum 24-hour PM₁₀
26 concentration increments modeled to occur at the site boundaries would be an estimated
27 539 µg/m³, which far exceeds the relevant standard level of 150 µg/m³. Total 24-hour PM₁₀
28 concentrations of 605 µg/m³ would also exceed the standard level at the SEZ boundary.
29 However, high PM₁₀ concentrations would be limited to the immediate areas surrounding the
30 SEZ boundary and would decrease quickly with distance. Predicted maximum 24-hour PM₁₀
31 concentration increments would be about 15 µg/m³ at the Silver Peak (about 26 mi [42 km]
32 south-southwest from the SEZ), about 4 µg/m³ at Coaldale, and about 2 µg/m³ at Tonopah (the
33 closest town, about 11 mi [18 km] east-southeast of the SEZ boundary). Annual average modeled
34 PM₁₀ concentration increments and total concentration (increment plus background) at the SEZ
35 boundary would be about 75.8 µg/m³ and 92.8 µg/m³, respectively, which are much higher than

7 To provide a quantitative assessment, the modeled air impacts of construction were compared to the NAAQS/SAAQS levels and the PSD Class I increment levels. Although the Clean Air Act exempts construction activities from PSD requirements, a comparison with the Class I increment levels was used to quantify potential impacts. Only monitored data can be used to determine the attainment status. Modeled data are used to assess potential problems and as a consideration in the permitting process.

8 The number of missing hours at the Tonopah Airport amounts to about 17.6% of the total hours, which may not be acceptable for regulatory applications because that percentage exceeds the 10% limit defined by the EPA. However, because the wind patterns at Tonopah Airport are more representative of wind at the Millers SEZ than the wind patterns at other airports (which have more complete data but are located in different topographic features), the former values were used for the screening analysis.

TABLE 11.7.13.2-1 Maximum Air Quality Impacts from Emissions Associated with Construction Activities for the Proposed Millers SEZ

Pollutant ^a	Averaging Time	Rank ^b	Concentration ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)				Percentage of NAAQS/SAAQS	
			Maximum Increment ^b	Background ^c	Total	NAAQS/SAAQS	Increment	Total
PM ₁₀	24 hours	H6H	539	66	605	150	359	403
	Annual	– ^d	75.8	17	92.8	50	152	186
PM _{2.5}	24 hours	H8H	34.9	12.9	47.8	35	100	136
	Annual	–	7.6	4.9	12.5	15.0	51	83

^a PM_{2.5} = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 2.5 \mu\text{m}$; PM₁₀ = particulate matter with a diameter of $\leq 10 \mu\text{m}$.

^b Concentrations for attainment demonstration are presented. H6H = highest of the sixth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. H8H = highest of the multiyear average of the eighth-highest concentrations at each receptor over the 5-year period. For the annual average, multiyear averages of annual means over the 5-year period are presented. Maximum concentrations are predicted to occur at the site boundaries.

^c See Table 11.7.13.1-2.

^d A dash indicates not applicable.

1
2
3 the SAAQS level of $50 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Annual PM₁₀ increments would be much lower, about $0.3 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
4 at Silver Peak, about $0.1 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at Tonopah, and lower than $0.1 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at Coaldale. Total 24-hour
5 PM_{2.5} concentrations would be $48 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at the SEZ boundary, which is higher than the NAAQS
6 level of $35 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$; modeled increments contribute about three times more than background
7 concentration to this total. The total annual average PM_{2.5} concentration would be $12.5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$,
8 which is below the NAAQS level of $15.0 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. At Silver Peak, predicted maximum 24-hour
9 and annual PM_{2.5} concentration increments would be about 0.3 and $0.03 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, respectively.

10
11 Predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ concentration increments at the surrogate receptors
12 for the nearest Class I Area—John Muir WA in California—would be about 8.7 and $0.2 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$,
13 or 109% and 5% of the PSD increments for Class I area, respectively. These surrogate receptors
14 are more than 36 mi (58 km) from the John Muir WA, and thus predicted concentrations in John
15 Muir WA would be much lower than the above values (about 55% of the PSD increments for
16 24-hour PM₁₀), considering the same decay ratio with distance.

17
18 In conclusion, predicted 24-hour and annual PM₁₀ and 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentration
19 levels could exceed the standard levels used as guidelines at the SEZ boundaries and in the
20 immediate surrounding areas during the construction of solar facilities. To reduce potential
21 impacts on ambient air quality and in compliance with programmatic design features, aggressive
22 dust control measures would be used. Potential air quality impacts on nearby communities would
23 be much lower. Predicted total concentrations for annual PM_{2.5} would be below the respective
24 standard levels. Modeling indicates that emissions from construction activities are not anticipated

1 to exceed Class I PSD PM₁₀ increments at the nearest federal Class I area (John Muir WA in
2 California). Construction activities are not subject to the PSD program, and the comparison
3 provides only a screen for gauging the size of the impact. Accordingly, it is anticipated that
4 impacts of construction activities on ambient air quality would be moderate and temporary.
5

6 Construction emissions from the engine exhaust from heavy equipment and vehicles
7 could cause impacts on AQRVs (e.g., visibility and acid deposition) at the nearby federal Class I
8 areas. The SO_x emissions from engine exhaust would be very low, because programmatic design
9 features would require ultra-low-sulfur fuel with a sulfur content of 15 ppm. The NO_x emissions
10 from engine exhaust would be primary contributors to potential impacts on AQRVs.
11 Construction-related emissions are temporary in nature and thus would cause some unavoidable
12 but short-term impacts.
13

14 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
15 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 120-kV transmission line
16 might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-
17 specific analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However,
18 some construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ. Potential impacts on
19 ambient air quality would be a minor component of construction impacts in comparison with
20 solar facility construction and would be temporary.
21

22 23 ***11.7.13.2.2 Operations*** 24

25 Emission sources associated with the operation of a solar facility would include auxiliary
26 boilers; vehicle traffic (commuter, visitor, support, and delivery); maintenance (e.g., mirror
27 cleaning and repair and replacement of damaged mirrors); and drift from cooling towers for the
28 parabolic trough or power tower technology if wet cooling was implemented (drift comprises
29 low-level PM emissions).
30

31 The type of emission sources caused by and offset by operation of a solar facility are
32 discussed in Appendix M, Section M.13.4.
33

34 Potential air emissions displaced by the solar project development at the proposed Millers
35 SEZ are presented in Table 11.7.13.2-2. Total power generation capacity ranging from 1,492 to
36 2,686 MW is estimated for the proposed Millers SEZ for various solar technologies
37 (see Section 11.7.2). The estimated amount of emissions avoided for the solar technologies
38 evaluated depends only on the megawatts of conventional fossil fuel-generated power displaced,
39 because a composite emission factor per megawatt-hour of power by conventional technologies
40 is assumed (EPA 2009c). Full development of solar power in the SEZ could result in substantial
41 avoided air emissions—ranging from 6.9 to 12% of total emissions of SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂
42 from electric power systems in the state of Nevada (EPA 2009c). Avoided emissions could be up
43 to 2.6% of total emissions from electric power systems in the six-state study area. When
44 compared with all source categories, power production from the same solar facilities could
45 displace up to 10% of SO₂, 3.8% of NO_x, and 6.7% of CO₂ emissions in the state of Nevada
46 (EPA 2009a; WRAP 2009). These emissions could be up to 1.4% of total emissions from all

TABLE 11.7.13.2-2 Annual Emissions from Combustion-Related Power Generation Avoided by Full Solar Development of the Proposed Millers SEZ

Area Size (acres)	Capacity (MW) ^a	Power Generation (GWh/yr) ^b	Emissions Displaced (tons/yr; 10 ³ tons/yr for CO ₂) ^c			
			SO ₂	NO _x	Hg	CO ₂
16,787	1,492–2,686	2,614–4,706	3,689–6,639	3,164–5,695	0.021–0.038	2,030–3,655
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in Nevada ^d			6.9–12%	6.9–12%	6.9–12%	6.9–12%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in Nevada ^e			5.6–10%	2.1–3.8%	– ^f	3.7–6.7%
Percentage of total emissions from electric power systems in the six-state study area ^d			1.5–2.6%	0.86–1.5%	0.72–1.3%	0.77–1.4%
Percentage of total emissions from all source categories in the six-state study area ^e			0.78–1.4%	0.12–0.21%	–	0.24–0.44%

^a It is assumed that the SEZ would eventually have development on 80% of the lands and that a range of 5 acres (0.020 km²) per MW (for parabolic trough technology) to 9 acres (0.036 km²) per MW (power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies) would be required.

^b Assumed capacity factor of 20%.

^c Composite combustion-related emission factors for SO₂, NO_x, Hg, and CO₂ of 2.82, 2.42, 1.6 × 10⁻⁵, and 1,553 lb/MWh, respectively, were used for the state of Nevada.

^d Emission data for all air pollutants are for 2005.

^e Emission data for SO₂ and NO_x are for 2002, while those for CO₂ are for 2005.

^f A dash indicates not estimated.

Sources: EPA (2009a,c); WRAP (2009).

1
2
3 source categories in the six-state study area. Power generation from fossil fuel-fired power
4 plants accounts for about 93% of the total electric power generated in Nevada for which
5 contribution of natural gas and coal combustion is comparable (EPA 2009c). Thus, solar
6 facilities to be built in the Millers SEZ could be more important than those built in other states in
7 terms of reducing fuel combustion-related emissions.

8
9 As discussed in Section 5.11.1.5, the operation of associated transmission lines would
10 generate some air pollutants from activities such as periodic site inspections and maintenance.
11 However, these activities would occur infrequently, and the amount of emissions would be small.
12 In addition, transmission lines could produce minute amounts of O₃ and its precursor
13 NO_x associated with corona discharge (i.e., the breakdown of air near high-voltage conductors),
14 which is most noticeable for high-voltage lines during rain or very humid conditions. Since the
15 Millers SEZ is located in an arid desert environment, these emissions would be small, and

1 potential impacts on ambient air quality associated with transmission lines would be negligible,
2 considering the infrequent occurrences and small amount of emissions from corona discharges.
3
4

5 ***11.7.13.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation***

6
7 As discussed in Section 5.11.1.4, decommissioning/reclamation activities are similar to
8 construction activities but are on a more limited scale and of shorter duration. Potential impacts
9 on ambient air quality would be correspondingly less than those from construction activities.
10 Decommissioning activities would last for a short period, and their potential impacts would be
11 moderate and temporary. The same mitigation measures adopted during the construction phase
12 would also be implemented during the decommissioning phase (Section 5.11.3).
13
14

15 **11.7.13.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

16
17 No SEZ-specific design features are required. Limiting dust generation during
18 construction and operations at the proposed Millers SEZ (such as increased watering frequency
19 or road paving or treatment) is a required design feature under BLM's Solar Energy Program.
20 These extensive fugitive dust control measures would keep off-site PM levels as low as possible
21 during construction.
22

1 **11.7.14 Visual Resources**

2
3
4 **11.7.14.1 Affected Environment**

5
6
7 The proposed Millers SEZ is located in Esmeralda County in southwestern Nevada,
8 44 mi (71 km) east of the California border. The SEZ occupies 16,787 acres (67.9 km²) within
9 the Big Smoky Valley and extends about 7.7 mi (12.4 km) east to west and nearly 5.8 mi
10 (9.3 km) north to south. The SEZ ranges in elevation from 4,778 ft (1,456 m) in the southwest
11 portion to 4,892 ft (1,491 m) in the northwest portion.

12
13 The SEZ lies within the Central Basin and Range Level III ecoregion, which consists of
14 northerly trending fault-block ranges and intervening drier basins. Valleys, lower slopes, and
15 alluvial fans are either shrub- and grass-covered or shrub-covered. Higher elevation mountain
16 slopes support woodland, mountain brush, and scattered forests. The land is primarily used for
17 grazing, with some irrigated cropland found in valleys near mountain water sources. Millers SEZ
18 is located within two Level IV ecoregions. The southwest corner of the SEZ is within the nearly
19 level and mostly barren Lahontan and Tonopah Playas Level IV ecoregion. The playas contain
20 mud flats, alkali flats, and intermittent saline lakes. Playas occur at the lowest elevations in the
21 Lahontan Basin and fill with seasonal runoff from surrounding mountain ranges during winter,
22 providing habitat for migratory birds. (Bryce et al. 2003). The rest of the SEZ is within the
23 *Tonopah Basin* Level IV ecoregion, which is a transition between the Great Basin and the more
24 southerly Mojave Desert. It is typified by broad, nearly flat to rolling valleys containing lake
25 plains, scattered hills, alluvial fans, bajadas, sand dunes, and hot springs. Ephemeral washes
26 occur. Surface water comes from springs and sporadic foothill precipitation events, but is
27 generally scarce.

28
29 The SEZ is located within a very flat treeless plain of the broad Big Smoky Valley,
30 resulting in a very strong horizon line. The SEZ is bounded by mountain ranges on the east,
31 south, and west, with open views to the northeast and southwest. Lone Mountain rises 5.5 mi
32 (8.9 km) south of the SEZ. The Monte Cristo Range is located about 3 mi (5 km) west of the
33 SEZ. The San Antonio Mountains to the east are more distant, rising about 9 mi (15 km) from
34 the SEZ. These ranges include peaks generally between 6,000 and 8,000 ft (1,829 and 2,438 m)
35 in elevation, with the peak of Lone Mountain at 9,108 ft (2,776 m). From the northeast to the
36 southwest, the Big Smoky Valley extends 50 mi (81 km) and is about 12 mi (19 km) wide. The
37 SEZ and surrounding mountain ranges are shown in Figure 11.7.14.1-1.

38
39 The overall visual impression of the SEZ and its surroundings is of a vast, light-colored
40 plain rising abruptly to rugged mountains to the south and west, with more distant mountains to
41 the east, and generally open views to the north and southwest. The mountains to the south (Lone
42 Mountain) are dark, while the mountains to the west (Monte Cristo Range) present a range of
43 colors from nearly white through rusty red to darker grays and browns. The light soils and lack
44 of vegetation in playas add some visual interest, and in other, scattered, smaller areas, black,
45 featureless, and nearly perfectly flat desert pavement provides striking visual contrasts in color
46 and texture with surrounding vegetation and soils.

1 Vegetation is generally sparse in much of the SEZ, with widely spaced low shrubs
2 generally less than 3 ft (1 m) tall, and much bare soil, particularly in the playas. The vegetation is
3 predominantly greasewood-shadscale. During an August 2009 site visit, the vegetation presented
4 a limited range of light greens, tans, and grays, with medium to coarse textures, and generally
5 low visual interest.
6

7 There is no permanent surface water within the SEZ. A number of washes, including Ione
8 Wash, cross the SEZ in a generally north-south direction.
9

10 Cultural disturbances visible within the SEZ include existing transmission lines, fences,
11 and roads. There is evidence of OHV use in some areas, but in general, the level of cultural
12 disturbance is low. These cultural modifications generally detract from the scenic quality of the
13 SEZ; however, the SEZ is so large that from many locations within the SEZ, these features are
14 either not visible or are so distant as to have minimal effect on views. From most locations
15 within the SEZ, the landscape is generally natural in appearance, with little disturbance visible.
16

17 Off-site cultural disturbances visible from the SEZ include U.S. 6, just south of the SEZ
18 and generally paralleling the southern boundary of the SEZ. Traffic on the highway would be
19 plainly visible from many locations within the SEZ. The Millers rest stop on U.S. 6 includes
20 fences, cleared areas roads, groves of trees, a few low buildings, and a communications tower
21 that is visible for long distances, including from within the SEZ. Transmission towers and lines
22 are visible along U.S. 6 and also between the highway and the SEZ.
23

24 The general lack of topographic relief, water, and variety results in low scenic value
25 within the SEZ itself; however, because of the flatness of the landscape, the lack of trees, and the
26 breadth of the Big Smoky Valley, the SEZ presents a vast panoramic landscape with sweeping
27 views of the surrounding mountains that add to the scenic values within the SEZ viewshed. In
28 general, the mountains appear to be devoid of vegetation, and their jagged, irregular forms, and
29 varied colors provide dramatic visual contrasts to the strong horizontal line, light-colored
30 vegetation, the light playa soils and dark desert pavement areas of the valley floor, particularly
31 when viewed from nearby locations within the SEZ. The mountain slopes and peaks to the east,
32 south, and west of the SEZ are, in general, visually pristine. Panoramic views of the SEZ are
33 shown in Figures 11.7.14.1-2, 11.7.14.1-3 and 11.7.14.1-4.
34

35 The BLM conducted a VRI for the SEZ and surrounding lands in 2004. The VRI
36 evaluates BLM-administered lands based on scenic quality; sensitivity level in terms of public
37 concern for preservation of scenic values in the evaluated lands; and distance from travel routes
38 or KOPs. Based on these three factors, BLM-administered lands are placed into one of four VRI
39 Classes, which represent the relative value of the visual resources. Class I and II are the most
40 valued; Class III represents a moderate value; and Class IV represents the least value. Class I is
41 reserved for specially designated areas, such as national wildernesses and other congressionally
42 and administratively designated areas for which decisions have been made to preserve a natural
43 landscape. Class II is the highest rating for lands without special designation. More information
44 about VRI methodology is presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Inventory*, BLM
45 Manual Handbook 8410-1 (BLM 1986a).
46

1



2

FIGURE 11.7.14.1-2 Approximately 180° Panoramic View of the Proposed Millers SEZ, Facing Southwest from Desert Pavement Area, with Lone Mountain at Left, and Monte Cristo Range at Right

3

4

5

6



7

FIGURE 11.7.14.1-3 Approximately 120° Panoramic View of the Proposed Millers SEZ, Facing West toward Monte Cristo Range from Southeastern Portion of the SEZ

8

9

10

11



12

FIGURE 11.7.14.1-4 Approximately 120° Panoramic View of the Proposed Millers SEZ, Facing South toward Lone Mountain from West-Central Portion of the SEZ

13

1 The VRI values for the SEZ are VRI Class 4, indicating low relative visual values. Most
2 of the immediate surroundings are also VRI Class 4, with the exception of the area immediately
3 to the east of the SEZ. This is VRI Class 3 (BLM 2009c). The BLM conducted a new VRI for
4 the SEZ and surrounding lands in 2010, ; however, the VRI was not completed in time for the
5 new data to be included in this draft PEIS. The new VRI data will be incorporated into the
6 analyses presented in the final PEIS. More information about VRI methodology is presented in
7 Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Inventory*, BLM Manual Handbook 8410-1 (BLM 1986a).
8

9 The Tonopah Resource Management Plan (BLM 1997) indicates that the SEZ and
10 surrounding area is managed as VRM Class IV, which permits major modification of the existing
11 character of the landscape. More information about the BLM VRM program is presented in
12 Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Management*, BLM Manual Handbook 8400 (BLM 1984).
13
14

15 **11.7.14.2 Impacts**

16
17 The potential for impacts from utility-scale solar energy development on visual
18 resources within the proposed Millers SEZ and surrounding lands, as well as the impacts
19 of related projects (e.g., access roads and transmission lines) outside of the SEZ, is presented in
20 this section.
21

22 Site-specific impact assessment is needed to systematically and thoroughly assess visual
23 impact levels for a particular project. Without precise information about the location of a project
24 and a relatively complete and accurate description of its major components and their layout, it is
25 not possible to assess precisely the visual impacts associated with the facility. However, if the
26 general nature and location of a facility are known, a more generalized assessment of potential
27 visual impacts can be made by describing the range of expected visual changes and discussing
28 contrasts typically associated with these changes. In addition, a general analysis can identify
29 sensitive resources that may be at risk if a future project is sited in a particular area. Detailed
30 information about the methodology employed for the visual impact assessment used in this PEIS,
31 including assumptions and limitations, is presented in Appendix M.
32
33

34 *Potential Glint and Glare Impacts.* Similarly, the nature and magnitude of potential glint-
35 and glare-related visual impacts for a given solar facility is highly dependent on viewer position,
36 sun angle, the nature of the reflective surface and its orientation relative to the sun and the
37 viewer, atmospheric conditions and other variables. The determination of potential impacts from
38 glint and glare from solar facilities within a given proposed SEZ would require precise
39 knowledge of these variables, and is not possible given the scope of the PEIS. Therefore, the
40 following analysis does not describe or suggest potential contrast levels arising from glint and
41 glare for facilities that might be developed within the SEZ. However, it should be assumed that
42 glint and glare are possible visual impacts from *any* utility-scale solar facility, regardless of size,
43 landscape setting, or technology type. The occurrence of glint and glare at solar facilities could
44 potentially cause large though temporary increases in brightness and visibility of the facilities.
45 The visual contrast levels projected for sensitive visual resource areas discussed in the following
46 analysis do not account for potential glint and glare effects; however, these effects would be

1 incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be conducted for
2 specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more information about potential glint
3 and glare impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy facilities, see Section 5.12 of this
4 PEIS.

7 ***11.7.14.2.1 Impacts on the Proposed Millers SEZ***

9 Some or all of the SEZ could be developed for one or more utility-scale solar energy
10 projects, utilizing one or more of the solar energy technologies described in Appendix F.
11 Because of the industrial nature and large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities, large visual
12 impacts on the SEZ would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and decommissioning
13 of solar energy projects. In addition, large impacts could occur at solar facilities utilizing highly
14 reflective surfaces or major light-emitting facility components (solar dish, parabolic trough, and
15 power tower technologies) , with lesser impacts associated with reflective surfaces expected
16 from PV facilities. These impacts would be expected to involve major modification of the
17 existing character of the landscape and would likely dominate the views nearby. Additional, and
18 potentially large, impacts would occur as a result of the construction, operation, and
19 decommissioning of related facilities, such as access roads and electric transmission lines. While
20 the primary visual impacts associated with solar energy development within the SEZ would
21 occur during daylight hours, lighting required for utility-scale solar energy facilities would be a
22 potential source of visual impacts at night, both within the SEZ and on surrounding lands.

24 Common and technology-specific visual impacts from utility-scale solar energy
25 development, as well as impacts associated with electric transmission lines, are discussed in
26 Section 5.12 of this PEIS. Impacts would last throughout construction, operation, and
27 decommissioning, and some impacts could continue after project decommissioning. Visual
28 impacts resulting from solar energy development in the SEZ would be in addition to impacts
29 from solar energy development and other development that may occur on other public or private
30 lands within the SEZ viewshed, and are subject to cumulative effects. For discussion of
31 cumulative impacts, see Section 11.7.22.4.13 of this PEIS.

33 The changes described above would be expected to be consistent with BLM VRM
34 objectives for VRM Class IV (as seen from nearby KOPs), the current VRM class designated for
35 the SEZ. More information about impact determination using the BLM VRM program is
36 presented in Section 5.12 and in *Visual Resource Contrast Rating*, BLM Manual
37 Handbook 8431-1 (BLM 1986b).

39 Implementation of the programmatic design features intended to reduce visual impacts
40 (described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would be expected to reduce visual impacts associated
41 with utility-scale solar energy development within the SEZ; however, the degree of effectiveness
42 of these design features could be assessed only at the site- and project-specific level. Given the
43 large scale, reflective surfaces, and strong regular geometry of utility-scale solar energy facilities
44 and the lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities
45 away from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive viewing areas would be the primary
46 means of mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other visual impact mitigation measures

1 would generally be limited, but would be important to reduce visual contrasts to the greatest
2 extent possible.

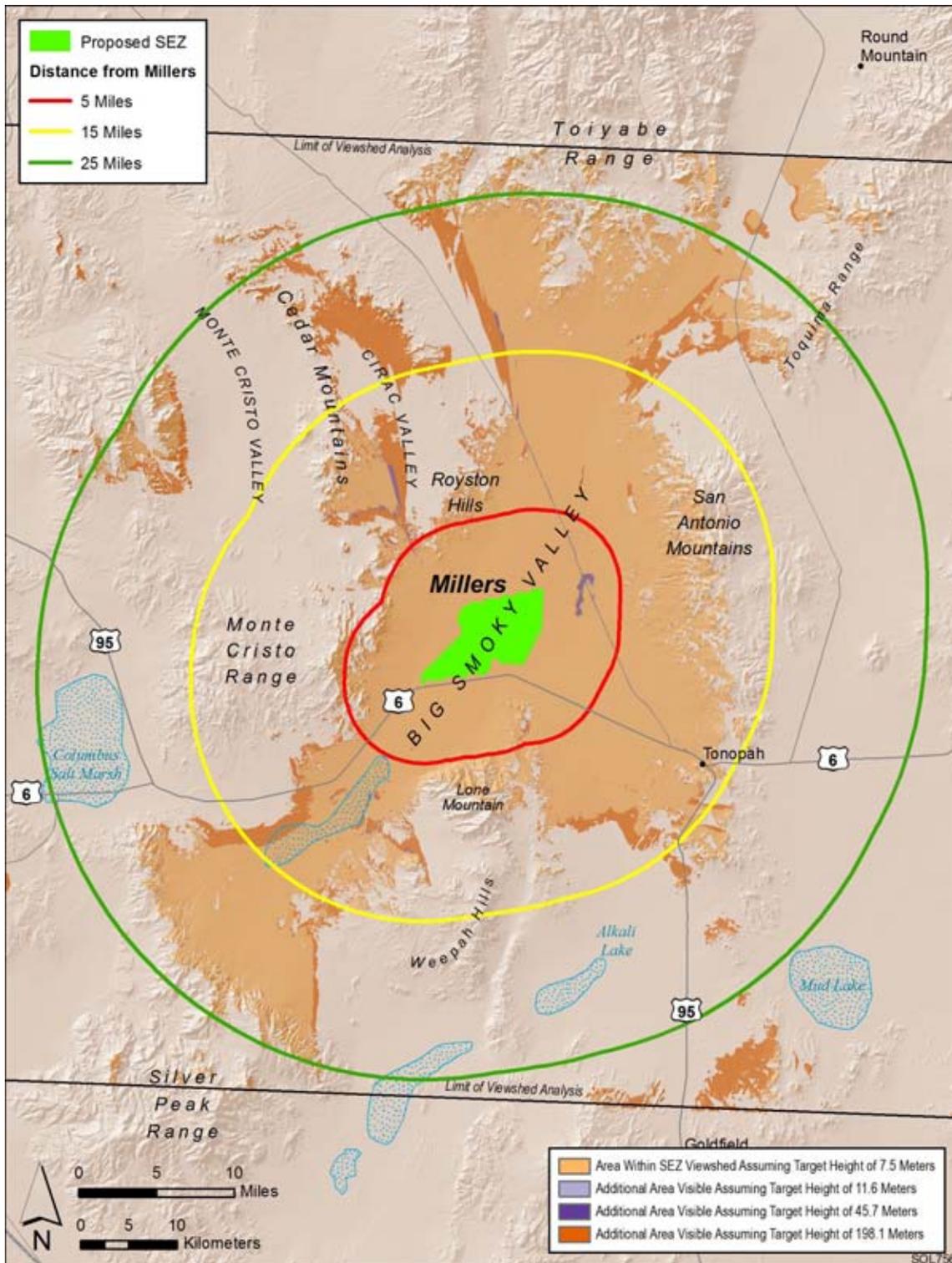
3 4 5 ***11.7.14.2.2 Impacts on Lands Surrounding the Proposed Millers SEZ*** 6

7 Because of the large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat,
8 open nature of the proposed SEZ, lands outside the SEZ would be subjected to visual impacts
9 related to construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities.
10 The affected areas and extent of impacts would depend on a number of visibility factors and
11 viewer distance. (For a detailed discussion of visibility and related factors, see Section 5.12).
12 The intervisibility between the project and potentially affected lands is a key component in
13 determining impact levels; if topography, vegetation, or structures screen the project from
14 viewer locations, there is no impact.

15
16 Preliminary viewshed analyses were conducted to identify which lands surrounding the
17 proposed SEZ are visible from the SEZ (see Appendix M for information on assumptions and
18 limitations of the methods used). Four viewshed analyses were conducted, assuming four
19 different equipment heights representative of project elements associated with potential solar
20 energy technologies: PV and parabolic trough arrays (24.6 ft [7.5 m]), solar dishes and power
21 blocks for CSP technologies (38 ft [11.6 m]), transmission towers and short solar power towers
22 (150 ft [45.7 m]), and tall solar power towers (650 ft [198.1 m]). Viewshed maps for the SEZ for
23 all four solar technology heights are presented in Appendix N.

24
25 Figure 11.7.14.2-1 shows the combined results of the viewshed analyses for all four solar
26 technologies. The colored segments indicate areas with clear lines of sight to one or more areas
27 within the SEZ and from which solar facilities within these areas of the SEZ would be expected
28 to be visible, assuming the absence of screening vegetation or structures and adequate lighting
29 and other atmospheric conditions. The light brown areas are locations from which PV and
30 parabolic trough arrays located in the SEZ could be visible. Solar dishes and power blocks for
31 CSP technologies would be visible from the areas shaded in light brown and the additional areas
32 shaded in light purple. Transmission towers and short solar power towers would be visible from
33 the areas shaded light brown, light purple, and the additional areas shaded in dark purple. Power
34 tower facilities located in the SEZ could be visible from areas shaded light brown, light purple,
35 and dark purple, and at least the upper portions of power tower receivers could be visible from
36 the additional areas shaded in medium brown.

37
38 For the following visual impact discussion, the tall solar power tower (650 ft [198.1 m])
39 and PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds are shown in figures and
40 discussed in the text. These heights represent the maximum and minimum landscape visibility
41 for solar energy technologies analyzed in the PEIS. Viewsheds for solar dish and CSP
42 technology power blocks (38 ft [11.6 m]), and transmission towers and short solar power towers
43 (150 ft [45.7 m]) are presented in Appendix N. The visibility of these facilities would fall
44 between that for tall power towers and PV and parabolic trough arrays.
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FIGURE 11.7.14.2-1 Viewshed Analyses for the Proposed Millers SEZ and Surrounding Lands, Assuming Solar Technology Heights of 24.6 ft (7.5 m), 38 ft (11.6 m), 150 ft (45.7 m), and 650 ft (198.1 m) (shaded areas indicate lands from which solar development within the SEZ could be visible)

1 **Impacts on Selected Federal-, State-, and BLM-Designated Sensitive Visual**
2 **Resource Areas**

3
4 A GIS analysis was conducted that overlaid selected federal, state, and BLM-designated
5 sensitive visual resource areas onto the combined tall solar power tower (650 ft [198.1 m]) and
6 PV and parabolic trough array (24.6 ft [7.5 m]) viewsheds. This was done in order to identify
7 which of these sensitive visual resource areas would have views of solar facilities within the SEZ
8 and, therefore, would potentially be subject to visual impacts from those facilities.

9
10 The scenic resources included in the analysis were as follows:

- 11 • National Parks, National Monuments, National Recreation Areas, National
12 Preserves, National Wildlife Refuges, National Reserves, National
13 Conservation Areas, National Historic Sites;
- 14 • Congressionally authorized Wilderness Areas;
- 15 • Wilderness Study Areas;
- 16 • National Wild and Scenic Rivers;
- 17 • Congressionally authorized Wild and Scenic Study Rivers;
- 18 • National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails;
- 19 • National Historic Landmarks and National Natural Landmarks;
- 20 • All-American Roads, National Scenic Byways, State Scenic Highways; and
21 BLM- and USFS-designated scenic highways/byways;
- 22 • BLM-designated Special Recreation Management Areas; and
- 23 • ACECs designated because of outstanding scenic qualities.

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35 The results of the GIS analysis demonstrate that none of these types of scenic resources are
36 located within the 25-mi (40-km) viewshed of the Millers SEZ.

37
38 Additional scenic resources exist at the national, state, and local levels, and impacts may
39 occur on both federal and nonfederal lands, including sensitive traditional cultural properties
40 important to Tribes. In addition to the resource types and specific resources analyzed in this
41 PEIS, future site-specific NEPA analyses would include state and local parks, recreation areas,
42 other sensitive visual resources, and communities close enough to the proposed project to be
43 affected by visual impacts. Selected other lands and resources are included in the discussion
44 below. Further discussion of impacts on these areas is presented in Sections 11.7.3 (Specially
45 Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics) and Section 11.7.17 (Cultural
46 Resources) of this PEIS.

1 In addition to impacts associated with the solar energy facilities themselves, sensitive
2 visual resources could be affected by facilities that would be built and operated in conjunction
3 with the solar facilities. With respect to visual impacts, the most important associated facilities
4 would be access roads and transmission lines, the precise location of which cannot be determined
5 until a specific solar energy project is proposed. There is currently a 120-kV transmission line
6 within the proposed SEZ, so construction and operation of a transmission line outside the
7 proposed SEZ would not be required; however, transmission lines to connect facilities to the
8 existing line would be required. For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of
9 transmission lines outside of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing 120-kV
10 transmission line might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that
11 additional project-specific analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line
12 upgrades. Depending on project- and site-specific conditions, visual impacts associated with
13 access roads, and particularly transmission lines, could be large. Detailed information about
14 visual impacts associated with transmission lines is presented in Section 5.12.1. A detailed site-
15 specific NEPA analysis would be required to determine visibility and associated impacts
16 precisely for any future solar projects, based on more precise knowledge of facility location and
17 characteristics.

18
19 The following visual impact analysis describes *visual contrast levels* rather than *visual*
20 *impact levels*. *Visual contrasts* are changes in the landscape seen by the viewer, including
21 changes in the forms, lines, colors, and textures of objects. A measure of *visual impact* includes
22 potential human reactions to the visual contrasts arising from a development activity, based on
23 viewer characteristics, including attitudes and values, expectations, and other characteristics that
24 that are viewer- and situation-specific. Accurate assessment of visual impacts requires
25 knowledge of the potential types and numbers of viewers for a given development and their
26 characteristics and expectations; specific locations where the project might be viewed from; and
27 other variables that were not available or not feasible to incorporate in the PEIS analysis. These
28 variables would be incorporated into a future site-and project-specific assessment that would be
29 conducted for specific proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. For more discussion of visual
30 contrasts and impacts, see Section 5.12 of the PEIS.

31 32 33 **Impacts on Selected Other Lands and Resources**

34
35
36 **U.S. 6.** About 31 mi (50 km) of U.S. 6 is within the SEZ 25 mi (40 km) viewshed. As
37 shown in Figure 11.7.14.2-1, at the point of closest approach, U.S. 6 passes within 0.2 mi
38 (0.3 km) of the southern boundary of the Millers SEZ and approaches the SEZ from the direction
39 of Tonopah (southeast) and Coaldale (southwest). The AADT value for U.S. 6 just west of
40 Tonopah was 3,900 vehicles in 2009 (NV DOT 2010), although traffic would increase slightly as
41 a result of solar energy development within the SEZ.

42
43 For westbound travelers on U.S. 6, solar facilities within the SEZ would come into view
44 just west of Tonopah and would be in full view as vehicles descended the approximately 14-mi
45 (23-km) slope from Tonopah. Near Tonopah, U.S. 6 is elevated nearly 1,000 ft [300 m] above
46 the SEZ elevation, but because of the long distance to the SEZ, the vertical angle of view is low.

GOOGLE EARTH™ VISUALIZATIONS

The visual impact analysis discussion in this section utilizes three-dimensional Google Earth™ perspective visualizations of hypothetical solar facilities placed within the SEZ. The visualizations include simplified wireframe models of a hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed at various locations within the SEZ as visual aids for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of utility-scale solar facilities. The visualizations are intended to show the apparent size, distance, and configuration of the SEZ, as well as the apparent size of a typical utility-scale solar power tower project and its relationship to the surrounding landscape, as viewed from potentially sensitive visual resource areas within the viewshed of the SEZ.

The visualizations are not intended to be realistic simulations of the actual appearance of the landscape or of proposed utility-scale solar energy projects. The placement of models within the SEZ did not reflect any actual planned or proposed projects within the SEZ, and did not take into account engineering or other constraints that would affect the siting or choice of facilities for this particular SEZ. The number of facility models placed in the SEZ does not reflect the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, but it should be noted that the discussion of expected visual contrast levels does account for the 80% development scenario. A solar power tower was chosen for the models because the unique height characteristics of power tower facilities make their visual impact potential extend beyond other solar technology types.

1
2
3 The angle of view would decrease as travelers approached the SEZ, but the facilities within the
4 SEZ would increase in apparent size. The SEZ would be visible directly in front of vehicles on
5 the upper portions of the slope, but would gradually appear to shift to the right as westbound
6 travelers approached the SEZ to pass it on its southern side. At highway speeds, the SEZ would
7 be in view for about 15 minutes for westbound travelers as they approached and passed it.
8

9 Figure 11.7.14.2-2 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ (highlighted in orange) as
10 seen from U.S. 6, on the western outskirts of Tonopah about 12.4 mi (20.0 km) from the
11 southeast corner of the SEZ. The visualization includes simplified wireframe models of a
12 hypothetical solar power tower facility. The models were placed within the SEZ as a visual aide
13 for assessing the approximate size and viewing angle of utility-scale solar facilities. The receiver
14 towers depicted in the visualization are properly scaled models of a 459-ft (139.9-m) tall power
15 tower with an 867-acre (3.5-km²) field of 12-ft (3.7-m) tall heliostats, each representing about
16 100 MW of electric generating capacity. Four models were placed in the SEZ for this and other
17 visualizations shown in this section of the PEIS. In the visualization, the SEZ area is depicted in
18 orange, the heliostat fields in blue.
19

20 The visualization suggests that from this distance and viewing angle, irregularities in the
21 gentle downward sloping terrain toward the SEZ would screen parts of the SEZ from view,
22 although most of it would be visible. The SEZ would occupy a substantial portion of the
23 horizontal field of view, but solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen nearly edge on, so that
24 the collector/reflector arrays would appear as thin lines at the base of the Monte Cristo Range.
25 The edge-on view of the facilities would reduce the visible surface area, conceal the strong
26 regular geometry of the collector arrays, and repeat the strong horizon line, all of which would
27 tend to reduce associated visual contrasts, although there could be glinting or glare from the
28 collectors or ancillary facilities that might attract visual attention. The receivers of operating
29 power towers within the SEZ would likely be visible as bright point light sources against the



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FIGURE 11.7.14.2-2 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Millers SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models as Seen from U.S. 6, just West of Tonopah, Nevada

1 backdrop of the valley floor or the bajadas of the Monte Cristo Range. The tower structures
2 would likely be visible underneath the receiver “glow.” Under the 80% development scenario
3 analyzed in the PEIS and depending on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar
4 facilities and their designs, and other visibility factors, weak to moderate visual contrasts from
5 solar energy development within the SEZ could be expected at this location.
6

7 Figure 11.7.14.2-3 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from U.S. 6 about
8 5 mi (8 km) from the southeast corner of the SEZ, the outer limit of the BLM VRM Program’s
9 foreground-middleground distance. From this viewpoint, the SEZ would occupy most of the
10 horizontal field of view. Solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen edge on, but any ancillary
11 facilities, such as STGs, cooling towers, substations, etc. would likely be visible projecting above
12 the collector arrays, and adding contrasts in form, line, texture, and color, with the possibility and
13 glinting and glare from any reflective surfaces associated with those project components. The
14 light from operating power tower receivers in the SEZ could appear as very bright non-point
15 light sources as viewed from the road and would be expected to strongly attract visual attention.
16 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, solar facilities within the SEZ would
17 likely command visual attention and could potentially dominate views from U.S. 6. Depending
18 on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and their designs, and other
19 visibility factors, strong visual contrasts from solar energy development within the SEZ could be
20 expected at this location.
21

22 Figure 11.7.14.2-4 is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ as seen from U.S. 6 about
23 0.4 mi (0.7 km) from the southern boundary of the SEZ. From this viewpoint, the SEZ could not
24 be encompassed in a single view; viewers would have to turn their heads to see the entire SEZ.
25 Solar facilities within the SEZ would be seen edge on, but if they were located in closer parts of
26 the SEZ, they could be too large to appear as lines. Depending on the technology, project layout,
27 and location, facilities could block views of the surrounding mountains and dominate views from
28 the roadway.
29

30 Taller ancillary facilities, such as buildings, transmission structures, and cooling towers,
31 and plumes (if present) would likely be visible projecting above the collector/reflector arrays,
32 and their structural details could be evident, at least for nearby facilities. The ancillary facilities
33 could create form and line contrasts with the strongly horizontal, regular, and repeating forms
34 and lines of the collector/reflector arrays. Color and texture contrasts would also be likely, but
35 their extent would depend on the materials and surface treatments utilized in the facilities.
36

37 If power tower facilities were located in the SEZ in close proximity to the highway, when
38 operating, the receivers could appear as brilliant white no-point (i.e. having visible cylindrical or
39 rectangular surfaces) light sources as viewed from the highway, and if sufficiently close to the
40 road, would likely strongly attract visual attention. Also, under certain viewing conditions,
41 sunlight on dust particles in the air might result in the appearance of light streaming down from
42 the tower. At night, if more than 200 ft (61 m) tall, power towers would have hazard navigation
43 lights that could potentially be visible from this location. The lights could be red flashing lights
44 or red or white strobe lights, and the light could be visible from U.S. 6. Other lighting associated
45 with solar facilities could be visible as well.
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FIGURE 11.7.14.2-3 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Millers SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models as Seen from U.S. 6 approximately 5 mi (8 km) Southeast of the SEZ



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FIGURE 11.7.14.2-4 Google Earth Visualization of the Proposed Millers SEZ (shown in orange tint) and Surrounding Lands, with Power Tower Wireframe Models as Seen from U.S. 6, 0.4 mi (0.7 km) from the SEZ

1 As travelers approached and passed by the SEZ, depending on lighting conditions, the
2 solar technologies present, facility layout, and mitigation measures employed, there would be the
3 potential for reflections from facility components. These effects could potentially distract drivers
4 and/or impair views toward the facilities. These potential impacts could be reduced by siting
5 reflective components away from the roadways, employing various screening mechanisms,
6 and/or adjusting the mirror operations to reduce potential impacts; however, it could be difficult
7 to screen power towers from view, because of their height. Under the 80% development scenario
8 analyzed in the PEIS, the various solar facilities within the SEZ would likely dominate views
9 from the roadway and would be expected to create strong visual contrasts as seen from this
10 viewpoint on U.S. 6.

11
12 Eastbound travelers on U.S. 6 would have roughly similar visual experiences to
13 westbound travelers in terms of impact magnitude; however, because U.S. 6 essentially does
14 not slope downward toward the SEZ as it approaches the SEZ from the east, there are no
15 elevated views of the SEZ, so the general level of visual contrasts created would likely be
16 somewhat less than for westbound travelers. The SEZ would first come into view about 11 mi
17 (18 km) west of the SEZ. At highway speeds, the SEZ would be in view for about 15 minutes
18 for eastbound travelers as they approached and passed it.

19
20 In summary, under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS and depending
21 on project location within the SEZ, the types of solar facilities and their designs, and other
22 visibility factors, weak to strong visual contrasts from solar energy development within the SEZ
23 would be expected for travelers on U.S. 6.

24
25
26 ***Town of Tonopah.*** The viewshed analyses indicate visibility of the SEZ from the town of
27 Tonopah (approximately 13 mi [20.9 km] southeast of the SEZ). Tonopah is more than 1,000 ft
28 (305 m) higher in elevation than the SEZ, so portions of the SEZ would be visible. A detailed
29 future site-specific NEPA analysis is required to determine visibility precisely, but a site visit in
30 2009 determined that views of the SEZ are screened in most of Tonopah by trees, structures, and
31 small variations in local topography. Visibility of the SEZ is more likely in the far western
32 portions of Tonopah, where the density of structures and planted vegetation diminishes.
33 Figure 11.7.14.2-2 (see above) is a Google Earth visualization of the SEZ with hypothetical solar
34 power tower facilities as seen from the far western outskirts of Tonopah. As noted above, the
35 visualization suggests that from this distance and viewing angle, under the 80% development
36 scenario analyzed in the PEIS, weak levels of visual contrasts would be expected to arise from
37 solar facilities located within the Millers SEZ.

38
39
40 ***Other Impacts.*** In addition to the impacts described for the resource areas above, nearby
41 residents and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities
42 located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) from their
43 residences, or as they travel area roads. The range of impacts experienced would be highly
44 dependent on viewer location, project types, locations, sizes, and layouts, as well as the presence
45 of screening, but under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, from some

1 locations, strong visual contrasts from solar development within the SEZ could potentially be
2 observed.

3 4 5 **11.7.14.2.3 Summary of Visual Resource Impacts for the Proposed Millers SEZ** 6

7 Under the 80% development scenario analyzed in the PEIS, the SEZ could contain
8 multiple solar facilities utilizing differing solar technologies, as well as a variety of roads and
9 ancillary facilities. The array of facilities could create a visually complex landscape that would
10 contrast strongly with the strongly horizontal landscape of the flat valley in which the SEZ is
11 located. Large visual impacts on the SEZ and surrounding lands within the SEZ viewshed would
12 be associated with solar energy development due to major modification of the character of the
13 existing landscape. The potential exists for additional impacts from construction and operation of
14 transmission lines and access roads within the SEZ.

15
16 The SEZ is in an area of low scenic quality. Residents of Tonopah and nearby areas,
17 workers, and visitors to the area may experience visual impacts from solar energy facilities
18 located within the SEZ (as well as any associated access roads and transmission lines) as they
19 travel area roads. The residents nearest to the SEZ could be subjected to large visual impacts
20 from solar energy development within the SEZ. U.S. 6 passes very close to the SEZ, and
21 travelers on that road could be subjected to strong visual contrasts from solar development within
22 the SEZ, but typically their exposure would be brief. Utility-scale solar energy development
23 within the proposed Millers SEZ could cause weak levels of visual contrast for some residents of
24 Tonopah, generally for persons in the westernmost parts of the community.

25 26 27 **11.7.14.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Features Effectiveness** 28

29 No SEZ-specific design features have been identified to protect visual resources for the
30 proposed Millers SEZ. As noted in Section 5.12, the presence and operation of large-scale solar
31 energy facilities and equipment would introduce major visual changes into non-industrialized
32 landscapes and could create strong visual contrasts in line, form, color, and texture that could not
33 easily be mitigated substantially. Implementation of programmatic design features intended to
34 reduce visual impacts (described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2) would be expected to reduce
35 visual impacts associated with utility-scale solar energy development within the SEZ; however,
36 the degree of effectiveness of these design features could be assessed only at the site- and
37 project-specific level. Given the large scale, reflective surfaces, strong regular geometry of
38 utility-scale solar energy facilities, and the lack of screening vegetation and landforms within the
39 SEZ viewshed, siting the facilities away from sensitive visual resource areas and other sensitive
40 viewing areas is the primary means of mitigating visual impacts. The effectiveness of other
41 visual impact mitigation measures would generally be limited.

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1 **11.7.15 Acoustic Environment**

2
3
4 **11.7.15.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The proposed Millers SEZ is located in the northern portion of Esmeralda County in
7 southwestern Nevada. Neither the State of Nevada nor Esmeralda County has established
8 quantitative noise-limit regulations.
9

10 The proposed Millers SEZ is in an undeveloped area, the overall character of which is
11 rural. U.S. 6/95 extends east–west as close as 800 ft (244 m) south of the SEZ, while State
12 Route 89 extends north–south as close as 2.5 mi (4.0 km) east of the SEZ. Numerous dirt roads
13 cross the SEZ. The nearest railroad is in Luning in neighboring Mineral County, about 40 mi
14 (64 km) northwest of the SEZ. Nearby airports include: Coaldale Airport, about 19 mi (30 km)
15 west-southwest of the SEZ; Tonopah Airport in Nye County, about 20 mi (32 km)
16 east–southeast; Goldfield Airport in Esmeralda County, about 32 mi (51 km) south–southeast;
17 and Mina Airport in Mineral County, about 33 mi (53 km) west–northwest. Small-scale irrigated
18 agricultural lands are situated about 10 mi (16 km) north of the SEZ. No industrial or
19 commercial activities are located around the SEZ; grazing is about the only agricultural activity
20 in the immediate vicinity of the SEZ. Millers, a ghost town, is about 0.8 mi (1.3 km) from the
21 southeast corner of the SEZ. No sensitive receptors (e.g., residences, hospitals, schools, or
22 nursing homes) exist around the proposed Millers SEZ. The closest population center with
23 schools is Tonopah, the county seat of Nye County. It is about 11 mi (18 km) east–southeast of
24 the SEZ.
25

26 Accordingly, noise sources around the SEZ include road traffic, aircraft flyovers, and
27 cattle grazing. Other noise sources are associated with current land use around the SEZ include
28 occasional OHV races, but not much other recreational use occurs in the area. To date, no
29 environmental noise survey has been conducted around the proposed Millers SEZ. On the basis
30 of the population density, the day-night average noise level (L_{dn} or DNL) is estimated to be
31 17 dBA for Esmeralda County, well below the 33 to 47 dBA L_{dn} range level typical of a rural
32 area (Eldred 1982; Miller 2002).⁹
33

34
35 **11.7.15.2 Impacts**

36
37 Potential noise impacts associated with solar projects in the Millers SEZ would occur
38 during all phases of the projects. During the construction phase, potential noise impacts on the
39 nearest residences (about 11 mi [18 km] east-southeast of the SEZ boundary) from operation of
40 heavy equipment would be expected to be minimal because of the considerable separation
41 distance. During the operations phase, potential noise impacts on the nearest residences also
42 would be expected to be minimal. However, if the Millers SEZ is fully developed, potential noise

⁹ Rural and undeveloped areas have sound levels in the range of 33 to 47 dBA as L_{dn} (Eldred 1982). Typically, the nighttime level is 10 dBA lower than daytime level, and it can be interpreted as 33 to 47 dBA (mean 40 dBA) during the daytime hours and 23 to 37 dBA (mean 30 dBA) during nighttime hours.

1 impacts on residences along the roads would be likely because of vehicular traffic (commuters,
2 visitors, support, and deliveries) to and from the SEZ. Noise impacts shared by all solar
3 technologies are discussed in detail in Section 5.13.1, and technology-specific impacts are
4 presented in Section 5.13.2. Impacts specific to the proposed Millers SEZ are presented in this
5 section. Any such impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required
6 programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, and through the
7 application of any additional SEZ-specific design features applied (see Section 11.7.15.3 below).
8 This section primarily addresses potential noise impacts on humans, although potential impacts
9 on wildlife at nearby sensitive areas are discussed. Additional discussion on potential noise
10 impacts on wildlife is presented in Section 5.10.2.

11 12 13 **11.7.15.2.1 Construction** 14

15 The proposed Millers SEZ has a relatively flat terrain; thus, minimal site preparation
16 activities would be required, and associated noise levels would be lower than those during
17 general construction (e.g., erecting building structures and installing equipment, piping, and
18 electrical).

19
20 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, the highest construction noise
21 levels would occur at the power block area, where key components (e.g., steam turbine/
22 generator) needed to generate electricity would be located. A maximum of 95 dBA at a distance
23 of 50 ft (15 m) is assumed, if impact equipment such as pile drivers or rock drills is not being
24 used. Typically, the power block area is located in the center of the solar facility, at a distance
25 of more than 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from the facility boundary. Noise levels from construction of the
26 solar array would be lower than 95 dBA. When geometric spreading and ground effects are
27 considered, as explained in Section 4.13.1, noise levels would attenuate to about 40 dBA at a
28 distance of 1.2 mi (1.9 km) from the power block area. This noise level is typical of daytime
29 mean rural background level. In addition, mid- and high-frequency noise from construction
30 activities is significantly attenuated by atmospheric absorption under the low-humidity
31 conditions typical of an arid desert environment and by temperature lapse conditions typical of
32 daytime hours. Therefore, noise attenuation to a 40-dBA level would occur at distances
33 somewhat shorter than 1.2 mi (1.9 km). If a 10-hour daytime work schedule is considered, the
34 EPA guideline level of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas (EPA 1974) would occur at about
35 1,200 ft (370 m) from the power block area, which would be well within the facility boundary.
36 For construction activities occurring near the southeastern SEZ boundary (the closest SEZ
37 boundary to the nearest residences), estimated noise levels at the nearest residences would be
38 about 15 dBA. This noise level is well below a typical daytime mean rural background level of
39 40 dBA. In addition, an estimated 40-dBA L_{dn} ¹⁰ at these residences (i.e., no contribution from
40 construction activities) is well below the EPA guidance of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas.

41
42 It is assumed that a maximum of two projects would be developed at any one time for
43 SEZs greater than 10,000 acres (40.47 km²) but less than 30,000 acres (121.4 km²), such as the

¹⁰ For this analysis, background levels of 40 and 30 dBA for daytime and nighttime hours, respectively, are assumed, which result in day-night average noise level (L_{dn}) of 40 dBA.

1 Millers SEZ. If two projects were to be built in the southeastern portion of the SEZ near the
2 nearest residences, noise levels would be about 18 dBA, 3 dBA higher than the value for one
3 project. These levels would be still well below the typical daytime mean rural background level,
4 and thus their contribution to the existing L_{dn} would be minimal.

5
6 There are no specially designated areas within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Millers
7 SEZ. Thus, noise impacts for nearby specially designated areas were not modeled.

8
9 Depending on the soil conditions, pile driving might be required for installation of
10 solar dish engines. However, the pile drivers used, such as vibratory or sonic drivers, would be
11 relatively small and quiet rather than the impulsive impact pile drivers frequently seen at large-
12 scale construction sites. Potential impacts on the nearest residences would be anticipated to be
13 negligible, considering the distance to the nearest residences (about 11 mi [18 km] from the SEZ
14 boundary).

15
16 It is assumed that most construction activities would occur during the day, when noise is
17 better tolerated than at night because of the masking effects of background noise. In addition,
18 construction activities for a utility-scale facility are temporary in nature (typically a few years).
19 Construction within the proposed Millers SEZ would cause negligible unavoidable but localized
20 short-term noise impacts on neighboring communities, even when construction activities would
21 occur near the southeastern SEZ boundary, the SEZ boundary closest to the nearest residences.

22
23 Construction activities could result in various degrees of ground vibration, depending on
24 the construction equipment and methods employed. All construction equipment causes ground
25 vibration to some degree, but activities that typically generate the most severe vibrations are
26 high-explosive detonations and impact pile driving. As is the case for noise, vibration would
27 diminish in strength with distance. For example, vibration levels at receptors beyond 140 ft
28 (43 m) from a large bulldozer (87 VdB at 25 ft [7.6 m]) would diminish below the threshold of
29 perception for humans, which is about 65 VdB (Hanson et al. 2006). During the construction
30 phase, no major construction equipment that can cause ground vibration would be used, and no
31 residences or sensitive structures are located in close proximity. Therefore, no adverse vibration
32 impacts are anticipated from construction activities, including pile driving for dish engines.

33
34 For this analysis, the impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines outside
35 of the SEZ were not assessed, assuming that the existing regional 120-kV transmission line
36 might be used to connect some new solar facilities to load centers, and that additional project-
37 specific analysis would be done for new transmission construction or line upgrades. However,
38 some construction of transmission lines could occur within the SEZ. Potential noise impacts on
39 nearby residences would be a negligible component of construction impacts and would be
40 temporary in nature.

41 42 43 ***11.7.15.2.2 Operations***

44
45 Noise sources common to all or most types of solar technologies include equipment
46 motion from solar tracking, maintenance and repair activities (e.g., washing mirrors or replacing

1 broken mirrors) at the solar array area, commuter/visitor/support/delivery traffic within and
2 around the solar facility, and control/administrative buildings, warehouses, and other auxiliary
3 buildings/structures. Diesel-fired emergency power generators and firewater pump engines
4 would be additional sources of noise, but their operations would be limited to several hours per
5 month (for preventive maintenance testing).
6

7 With respect to the main solar energy technologies, noise-generating activities in the
8 PV solar array area would be minimal, related mainly to solar tracking, if used. On the other
9 hand, dish engine technology, which employs collector and converter devices in a single unit,
10 generally has the strongest noise sources.
11

12 For the parabolic trough and power tower technologies, most noise sources during
13 operations would be in the power block area, including the turbine generator (typically in an
14 enclosure), pumps, boilers, and dry- or wet-cooling systems. The power block is typically
15 located in the center of the facility. On the basis of a 250-MW parabolic trough facility with a
16 cooling tower (Beacon Solar, LLC 2008), simple noise modeling indicates that noise levels
17 around the power block would be more than 85 dBA, but about 51 dBA at the facility boundary,
18 about 0.5 mi (0.8 km) from the power block area. For a facility located near the southeastern
19 SEZ boundary, the predicted noise level would be about 21 dBA at the nearest residences,
20 located about 11 mi (18 km) from the SEZ boundary. This noise level is much lower than typical
21 daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. If TES was not used (i.e., if the operation was
22 limited to daytime, 12 hours only¹¹), the EPA guideline level of 55 dBA (as L_{dn} for residential
23 areas) would occur at about 1,370 ft (420 m) from the power block area and thus would not be
24 exceeded outside of the proposed SEZ boundary. At the nearest residences, about 40 dBA L_{dn}
25 (i.e., no contribution from facility operation) would be estimated, which is well below the EPA
26 guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. As for construction, if two parabolic trough and/or
27 power tower facilities were operating at the same time, combined noise levels at the nearest
28 residences would be about 24 dBA, 3 dBA higher than the value for a single facility. These
29 levels are still well below the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA, and their
30 contribution to existing L_{dn} level would be minimal. However, day-night average noise levels
31 higher than those estimated above by using the simple noise modeling would be anticipated if
32 TES was used during nighttime hours, as explained below and in Section 4.13.1.
33

34 On a calm, clear night typical of the proposed Millers SEZ setting, the air temperature
35 would likely increase with height (temperature inversion) because of strong radiative cooling.
36 Such a temperature profile tends to focus noise down toward the ground. There would be little, if
37 any, shadow zone¹² within 1 or 2 mi (1.6 or 3 km) of the noise source in the presence of a strong
38 temperature inversion (Beranek 1988). In particular, such conditions add to the effect of noise
39 being more discernable during nighttime hours, when the background noise levels are lowest. To
40 estimate the day-night average noise level (L_{dn}), 6-hour nighttime generation with TES is
41 assumed after 12-hour daytime generation. For nighttime hours under temperature inversion,
42 10 dB is added to noise levels estimated from the uniform atmosphere (see Section 4.13.1). On

11 Maximum possible operating hours at the summer solstice, but limited to 7 to 8 hours at the winter solstice.

12 A shadow zone is defined as the region in which direct sound does not penetrate because of upward diffraction.

1 the basis of these assumptions, the estimated nighttime noise level at the nearest residences
2 (about 11 mi [18 km] from the SEZ boundary) would be 31 dBA, which is comparable to the
3 typical nighttime mean rural background level of 30 dBA. However, the noise level would be
4 much lower than this value if considering air absorption among other attenuation mechanisms.
5 The day-night average noise level is estimated to be about 41 dBA L_{dn} , which is well below the
6 EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. The assumptions are conservative in terms of
7 operating hours, and no credit was given to other attenuation mechanisms, so it is likely that
8 noise levels would be lower than 41 dBA L_{dn} at the nearest residences, even if TES was used at a
9 solar facility. In consequence, operating parabolic trough or power tower facilities using TES
10 and located near the SEZ boundary could result in minimal adverse noise impacts on the nearest
11 residences, depending on background noise levels and meteorological conditions..
12

13 The solar dish engine is unique among CSP technologies because it generates electricity
14 directly and does not require a power block. A single, large solar dish engine has relatively low
15 noise levels, but a solar facility might use tens of thousands of dish engines, which would cause
16 high noise levels around such a facility. For example, the proposed 750-MW SES Solar Two
17 dish engine facility in California would employ as many as 30,000 dish engines (SES Solar Two,
18 LLC 2008). At the proposed Millers SEZ, on the basis of the assumption of dish engine facilities
19 of up to 1,492 MW total capacity (covering 80% of the total area, or 13,430 acres [54.4 km²]),
20 up to 59,690 25-kW dish engines could be employed. For a large dish engine facility, about a
21 thousand step-up transformers would be embedded in the dish engine solar field, along with a
22 substation; however, the noise from these sources would be masked by dish engine noise.
23

24 The composite noise level of a single dish engine would be about 88 dBA at a distance of
25 3 ft (0.9 m) (SES Solar Two, LLC 2008). This noise level would be attenuated to about 40 dBA
26 (typical of the mean rural daytime environment) within 330 ft (100 m). However, the combined
27 noise level from tens of thousands of dish engines operating simultaneously would be high in the
28 immediate vicinity of the facility, for example, about 50 dBA at 1.0 mi (1.6 km) and 47 dBA at
29 2 mi (3 km) from the boundary of the square-shaped dish engine solar field. Both of these
30 values are higher than the typical daytime mean rural background level of 40 dBA. However,
31 because of noise attenuation by atmospheric absorption and temperature lapse during daytime
32 hours, these levels would actually occur at somewhat shorter distance than cited above.
33

34 To estimate noise levels at the nearest residences, it was assumed that dish engines were
35 placed all over the Millers SEZ at intervals of 98 ft (30 m). Under these assumptions, the
36 estimated noise level at the nearest residences, about 11 mi (18 km) from the SEZ boundary,
37 would be about 33 dBA, which is below the typical daytime mean rural background level of
38 40 dBA. Assuming 12-hour daytime operation only, the estimated 40 dBA L_{dn} at these
39 residences is well below the EPA guideline of 55 dBA L_{dn} for residential areas. Considering
40 other noise attenuation mechanisms, noise levels at the nearest residences would be lower than
41 values estimated above, and thus potential impacts on nearby residences would be expected to be
42 minimal.
43

44 During operations, no major ground-vibrating equipment would be used. In addition, no
45 sensitive structures are located close enough to the proposed Millers SEZ to experience physical

1 damage. Therefore, during operation of any solar facility, potential vibration impacts on
2 surrounding communities and vibration-sensitive structures would be negligible.

3
4 Transformer-generated humming noise and switchyard impulsive noises would be
5 generated during the operation of solar facilities. These noise sources would be located near the
6 power block area, typically near the center of a solar facility. Noise from these sources would
7 generally be limited to within the facility boundary and not be heard at the nearest residence,
8 assuming a 11.5-mi (18.5-km) distance (at least 0.5 mi [0.8 km] to the facility boundary and
9 11 mi [18 km] to the nearest residences). Accordingly, potential impacts of these noise sources
10 on the nearest residences would be negligible.

11
12 For impacts from transmission line corona discharge noise during rainfall events
13 (discussed in Section 5.13.1.5), the noise level at 50 ft (15 m) and 300 ft (91 m) from the center
14 of 230-kV transmission line towers would be about 39 and 31 dBA (Lee et al. 1996),
15 respectively, typical of daytime and nighttime mean background noise levels in rural
16 environments. Corona noise includes high-frequency components, considered to be more
17 annoying than low-frequency environmental noise. However, corona noise would not likely
18 cause impacts unless a residence was located close by (e.g., within 500 ft [152 m] of a 230-kV
19 transmission line). The proposed Millers SEZ is located in an arid desert environment, and
20 incidents of corona discharge are infrequent. Therefore, potential impacts on nearby residences
21 from corona noise along transmission lines within the SEZ would be negligible.

22 23 24 **11.7.15.2.3 Decommissioning/Reclamation**

25
26 Decommissioning/reclamation requires many of the same procedures and items of
27 equipment used in traditional construction. Decommissioning/reclamation would include
28 dismantling of solar facilities and support facilities, such as buildings/structures and
29 mechanical/electrical installations; disposal of debris; grading; and revegetation as needed.
30 Activities for decommissioning would be similar to those for construction but more limited.
31 Potential noise impacts on surrounding communities would be correspondingly lower than those
32 for construction activities. Decommissioning activities would be of short duration, and their
33 potential impacts would be minimal and temporary in nature. The same mitigation measures
34 adopted during the construction phase could also be implemented during the decommissioning
35 phase.

36
37 Similarly, potential vibration impacts on surrounding communities and vibration-
38 sensitive structures during decommissioning of any solar facility would be lower than those
39 during construction and thus negligible.

40 41 42 **11.7.15.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

43
44 The implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
45 Section A.2.2, would greatly reduce or eliminate the potential for noise impacts from
46 development and operation of solar energy facilities. Because of the considerable separation

1 distances, activities within the proposed Millers SEZ during construction and operation would be
2 anticipated to cause only minimal increases in noise levels at the nearest residences and no
3 increases in noise levels at the specially designated areas. Accordingly, SEZ-specific design
4 features are not required.

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1 **11.7.16 Paleontological Resources**

2
3
4 **11.7.16.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 The surface geology of the proposed Millers SEZ is predominantly lacustrine sediments
7 (less than 100 ft [30 m] thick) and thick alluvial deposits (more than 100 ft [30 m] thick), ranging
8 in age from the Pliocene to Holocene, with minimal playa deposits (approximately 0.1 acre
9 [0.0004 km²]) of similar age in the southern tip of the SEZ. The total acreage of the lacustrine
10 sediments within the SEZ is 15,819 acres (64 km²), and the alluvial deposits include 968 acres
11 (3.9 km²), or 94% and 6% of the SEZ, respectively. In the absence of a PFYC map for Nevada,
12 a preliminary classification of PFYC Class 3b is assumed for the lacustrine and playa deposits.
13 Class 3b indicates that the potential for the occurrence of significant fossil materials is unknown
14 and needs to be investigated further (see Section 4.14 for a discussion of the PFYC system).
15 Pleistocene lake beds could have a high potential for subsurface fossil resources and could
16 alternatively be classified as PFYC Class 4/5. A preliminary classification of PFYC Class 2 is
17 assumed for the young Quaternary alluvial deposits, similar to that assumed for the Amargosa
18 Valley SEZ (Section 11.1.16). Class 2 indicates a low potential for the occurrence of significant
19 fossil material.
20

21
22 **11.7.16.2 Impacts**

23
24 The potential for impacts on significant paleontological resources in 94% of the proposed
25 Millers SEZ is unknown but potentially high. A more detailed investigation of the lacustrine and
26 playa deposits is needed prior to project approval. A paleontological survey will likely be needed
27 following consultation with the BLM. The appropriate course of action would be determined as
28 established in BLM IM2008-009 (BLM 2007) and IM2009-011 (BLM 2008a). Few, if any,
29 impacts on significant paleontological resources are likely to occur in the remaining 6% of the
30 proposed SEZ. However, a more detailed look at the geological deposits of the SEZ is needed to
31 determine whether a paleontological survey is warranted. If the geological deposits are
32 determined to be as described above and are classified as PFYC Class 2, further assessment of
33 paleontological resources in this portion of the SEZ is not likely to be necessary. Important
34 resources could exist; if identified, they would need to be managed on a case-by-case basis.
35 Section 5.14 discusses the types of impacts that could occur on any significant paleontological
36 resources found to be present within the Millers SEZ. Impacts would be minimized through the
37 implementation of required programmatic design features described in Appendix A,
38 Section A.2.2.
39

40 Indirect impacts on paleontological resources outside of the SEZ, such as through looting
41 or vandalism, are unknown but unlikely, because any such resources would be below the surface
42 and not readily accessed. Programmatic design features for controlling water runoff and
43 sedimentation would prevent erosion-related impacts on buried deposits outside of the SEZ.
44

45 No new roads or transmission lines are currently assessed for the proposed Millers SEZ,
46 assuming existing corridors would be used; therefore, no impacts on paleontological resources

1 are anticipated from new access pathways. Impacts on paleontological resources related to the
2 creation of new corridors not assessed in this PEIS would be evaluated at the project-specific
3 level if new road or transmission construction or line upgrades are to occur.
4

5 A programmatic design feature requiring a stop work order in the event of an inadvertent
6 discovery of paleontological resources would reduce impacts by preserving some information
7 and allowing excavation of the resource, if warranted. Depending on the significance of the find,
8 it could also result in some modification to the project footprint. Since the SEZ is predominantly
9 located in an area classified as PFYC Class 3b or greater, a stipulation would be included in
10 permitting documents to alert solar energy developers of the possibility of a delay if
11 paleontological resources were uncovered during surface-disturbing activities.
12
13

14 **11.7.16.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

15
16 Impacts would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic
17 design features, including a stop-work stipulation in the event that paleontological resources are
18 encountered during construction, as described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
19

20 The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features for 94% of the proposed Millers
21 SEZ would depend on the results of future paleontological investigations. If the geological
22 deposits for the remaining 6% of the SEZ are determined to be as described above and are
23 classified as PFYC Class 2, mitigation of paleontological resources in the alluvial deposits would
24 not likely be necessary.
25

1 **11.7.17 Cultural Resources**

2
3
4 **11.7.17.1 Affected Environment**

5
6
7 **11.7.17.1.1 Prehistory**

8
9 The proposed Millers SEZ is located in Big Smoky Valley in the Great Basin region of
10 Nevada. It is situated in an area that was once a Late Pleistocene pluvial lake, Lake Tonopah.
11 The earliest known use of the area was during the Paleoindian Period, starting sometime between
12 12,000 and 10,000 years before present (B.P.). Surface finds of Paleoindian projectile points, the
13 hallmark of the Clovis culture, have been found in the Big Smoky Valley and around the former
14 lakeshores of Pleistocene Lake Tonopah, but no sites with any stratigraphic context have been
15 excavated. The Clovis culture is characterized by fluted projectile points and a hunting and
16 gathering subsistence economy that followed migrating herds of Pleistocene mega fauna. Within
17 the proposed Millers SEZ, a probable Clovis site was documented associated with Lake
18 Tonopah. Sites established during this time period may be difficult to find if they have been
19 buried by the ebb and flow of the pluvial lakes.
20

21 The cultural material associated with slightly later pluvial lake habitations is referred to
22 as the Western Pluvial Lakes Tradition; at least eight sites affiliated with this cultural tradition
23 have been well documented in the Big Smoky Valley, and in the proposed Millers SEZ. It is
24 likely that people during this time did not rely entirely on the marshland habitats, but were
25 nomadic hunters and gatherers who relied on both the wetland resources and those resources
26 located away from the pluvial lakes. The archaeological assemblage associated with this cultural
27 tradition is characterized by Lake Mohave and Silver Lake stemmed projectile points, leaf-
28 shaped bifaces, scrapers, crescents, and in some cases ground stone tools for milling plant
29 material. Often, projectile points and tools were made from locally procured obsidian, sources of
30 which are not far from the proposed Millers SEZ. Exploiting these sources of obsidian and
31 collecting raw materials for tool manufacture were a part of a larger resource exploitation
32 system, in which groups moved in seasonal rounds to take advantage of resources in different
33 localities (Haarklau et al. 2005; Fowler and Madsen 1986; Hockett et al. 2008; Eerkins and
34 Glascock 2000; McGonagle and Waski 1978; NROSL 2009).
35

36 The Early Archaic Period in the region began with the recession of most of the pluvial
37 lakes in the area, around 8,000 to 6,000 B.P., and extended until about 4,000 B.P. Archaic Period
38 groups likely congregated around marsh areas, where they still existed, but also used the vast
39 caves that can be found in the mountains of the Great Basin. The settlement system in some areas
40 was most likely based around a central base camp, with temporary camps located at the margins
41 of their territory to exploit resources that were not in the immediate vicinity of the base camp.
42 Archaic groups would sometimes perform communal hunts, notably antelope drives, in which
43 antelope were herded into a corral and then shot, and rabbit drives, in which large nets were
44 used. Some of the key Archaic Period sites in the area near the proposed Millers SEZ are
45 Gatecliff Shelter and Toquima Cave, to the northeast of the SEZ, and Lovelock Cave, Humbolt
46 Cave, and Hidden Cave, to the north of the SEZ. Many of these sites are located near Pleistocene

1 lakes, such as Lake Lahontan to the north of the proposed Millers SEZ, Mud Lake to the east,
2 and Lake Tonopah. The archaeological assemblage from the Early Archaic Period maintains
3 some cultural continuity with the previous period, consisting of large notched Elko and Gatecliff
4 points, leaf-shaped bifaces, scrapers, drills, graters, and manos and metates (Fowler and
5 Madsen 1986; Neusius and Gross 2007; McGonagle and Waski 1978).

6
7 The Middle Archaic Period, 4,000 to 1,500 B.P., saw the climatic shift known as the
8 Little Pluvial, a wetter and cooler climate that caused some of the pluvial lakes to fill back up.
9 The cultural material of this time period is similar to the Early Archaic, with an increased
10 concentration of milling stones, mortars and pestles, and the appearance of normally perishable
11 items that become well preserved in the arid Great Basin climate, such as wicker baskets, split-
12 twig figurines, duck decoys, and woven sandals (Beck and Jones 2008).

13
14 In the vicinity of the proposed Millers SEZ, the Late Archaic Period began around
15 1,500 B.P. and extended until about 800 B.P. This period saw major technological shifts,
16 evidenced by smaller projectile points that were more useful because groups began using bow-
17 and-arrow technology instead of the atlatl and dart technology and changes in subsistence
18 techniques, particularly in the use of horticulture. Around A.D. 1000, Numic-speaking groups
19 migrated into the region; however, the exact timing of these events is unclear and is a subject
20 for further research in the region. These Numic-speaking people were the antecedents of the
21 Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone, and the archaeological assemblage associated with this
22 time period consists of Desert Series projectile points, brown-ware ceramic, unshaped manos
23 and milling stones, incised stones, mortars, pestles, and shell beads. Contemporary Native
24 Americans dispute the separation of periods between the Late Archaic and the Numic periods,
25 because they believe that they have been in the area since time immemorial, and see themselves
26 as descendants of all prehistoric people, and not just of Numic derivation. The following section
27 describes the cultural history of the time period in greater detail.

28 29 30 ***11.7.17.1.2 Ethnohistory***

31
32 The proposed Millers SEZ is located in territory most often ascribed to the Western
33 Shoshone (Thomas et al. 1986). The Western Shoshone allowed their neighbors, the Northern
34 Paiute, with whom they were on good terms, access to its resources (McGonagle and Waski
35 1978), but they were far from the main centers of Northern Paiute population. Traditionally, the
36 closest Northern Paiute base camps were around Mono Lake in California; however, some
37 Northern Paiute travelled widely (Fowler and Liljeblad 1986). The Northern Paiute's southern
38 neighbors, the Owens Valley Paiute, may also have interacted with the Western Shoshone.

39 40 41 **Western Shoshone**

42
43 The Western Shoshone are a group of ethnically similar Central Numic speakers
44 who traditionally occupied a swath of the central Great Basin stretching from Death Valley
45 in California through central Nevada and northwestern Utah to southeastern Idaho
46 (Thomas et al. 1986). Their territory lies primarily within the basin and range province of the

1 Great Basin. They lived in small groups with rather fluid membership, usually identified with
2 the land on which they were centered. Their subsistence base and lifestyle varied with the
3 resources within their territory. Groups often established stable base camps near reliable water
4 sources where they could grow crops. From these base camps, they would move seasonally in a
5 flexible round to exploit resources as they became available in the surrounding mountains and
6 other areas. They gathered a wide variety of plant resources (Stoffle et al. 1990; Crum 1994;
7 Fowler 1986), which they supplemented by hunting and fishing. Pine nuts, available in the
8 mountains, were a storable staple. Pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep, and mule deer were
9 among the large game animals they hunted, but smaller game, including rodents, birds, and,
10 where available, fish, provided more protein to their diet. Groups varied in size and composition
11 with the season. The largest groups gathered for the pine nut harvest, which could include a
12 rabbit or antelope drive as well. Winter villages were usually close to stores of pine nuts.
13 Additional information on the Western Shoshone can be found in Section 11.1.17.1.2.

14 15 16 **Northern Paiute** 17

18 At the time of Euro-American contact, the Northern Paiute consisted of a collection of
19 politically distinct, but linguistically homogenous, family-centered groups occupying much of
20 northwestern Nevada and southeastern Oregon extending into southwestern Idaho. Probably
21 arriving in the Great Basin sometime between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1000 (Quinian and
22 Woody 2003), their traditional lifeway was similar to that of other indigenous Great Basin
23 populations. Living in small, family-based groups, they pursued a hunting and gathering
24 subsistence base. They congregated in winter base camps located near relatively abundant
25 resources where many family groups could gather. From these base locations, smaller groups
26 followed a seasonal round taking advantage of plant and animal resources as they became
27 available. Although their seasonal movements were patterned, and individual hunting and
28 gathering territories were considered the property of one group or another, there was
29 considerable flexibility and sharing of resources between groups and with their Shoshone
30 neighbors, who spoke related languages (Fowler and Liljebblad 1986).

31
32 The game and plants that they exploited varied with local conditions. The more southerly
33 groups, based in the piedmont of the Sierra Nevada, relied on piñon nuts, mule deer, bighorn
34 sheep, quail, marmots, and the larvae of the Pandora moth. Large game animals were hunted
35 individually or in cooperative drives. Smaller game, including rabbits, marmots, porcupines,
36 grouse, and quail, was hunted individually or taken in traps or nets. Rabbits were also taken in
37 cooperative drives. Seeds and other plant products were gathered from over 150 plant species
38 (Fowler and Liljebblad 1986; Fowler and Leland 1967; Fowler 1986). Seeds were often gathered
39 using a variety of twined tools including beaters, trays, and gathering baskets, but some were cut
40 from the plant with knives and flash burned to harden. Seeds and nuts were ground with manos
41 and metates, or with wooden or stone mortars and pestles. Seed meal mushes were stone boiled
42 in twined cooking baskets. Winter houses were dome-shaped and mat-covered structures varying
43 in size with the size of the family, or conical semi-subterranean structures. Summer housing was
44 in open-sided ramada-like structures. Clothing was made of skins, including woven rabbit skins,
45 or plant materials, including tules and sagebrush bark. The family was the basic social and
46 political unit, but non-hereditary headmen emerged in local camp groups and chiefs emerged in

1 response to Euro-American contact. Supernatural power was believed to reside in natural objects,
2 including animals, plants, stones, water, and geographic features (Fowler and Liljebblad 1986).

3
4 As with other Great Basin groups, the Northern Paiute were affected by the introduction
5 of the horse by the Spanish, and the “opening of the west” by Euro-American trappers,
6 prospectors and miners, and eventually farmers and ranchers. Immigrant trains and settlements,
7 along with their associated livestock, consumed or destroyed many of the plant, animal, and
8 water resources upon which the Northern Paiute relied. Northern Paiute response varied. Some
9 groups retreated from major trails; others associated themselves with settlements and ranches,
10 forming colonies; and others formed mounted bands that preyed upon immigrants and their
11 settlements. The Northern Paiute were pacified by 1868. Three reservations, Pyramid Lake
12 and Walker River in Nevada, and Malheur in Oregon, were set aside in 1859 and formally
13 established in 1874. The intent was for all Northern Paiutes to subsist on these parcels of land,
14 and for the hunting and gathering Paiute to learn to farm. However, these reservations were not
15 well suited for agriculture and generally lacked sufficient water. Many Paiutes refused to leave
16 their home ranges, where they adapted to the new situation by engaging in wage labor. The
17 establishment of additional colonies and reservations continued well into the twentieth century.
18 The closest of these to the SEZ are Bridgeport Rancheria and Benton Reservation in California.
19 Most groups have organized under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and reservations are
20 managed by Tribal councils. A free-ranging people, individual descendants of the Northern
21 Paiute may be found on reservations as far away as Oregon and Washington. Knowledge of their
22 former subsistence pursuits has been reduced, but has continued on a more limited scale (Fowler
23 and Liljebblad 1986).

24 25 26 **Owens Valley Paiute**

27
28 The Owens Valley Paiute inhabit the valley of the Owens River that parallels the eastern
29 slope of the Sierra Nevada. They speak Mono, a Western Numic language, and are linguistically
30 closely tied to the Northern Paiute (Liljebblad and Fowler 1986). A brief description of the Owens
31 Valley Paiute can be found in Section 11.1.17.1.2.

32 33 34 ***11.7.17.1.3 History***

35
36 The Great Basin was one of the last areas of the continental United States to be fully
37 explored. The harsh and rugged landscape deterred most European and American explorers until
38 the late eighteenth century. Several early explorers made their way into the southern portion of
39 the state by the late eighteenth century, but the area around the proposed Millers SEZ was not
40 explored by Euro-Americans until about 1826. Fur trapping was a popular enterprise during this
41 time, and overzealous trappers were quickly depleting their supplies of furs as they moved west
42 in search of additional materials. Peter Ogden of the Hudson Bay Company and Jedidiah Smith
43 of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company were parts of two different expeditions that entered
44 Nevada in 1827 and 1826, respectively, seeking new beaver fields. Ogden took a more northerly
45 route through Elko, Pershing, and Humbolt Counties, and Smith entered Nevada near Mesquite
46 and traveled across the southern tip of Nevada into California. When he entered California,

1 Smith was detained by Mexican authorities, as he had entered Mexican territory, and was
2 ordered to go back the way from which he had come. However, he decided to travel farther north
3 in California; he was the first white man to cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and entered
4 Nevada just south of Lake Tahoe. From there he crossed the state of Nevada and passed very
5 close to (if not actually through) the proposed Millers SEZ; it is assumed that he likely followed
6 a path that would eventually be U.S. 6. Another fur-trapping party, the Walker-Bonneville party,
7 explored the region between 1833 and 1834. This group also likely explored the lands near the
8 proposed Millers SEZ on its way to exploring large portions of the Yosemite Valley in California
9 and the Great Basin. Fur trapping never became a lucrative enterprise in Nevada; however, these
10 trailblazers paved the way for later explorers and mappers, such as John C. Frémont. Frémont
11 was a member of the Topographical Engineers, and was commissioned to map and report on the
12 Great Basin area in 1843 and 1844. The results of his work gained wide circulation and were of
13 great importance in understanding the topography of the Great Basin, both for official use and
14 for those moving westward to seek new homes and fortunes. Frémont passed through the vicinity
15 of the proposed Millers SEZ, probably about 25 mi (40 km) to the north, at the northernmost
16 point of Esmeralda County, where it meets Mineral and Nye Counties (Elliott 1973).

17
18 Nevada and the Great Basin region have provided a corridor of travel for those seeking
19 to emigrate west. Several heavily traveled trails crossed the region, although other than those
20 initially traversed by Smith and the Walker-Bonneville party, none of the trails passes
21 particularly close to the proposed Millers SEZ. The Old Spanish Trail was an evolving trail
22 system generally established in the early nineteenth century that tended to follow established
23 paths used by earlier explorers and Native Americans. The 2,700-mi (4,345-km) network of trails
24 passes through six states, beginning in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and ending in Los Angeles,
25 California. The closest portion of the congressionally designated Old Spanish National Historic
26 Trail is about 200 mi (322 km) to the southeast of the proposed Millers SEZ as it passes near
27 Las Vegas, Nevada. Mormons also frequently used the Old Spanish Trail in emigrating farther
28 west to Nevada, Arizona, and California, and often the trail is referred to as the Old Spanish
29 Trail/ Mormon Road. Other notable trails that crossed Nevada included the California Trail,
30 which followed portions of the Oregon Trail farther east of Nevada, then broke off from that trail
31 and continued through the northern portion of Nevada along the Humbolt River, about 120 mi
32 (120 km) north of the proposed SEZ, until it reached California. The Pony Express Trail, a mail
33 route that connected Saint Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California, entered Nevada northeast
34 of Ely and exited just south of Lake Tahoe, the closest portion being about 70 mi (113 km)
35 northwest of the proposed SEZ (von Till Warren 1980).

36
37 With the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 closing out the
38 Mexican-American War, the area came under American control. In 1847, the first American
39 settlers arrived in the Great Basin, among them Mormon immigrants under the leadership of
40 Brigham Young, who settled in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. They sought to bring
41 the entire Great Basin under their control, establishing an independent State of Deseret. From its
42 center in Salt Lake City, the church sent out colonizers to establish agricultural communities in
43 surrounding valleys and missions to acquire natural resources such as minerals and timber.
44 Relying on irrigation to support their farms, the Mormons often settled in the same places as
45 the Native Americans had centuries before. The result was a scattering of planned agricultural
46 communities from northern Arizona to southern Idaho and parts of Wyoming, Nevada, and

1 southern California. One of the first Mormon settlements in Nevada was a trading post, located
2 just north of Genoa, over 100 mi (160 km) northwest of the SEZ. Established in 1850, this
3 trading post provided supplies for those traversing the California Trail.
4

5 Nevada's nickname is the "Silver State;" it is so named for the Comstock Lode strike
6 in Virginia City, about 145 mi (233 km) north of the proposed Millers SEZ, in 1859. This was
7 the first major silver discovery in the United States, and with the news of the strike hopeful
8 prospectors flocked to the area in an effort to capitalize on the possible wealth under the surface
9 of the earth. The discovery of the Comstock Lode led to the creation of Virginia City and other
10 nearby towns that served the population influx. The population increase was so dramatic that in
11 1850 there were less than a dozen non-native people in the state of Nevada; by 1860, there were
12 6,857, and by 1875 an estimated 75,000 people had migrated to the state. The Comstock Lode
13 strike is important to the history of Nevada not just because of the population growth and
14 significant amount of money that was consequently brought to the area, but also because of
15 several technological innovations that were created and employed in the mines, including the
16 use of square-set timbering. This technique kept loose soil from collapsing on miners, a concept
17 that eventually was employed around the world in other mines (Paher 1970).
18

19 Mining for valuable deposits occurred in all regions of the state of Nevada, including in
20 the vicinity of the proposed Millers SEZ. Esmeralda County did not experience much of the early
21 mining boom that was associated with the Comstock Lode strike, other than a small silver strike
22 at Silverpeak, about 20 mi (32 km) south of the proposed Millers SEZ. Major mining operations
23 did not come into the area until the major silver strike at Tonopah, just 13 mi (22 km) to the
24 southeast of the proposed Millers SEZ. The strike at Tonopah was made in 1900, and miners
25 there soon began exporting large amounts of silver. Tonopah's location made it difficult to
26 obtain some of the raw materials and supplies necessary for large-scale mining operations, and
27 the Tonopah-Goldfield Railroad was constructed to alleviate some of these issues. The town of
28 Millers, just 1 mi (1.6 km) south of the proposed SEZ, was originally created as a watering and
29 resting place for stage coaches and freight wagons travelling between Silverpeak Mine and San
30 Antonio Mines to the northeast. After the Tonopah-Goldfield Railroad was constructed in 1904,
31 repair shops for the railroad were built here. In addition, a 100-stamp mill was constructed at
32 Millers in 1906 for crushing the Tonopah ore, and another 50-stamp mill was built the next year.
33 A turquoise mine at Royston, 14 mi (23 km) northeast of the proposed SEZ, was mined by
34 Native Americans in the region for several years, until Tiffany and Co. took control of the mine
35 to obtain the turquoise. Crow Spring, just 5 mi (8 km) north of the proposed Millers SEZ, was
36 an overnight stopping place for teamsters and stages between Sodaville and Tonopah, and
37 supported a short-lived turquoise mine. Goldfield, 25 mi (40 km) south of Tonopah, was initially
38 discovered in 1902 and was one of the single most prosperous gold strikes in the West. The
39 mining stampede to the area began in 1904, with the most lucrative years, 1906 and 1907,
40 producing about \$15 million in gold ore. Other mines in the vicinity of the proposed Millers
41 SEZ were mined for borax, notably at Columbus and Fish Lake, located 25 mi (40 km) and
42 30 mi (48 km) east of the proposed Millers SEZ, respectively, and minor turquoise mining
43 occurred at Gilbert, approximately 6 mi (10 km) from the proposed SEZ.
44

45 Nevada's desert-mountain landscape has made it a prime region for use by the
46 U.S. military for several decades. Beginning in October 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt

1 established the Las Vegas Bombing and Gunnery Range, a 3.5- million-acre (14,000-km²)
2 parcel of land northwest of Las Vegas, near Indian Springs, Nevada, 150 mi (241 km) southeast
3 of the SEZ. At the start of the Cold War in 1948, the range was renamed the Nellis Air Force
4 Base; three years later, the Nevada Test Site (NTS) was established within Nellis Air Force Base.
5 For the next 41 years, testing of nuclear weapons occurred throughout regions of the NTS, in
6 addition to regular Air Force training missions. Although the proposed Millers SEZ does not fall
7 within the specific boundaries of Nevada Test Site and Range, the closest portion of the military
8 installation is about 45 mi (72 km) to the southeast, and the Air Force Base and associated ranges
9 have impacted the overall history and context of the region.

11.7.17.1.4 *Traditional Cultural Properties—Landscape*

14 The Native Americans whose historical homelands lie within the Great Basin have
15 traditionally taken a holistic view of the world. In this view, the sacred and profane are
16 inextricably intertwined. Landscapes as a whole are often culturally important. Adverse effects
17 on one part damage the whole (Stoffle 2001). From their perspective, landscapes include places
18 of power. Among the most important such places are sources of water; peaks, mountains, and
19 elevated features; caves; distinctive rock formations; and panels of rock art. Places of power are
20 important to the religious beliefs of the Western Shoshone and Northern Paiute, and may be
21 sought out for individual vision quests or healing. The view from such a point of power or the
22 ability to see from one important place to another can be an important element of its integrity
23 (Stoffle and Zedeño 2001b). Landscapes as a whole are often tied together by a network of
24 culturally important trails (Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a).

26 The proposed Millers SEZ is located in Big Smoky Valley between the Monte Cristo
27 Range and Lone Mountain. As stated above, mountain prominences are often culturally
28 important landscape features and may be places of power. Project-specific investigations would
29 need to establish the cultural importance of these mountains through consultation with the
30 relevant Native American Tribe(s). Mt. Grant, where the Northern Paiute believe their ancestors
31 emerged (Fowler et al. 1970), is 72 mi (116 km) to the northwest and is not likely to be visible
32 from the SEZ. Known important rock art panels are located primarily well south and southwest
33 of the SEZ and should not be affected by development within the SEZ. Archaeological sites
34 within the proposed SEZ, including those associated with pluvial lakeshores, are considered by
35 the Tribes to be the work of their ancestors and form an important part of the Native American
36 cultural landscape. Native Americans commenting on a proposed site for the construction of a
37 solar energy facility directly east of the proposed Millers SEZ indicated that this part of the
38 Big Smoky Valley appeared to have been a travel corridor, not a living area (Rigby 2010).

11.7.17.1.5 *Cultural Surveys and Known Archaeological and Historical Resources*

43 In the proposed Millers SEZ, four surveys covering about 4% of the proposed SEZ have
44 been conducted within the boundaries of the SEZ; three were linear surveys and one was a block
45 survey. These surveys have documented 30 sites within the boundaries of the SEZ, all of which
46 are prehistoric in nature. An additional 49 surveys have been performed within 5 mi (8 km) of

1 the proposed SEZ, recording a total of 100 sites (86 prehistoric, 12 historic, and 2 multi-
2 component sites; de Dufour 2009).

3
4 Most of the sites that have been documented within the boundaries of the proposed
5 Millers SEZ are prehistoric lithic scatters, some of which contain diagnostic projectile points,
6 as mentioned in Section 11.5.17.1. There is one documented temporary camp site. The potential
7 eligibility of these sites for inclusion on the NRHP has not been evaluated.
8

9 The proposed SEZ has the potential to yield further significant cultural resources,
10 especially in the dune area along the edge of the former Lake Tonopah. Because of the fact that
11 the proposed Millers SEZ is located in the immediate vicinity of the Pleistocene lake, more
12 prehistoric cultural resources are likely to be encountered around the margins of this area.
13 Historic period artifacts, likely associated with the town site of Millers, as well as obsidian
14 debitage, were also noted during an initial site visit of the proposed SEZ.
15

16 The BLM has also designated several locations within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed
17 Millers SEZ as cultural resources that should be managed for conservation (BLM 1997); these
18 areas include significant petroglyph sites.
19
20

21 ***National Register of Historic Places***

22
23 There are no historic properties listed in the NRHP in the SEZ or within 5 mi (8 km)
24 of the SEZ. However, there are 16 sites that have been documented within 5 mi (8 km) of the
25 proposed Millers SEZ that are potentially eligible for NRHP inclusion. The Millers town site has
26 been determined to be potentially eligible, and five additional sites have been documented that
27 are associated with the Millers town site. One site is the remains of three house basements,
28 associated residential trash, and a mine shaft. Residential activity has also been documented at
29 two sites. Another site is the remains of locomotive maintenance pits, a concrete foundation, and
30 associated trash. Historic corrals and feed lots that were associated with the Millers town site and
31 the Tonopah-Goldfield Railroad were also documented near the proposed Millers SEZ. The
32 Sodaville-Tonopah freight road, a 60-mi (97-km) road that connected these mining towns, has
33 been documented within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ. There are nine prehistoric sites within 5 mi
34 (8 km) of the proposed SEZ that are potentially eligible for NRHP inclusion. One site is an
35 Archaic campsite associated with Pleistocene Lake Tonopah. Six sites are campsites and lithic
36 scatters. Another site is a possible proto-historic site, consisting of Shoshone brown-ware pottery
37 and projectile points. A multi-component site, consisting of a prehistoric lithic scatter and an
38 historic wall/lean-to and associated trash, is also eligible for inclusion in the NRHP
39 (de Dufour 2009).
40

41 In Esmeralda County, only one property, the Goldfield Historic District, which is located
42 about 32 mi (52 km) south of the proposed Millers SEZ, is listed in the NRHP. In neighboring
43 Nye County, there are 53 properties listed in the NRHP, 48 of which are associated with the
44 Tonopah Multiple Resource Area 13 mi (21 km) southeast of the proposed Millers SEZ. The
45 other five NRHP properties in Nye County are located far enough away (Gatecliff Rockshelter
46 near Austin, 97 mi [157 km] northeast; James Wild Horse Trap near Fish Springs, 80 mi

1 [129 km] northeast; Tybo Charcoal Kilns, near Tybo, 65 mi [105 km] east; Manhattan School,
2 Manhattan, 42 mi [68 km] northeast; Sedan Crater, near Mercury, 132 mi [212 km] southeast)
3 from the SEZ not to be affected by solar development.
4
5

6 **11.7.17.2 Impacts**

7

8 Direct impacts on significant cultural resources could occur in the proposed Millers SEZ;
9 however, further investigation is needed. At least 30 sites have been recorded within the SEZ,
10 although none of them have been evaluated for inclusion in the NRHP. Consistent with findings
11 at other SEZs, dune areas continue to be areas with considerable potential for containing
12 significant sites on the valley floors suitable for solar development. The area within the proposed
13 Millers SEZ associated with Lake Tonopah also has the potential to provide significant sites
14 related to exploitation of lacustrine resources. A cultural resource survey of the entire area of
15 potential effect, including consultation with affected Native American Tribes, would first need to
16 be conducted to identify archaeological sites, historic structures and features, and traditional
17 cultural properties, and an evaluation would need to follow to determine whether any are eligible
18 for listing in the NRHP as historic properties. It is further recommended that subsurface testing
19 be conducted, because there is potential for significant buried cultural deposits associated with
20 prehistoric use of Lake Tonopah. Section 5.15 discusses the types of effects that could occur on
21 any significant cultural resources found to be present within the proposed Millers SEZ. Impacts
22 would be minimized through the implementation of required programmatic design features
23 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2. Programmatic design features assume that the necessary
24 surveys, evaluations, and consultations will occur. No traditional cultural properties have been
25 identified to date within the vicinity of the SEZ.
26

27 Indirect impacts on cultural resources that result from erosion outside of the SEZ
28 boundary (including along ROWs) are unlikely, assuming programmatic design features to
29 reduce water runoff and sedimentation are implemented (as described in Appendix A,
30 Section A.2.2).
31

32 No needs for new transmission or access corridors have currently been identified,
33 assuming existing infrastructure would be used. Therefore, no new areas of cultural concern
34 would be made accessible as a result of development within the proposed Millers SEZ, so
35 indirect impacts resulting from vandalism or theft of cultural resources is not anticipated.
36 However, impacts on cultural resources related to the creation of new corridors not assessed in
37 this PEIS would be evaluated at the project-specific level if new road or transmission
38 construction or line upgrades were to occur.
39

40 **11.7.17.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

41

42 Programmatic design features to mitigate adverse effects on significant cultural
43 resources, such as avoidance of significant sites and features, cultural awareness training for the
44 workforce, and measures for addressing possible looting/vandalism issues through formalized
45 agreement documents, are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
46

1 SEZ-specific design features would be determined in consultation with the Nevada SHPO
2 and affected Tribes and would depend on the results of future investigations.

- 3
4 • Avoidance of high-potential, high-density areas is recommended. Because of
5 the high sensitivity of the area for containing prehistoric sites associated with
6 Lake Tonopah and the presence of historic period sites related to the
7 development of Millers town site, complete avoidance of NRHP-eligible sites
8 may not be possible, and it may not be possible to fully mitigate the loss of
9 such a large number of sites associated with one lake system; therefore
10 avoidance of these general areas is recommended.
11

1 **11.7.18 Native American Concerns**
2

3 Native Americans share many environmental and socioeconomic concerns with other
4 ethnic groups. This section focuses on concerns specific to Native Americans and to which
5 Native Americans bring a distinct perspective. For a discussion of issues of possible Native
6 American concern shared with the population as a whole, several sections in this PEIS should be
7 consulted. General topics of concern are addressed in Section 4.16. Specifically for the proposed
8 Millers SEZ, Section 11.7.17 discusses archaeological sites, structures, landscapes, trails, and
9 traditional cultural properties; Section 11.7.8 discusses mineral resources; Section 11.7.9.1.3
10 discusses water rights and water use; Section 11.7.10 discusses plant species; Section 11.7.11
11 discusses wildlife species, including wildlife migration patterns; Section 11.7.13 discusses air
12 quality; Section 11.7.14 discusses visual resources; Sections 11.7.19 and 11.7.20 discuss
13 socioeconomics and environmental justice, respectively; and issues of human health and safety
14 are discussed in Section 5.21.
15

16
17 **11.7.18.1 Affected Environment**
18

19 The proposed Millers SEZ falls within the Tribal traditional use area generally attributed
20 to the Western Shoshone (Liljeblad and Fowler 1986) and is within the area recognized as
21 traditionally belonging to the Western Shoshone by the Indian Claims Commission
22 (Royster 2008). Lying near the western edge of Western Shoshone territory, the SEZ was
23 accessible by the Northern Paiutes, who were on friendly terms with the Western Shoshone
24 (McGonagle and Waski 1978). All federally recognized Tribes with Western Shoshone,
25 Northern Paiute, or Owens Valley Paiute roots have been contacted and provided an opportunity
26 to comment or consult regarding this PEIS. They are listed in Table 11.7.18.1-1. Details of
27 government-to-government consultation efforts are presented in Chapter 14; a listing of all
28 federally recognized tribes contacted for this PEIS is given in Appendix K.
29
30

31 ***11.7.18.1.1 Territorial Boundaries***
32

33
34 **Western Shoshone**
35

36 The Western Shoshone traditionally occupied a swath of the central Great Basin
37 stretching from Death Valley in California through central Nevada and northwestern Utah to
38 southeastern Idaho (Thomas et al. 1986). The proposed Millers SEZ lies near the northwestern
39 periphery of their traditional range where Shoshone territory blends into Northern and Owens
40 Valley Paiute territory.
41

42
43 **Northern Paiutes**
44

45 The traditional territory of the Northern Paiute lies mainly along the eastern front of the
46 Sierra Nevada and the divide separating the Pit and Klamath Rivers from the Great Basin,

TABLE 11.7.18.1-1 Federally Recognized Tribes with Traditional Ties to the Proposed Millers SEZ

Tribe	Location	State
Benton Paiute-Shoshone Tribe	Benton	California
Big Pine Paiute Tribe	Big Pine	California
Bishop Paiute Tribe	Bishop	California
Bridgeport Indian Colony	Bridgeport	California
Duck Valley Shoshone-Paiute Tribes	Owyhee	Nevada
Duckwater Shoshone Tribe	Duckwater	Nevada
Ely Shoshone Tribe	Ely	Nevada
Las Vegas Paiute Tribe	Las Vegas	Nevada
Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Tribe	Lone Pine	California
Lovelock Paiute Tribe	Lovelock	Nevada
Reno-Sparks Indian Colony	Reno	Nevada
Summit Lake Paiute Tribe	Sparks	Nevada
Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone	Elko	Nevada
Timbisha Shoshone Tribe	Death Valley	California
Washoe Tribe	Gardnerville	Nevada
Wells Indian Colony	Wells	Nevada
Yerington Paiute Tribe	Yerington	Nevada
Yomba Shoshone Tribe	Austin	Nevada

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extending from Mono Lake (California) in the south as far as southeastern Oregon. They occupied a wedge-shaped territory extending as far as western Idaho in the north and as far as Nevada’s Reese River in the south (Fowler and Liljeblad 1986).

Owens Valley Paiutes

The Owens Valley Paiutes occupy five relatively small reservations within Owens Valley in Inyo and Mono Counties, California, west of the SEZ. Their traditional use area ranged from the headwaters of the Owens River near Benton, California, southward to Owens Lake. They shared the shores of Owens Lake with Western Shoshone groups. The Indian Claims Commission placed Owens Valley within the traditional territory of the Northern Paiutes, with whom the Owens Valley Tribes are linked linguistically (Liljeblad and Fowler 1986; Royster 2008).

11.7.18.1.2 Plant Resources

Native Americans continue to make use of a wide range of indigenous plants for food, medicine, construction materials, and other uses. Although the proposed SEZ is sparsely vegetated, some species traditionally used by Native Americans have been observed or are possible in the SEZ. The vegetation present at the proposed Millers SEZ is described in Section 11.7.10. The cover types present at the SEZ are part of the Inter-mountain Basin series.

1 Mixed Salt Desert Scrub dominates, but there are substantial areas of Greasewood Flat, smaller
 2 amounts of Playa, and a sprinkling of Semi-desert Shrub Steppe (USGS 2005a). As shown in
 3 Table 11.7.18.1-2, there are some plants found in the SEZ that have been traditionally used by
 4 Native Americans for food and medicine (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983; Stoffle et al. 1999;
 5 Fowler 1986). The most common is black greasewood. Other seed-bearing plants appear to be
 6 scarce. However, project-specific analyses will be needed to determine their presence at any
 7 proposed development site. The importance of any stand to Native Americans must be
 8 determined in consultation with the affected Tribe(s).

9
 10
 11 **11.7.18.1.3 Other Resources**
 12

13 Water is an essential prerequisite for life in the arid areas of the Great Basin. As a result,
 14 it is a keystone of desert cultures’ religion. Most desert cultures consider all water sacred and a
 15 purifying agent. Water sources are often associated with rock art. Springs are often associated
 16 with powerful beings, and hot springs in particular figure prominently in Owens Valley Paiute
 17 creation stories. Water sources are seen as connected—damage to one source damages all
 18 (Stoffle and Zedeño 2001a). Tribes are also sensitive about the use of scarce local water supplies
 19 for the benefit of distant communities and recommend that determination of adequate water
 20 supplies be a primary consideration for whether a site is suitable for the development of a utility-
 21 scale solar energy facility (Moose 2009).

22
 23 Wildlife likely to be found in the proposed Millers Valley SEZ is described in
 24 Section 11.7.11. Native American game species whose range includes the SEZ are listed in
 25 Table 11.7.18.1-3. Most of these are small animals and birds common throughout much of the
 26
 27

TABLE 11.7.18.1-2 Plant Species Important to Native Americans Observed or Likely To Be Present in the Proposed Millers SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Food		
Big Sagebrush	<i>Artemisia tridentata</i>	Possible
Dropseed	<i>Sporobolus airoides</i>	Possible
Greasewood	<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>	Observed
Indian Rice Grass	<i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>	Observed
Iodine Bush	<i>Allenrolfea occidentalis</i>	Possible
Wolfberry	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	Possible
Medicine		
Greasewood	<i>Sacarbatus vermiculatus</i>	Possible
Mormon Tea	<i>Ephedra nevadensis</i>	Possible
Saltbush	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	Observed

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005a); Stoffle and Dobyns (1983); Stoffle et al. (1999); Fowler (1986).

TABLE 11.7.18.1-3 Animal Species Used by Native Americans as Food whose Range Includes the Proposed Millers SEZ

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Mammals		
Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	All year
Black-tailed jack rabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>	Observed
Wood rats	<i>Neotoma</i> spp.	All year
Chipmunks	<i>Tamias</i> spp.	Observed
Cottontails	<i>Silvilagus</i> spp.	All year
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	Observed
Kangaroo rats	<i>Dipodomys</i> spp.	All year
Kit fox	<i>Vulpes macotis</i>	All year
Pocket gopher	<i>Thomomys bottae</i>	All year
Pocket mice	<i>Perognathus</i> spp.	All year
Porcupine	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>	All year
Rock squirrel	<i>Spermophilus variegates</i>	All year
Striped skunk	<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>	All year
Birds		
Burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicular</i>	Summer
Common raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	All year
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Observed
Great horned owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	All year
Northern mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	All year
Red-tailed hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Observed
Sharp-shinned hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	Winter
Reptiles		
Western rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus viridis</i>	All year
Lizards	Various species	Observed

Sources: Field visit; USGS (2005b); Fowler (1986).

1
2
3 Great Basin. Traditionally, the most important was the black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus*
4 *californicus*), which provided both meat and pelts. Rabbit skin blankets and clothing were
5 common throughout the Great Basin. Important large game animals, mule deer (*Odocoileus*
6 *hemionus*) and bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*), occur in the nearby Monte Cristo Range and on
7 Lone Mountain (BLM 1994), and occasionally cross through the SEZ when passing between
8 mountain habitats. Bighorn sheep have been observed near the SEZ. The golden eagle (*Aquila*
9 *chrysaetos*), which is important culturally, has also been observed at the SEZ.

10
11 Other natural resources traditionally important to Native Americans include clay
12 for pottery, salt, and naturally occurring mineral pigments for the decoration and protection
13 of the skin (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). None of these has been reported in the SEZ
14 (see Section 11.7.7).
15

1 **11.7.18.2 Impacts**
2

3 In the past, the Western Shoshone and Owens Valley Paiutes have expressed concern
4 over project impacts on a variety of resources. They tend to take a holistic view of their
5 traditional homelands. Effects on one part have ripple effects on the whole. For them, cultural
6 and natural features are inextricably bound together. Western distinctions between the sacred
7 and the secular have no meaning in their traditional worldview (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). While
8 no comments specific to the proposed Millers SEZ have been received from Native American
9 Tribes to date, the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley has commented on the scope of
10 this PEIS. The Tribe recommends that the BLM preserve undisturbed lands intact and that
11 recently disturbed lands, such as abandoned farm fields, rail yards, mines, and airfields, be given
12 primary consideration for solar energy development. Potential impacts on existing water supplies
13 are also a primary concern (Moose 2009). During energy development projects in adjacent areas,
14 other Great Basin Tribes have expressed concern over adverse effects on a wide range of
15 resources. Among these are geophysical features and physical cultural remains. Known resources
16 of this type in the Millers area are discussed in Section 11.7.17.1.4. Such places are often seen as
17 important because they are thought to be places of power. They are often the location of or have
18 ready access to a variety of plant, animal, and mineral resources (Stoffle et al. 1997). Resources
19 that Native Americans have identified as important include food plants, medicinal plants, plants
20 used in basketry, and plants used in construction; game animals and birds; and sources of clay,
21 salt, and pigments (Stoffle and Dobyns 1983). Those likely to be found within the proposed
22 Millers SEZ are discussed in Section 11.7.18.1.
23

24 The construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed SEZ would
25 almost certainly result in the destruction of some plants important to Native Americans and the
26 habitat of some traditionally important animals. The Big Smoky Valley is reported to have been
27 a joint use area shared by the surrounding Native American groups (McGonagle and Waski
28 1978), and to have been a travel corridor, not a habitation area (Rigby 2010). Although it
29 includes some plant species traditionally important to Native Americans, they appear to be
30 relatively scant. While it is within the range of a number of traditional Native American game
31 species, these species for the most part are common throughout the valleys in the area, and may
32 be more abundant elsewhere (See Sections 11.7.10 and 11.7.11). The most important traditional
33 resource likely to be present in the valley is the black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*).
34 Project-specific consultation with Western Shoshone and Northern Paiute Tribes will be required
35 to determine whether the resources present at the SEZ are significant.
36

37 As consultation with the Tribes continues and project-specific analyses are undertaken, it
38 is possible that Native Americans will express concern over potential visual, acoustic and other
39 effects of solar energy development within the SEZ on specific resources including culturally
40 important landscapes.
41

42 Implementation of required programmatic design features, as discussed in Appendix A,
43 Section A.2.2, should eliminate impacts on Tribes' reserved water rights and the potential for
44 groundwater contamination issues.
45
46

1 **11.7.18.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 Programmatic design features to mitigate impacts of potential concern to Native
4 Americans, such as avoidance of sacred sites, water resources, and tribally important plant and
5 animal species are provided in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
6

7 The need for and nature of SEZ-specific design features addressing issues of potential
8 concern would be determined during government-to-government consultation with the affected
9 Tribes listed in Table 11.7.18.1-1.
10

11 Mitigation of impacts on archaeological sites and traditional cultural properties is
12 discussed in Section 11.7.17.3, in addition to programmatic design features for historic properties
13 also discussed in Section A.2.2.
14

1 **11.7.19 Socioeconomics**

2
3
4 **11.7.19.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 This section describes current socioeconomic conditions and local community services
7 within the ROI surrounding the proposed Millers SEZ. The ROI is a three-county area
8 comprising Esmeralda, Mineral, and Nye Counties in Nevada. It encompasses the area in which
9 workers are expected to spend most of their salaries and in which a portion of site purchases and
10 nonpayroll expenditures from the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the
11 proposed SEZ facility are expected to take place.

12
13
14 **11.7.19.1.1 ROI Employment**

15
16 In 2008, employment in the ROI stood at 18,672 (Table 11.7.19.1-1). Over the period
17 1999 to 2008, the annual average employment growth rate was low in each county in the ROI,
18 with lower rates in Nye County (0.5%) and in Esmeralda County (-2.7%). At 0.4%, growth rates
19 in the ROI as a whole were lower than the average rate for Nevada (2.7%).

20
21 In the ROI in 2006, the services sector provided the highest percentage of employment
22 at 46.5%, followed by wholesale and retail trade at 17.9%, with a smaller employment share held
23 by construction (8.7%) and mining (7.0%) (Table 11.7.19.1-2).

24
25
**TABLE 11.7.19.1-1 ROI Employment in the Proposed
Millers SEZ**

Location	1999	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1999–2008 (%)
Esmeralda County	590	448	-2.7
Mineral County	1,971	2,188	1.0
Nye County	15,325	16,036	0.5
ROI	17,886	18,672	0.4
Nevada	978,969	1,282,012	2.7

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a,b).

TABLE 11.7.19.1-2 ROI Employment in the Proposed Millers SEZ by Sector, 2006

Industry	Esmeralda County		Mineral County		Nye County		ROI	
	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total
Agriculture ^a	10	7.0	0	0.0	325	3.6	335	3.1
Mining	10	7.0	10	0.6	750	8.3	770	7.0
Construction	10	7.0	10	0.6	925	10.2	945	8.7
Manufacturing	60	42.0	10	0.6	329	3.6	399	3.7
Transportation and public utilities	20	14.0	385	22.0	292	3.2	697	6.4
Wholesale and retail trade	60	42.0	185	10.6	1,714	19.0	1,959	17.9
Finance, insurance, and real estate	0	0.0	38	2.2	328	3.6	366	3.4
Services	30	21.0	710	40.6	4,340	48.1	5,080	46.5
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	143		1,750		9,029		10,922	

^a Agricultural employment includes 2007 data for hired farmworkers.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a); USDA (2009).

1 **11.7.19.1.2 ROI Unemployment**

2
3 The average unemployment rate in Nye County over the period 1999 to 2008 was 6.9%,
4 slightly higher than the rate in Mineral County (6.7%) and higher than the rate for Esmeralda
5 County (Table 11.7.19.1-3). The average rate in the ROI over this period was 6.9%, higher than
6 the average rate for Nevada. Unemployment rates for the first 11 months of 2009 contrast with
7 rates for 2008 as a whole; in Nye County, the unemployment rate increased to 14.3%, in Mineral
8 County to 9.1%, and in Esmeralda County to 8.4%. The average rates for the ROI (13.6%) and
9 for Nevada as a whole (11.0%) were also higher during this period than the corresponding
10 average rates for 2008.
11

12
13 **11.7.19.1.3 ROI Urban Population and Income**

14
15 There are no incorporated places in the ROI, and consequently, no urban population or
16 income.
17

18
19 **11.7.19.1.4 ROI Total Population**

20
21 Table 11.7.19.1-4 presents recent and projected populations in the ROI and for the state
22 as a whole. Population in the ROI stood at 49,487 in 2008, having grown at an average annual
23 rate of 3.2% since 2000. Growth rates for ROI were higher than those in Nevada (3.4%) over
24 the same period.
25

26 Only one of the three counties in the ROI experienced growth in population between
27 2000 and 2008; population in Nye County grew at an annual rate of 3.9%, while in Mineral
28
29

TABLE 11.7.19.1-3 ROI Unemployment Rates for the Proposed Millers SEZ (%)

Location	1999–2008	2008	2009 ^a
Esmeralda County	6.1	5.1	8.4
Mineral County	6.7	7.5	9.1
Nye County	6.9	9.7	14.3
ROI	6.9	9.4	13.6
Nevada	5.0	6.7	11.0

^a Rates for 2009 are the average for January through November.

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (2009a–c).

TABLE 11.7.19.1-4 ROI Population for the Proposed Millers SEZ

Location	2000	2008	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2000–2008 (%)	2021	2023
Esmeralda County	971	664	–4.6	1,387	1,420
Mineral County	5,071	4,648	–1.1	4,160	4,149
Nye County	32,485	44,175	3.9	76,735	79,452
ROI	38,527	49,487	3.2	82,282	85,021
Nevada	1,998,257	2,615,772	3.4	3,675,890	3,779,745

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009d,e); Nevada State Demographers Office (2008).

County, population fell by –1.1%, and by –4.6% in Esmeralda County. The ROI population is expected to increase to 82,282 by 2021 and to 85,021 by 2023.

11.7.19.1.5 ROI Total Income

Total personal income in the ROI stood at \$1.6 billion in 2007 and has grown at an annual average rate of 3.9% over the period 1998 to 2007 (Table 11.7.19.1-5). Per-capita income also rose over the same period at a rate of 1.5%, increasing from \$29,208 to \$31,882. Per-capita incomes were higher in Esmeralda County (\$41,370) than in Nye County (\$31,836) and Mineral County (\$30,935) in 2007. Growth rates in total personal income have been higher in Nye County than in Mineral County and Esmeralda County. Personal income growth rates in Nevada (4.3%) were higher than the rate for the ROI (3.9%), while per-capita income growth rates in Esmeralda County were higher than those for Nevada as a whole (1.0%), the same as the state rate in Nye County and lower in Mineral County.

Median household income in 2006 to 2008 varied from \$42,275 in Nye County, to \$42,348 in Mineral County to \$42,749 in Esmeralda County (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009c).

11.7.19.1.6 ROI Housing

In 2007, more than 20,300 housing units were located in the three ROI counties, with about 82% of these located in Nye County (Table 11.7.19.1-6). Owner-occupied units account for approximately 72% of the occupied units in the three counties, with rental housing making up 28% of the total. Vacancy rates in 2007 were 45.4% in Esmeralda County, 23.3% in Mineral County, and 19.3% in Nye County; with an overall vacancy rate of 21% in the ROI, there were

TABLE 11.7.19.1-5 ROI Personal Income for the Proposed Millers SEZ

Location	1998	2007	Average Annual Growth Rate, 1998–2007 (%)
Esmeralda County			
Total income ^a	0.0	0.0	0.2
Per-capita income	26,781	41,370	4.4
Mineral County			
Total income ^a	0.2	0.1	-1.5
Per-capita income	31,655	30,935	-0.2
Nye County			
Total income ^a	0.9	1.4	4.8
Per-capita income	28,857	31,836	1.0
ROI			
Total income ^a	1.1	1.6	3.9
Per-capita income	29,208	31,882	0.9
Nevada			
Total income ^a	68.9	105.3	4.3
Per-capita income	37,188	41,022	1.0

^a Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ billion 2008.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce (2009); U.S. Bureau of Census (2009d,e).

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4,258 vacant housing units in the ROI in 2007, of which 1,198 are estimated to be rental units that would be available to construction workers. There were 734 units in seasonal, recreational, or occasional use in the ROI at the time of the 2000 Census, with 9.5% of housing units in Esmeralda County, 3.5% in Nye County and 3.2% in Mineral County used for seasonal or recreational purposes.

Housing stock in the ROI as a whole grew at an annual rate of 0.5% over the period 2000 to 2007, with 675 new units added to the existing housing stock (Table 11.7.19.1-6).

The median value of owner-occupied housing in 2006 to 2008 varied between \$59,500 in Mineral County, \$75,600 in Esmeralda County and \$122,100 in Nye County (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009f).

TABLE 11.7.19.1-6 ROI Housing Characteristics for the Proposed Millers SEZ

Parameter	2000	2007 ^a
Esmeralda County		
Owner-occupied	305	314
Rental	150	154
Vacant units	378	389
Seasonal and recreational use	79	Na ^b
Total units	833	857
Mineral County		
Owner-occupied	1,593	1,589
Rental	604	603
Vacant units	669	667
Seasonal and recreational use	93	NA
Total units	2,866	2,859
Nye County		
Owner-occupied	10,167	9,630
Rental	3,142	3,760
Vacant units	2,625	3,202
Seasonal and recreational use	562	NA
Total units	15,934	16,592
ROI		
Owner-occupied	12,065	11,533
Rental	3,896	4,517
Vacant units	3,672	4,258
Seasonal and recreational use	734	NA
Total units	19,633	20,308

^a 2007 data for number of owner-occupied, rental, and vacant units for Esmeralda County and Mineral County are not available; data are based on 2007 total housing units and 2000 data on housing tenure.

^b NA = data not available.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009g-i).

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1 **11.7.19.1.7 ROI Local Government Organizations**
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3 The various local and county government organizations in the ROI are listed in
4 Table 11.7.19.1-7. In addition, one Tribal governments is located in the ROI, with members
5 of other Tribal groups located in the county, but whose Tribal governments are located in
6 adjacent counties or states.
7

8
9 **11.7.19.1.8 ROI Community and Social Services**
10

11 This section describes educational, health care, law enforcement, and firefighting
12 resources in the ROI.
13

14
15 **Schools**
16

17 In 2007, the three-county ROI had a total of 32 public and private elementary, middle,
18 and high schools (NCES 2009). Table 11.7.19.1-8 provides summary statistics for enrollment
19 and educational staffing and two indices of educational quality—student-teacher ratios and levels
20 of service (number of teachers per 1,000 population). The student-teacher ratio in Nye County
21 schools (16.2) is higher than that in Mineral County (11.5) and Esmeralda County schools (9.6),
22 while the level of service is higher in Esmeralda County (11.6) than elsewhere in the ROI, where
23 there are fewer teachers per 1,000 population (Mineral County, 11.2; Nye County, 9.0).
24

25
26 **Health Care**
27

28 The total number of physicians (41) is much higher in Nye County than Mineral
29 County (4), while the number of physicians per 1,000 population in both counties is similar. No
30 data are available for Esmeralda County (Table 11.7.19.1-9).
31
32

**TABLE 11.7.19.1-7 ROI Local Government Organizations
and Social Institutions in the Proposed Millers SEZ**

Governments	
<i>City</i>	
None	
<i>County</i>	
Esmeralda County	Nye County
Mineral County	
<i>Tribal</i>	
Walker River Paiute Tribe of the Walker River Reservation, Nevada	

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009b); U.S. Department of the Interior (2010).

TABLE 11.7.19.1-8 ROI School District Data for the Proposed Millers SEZ, 2007

Location	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Student-Teacher Ratio	Level of Service ^a
Esmeralda County	77	8	9.6	11.6
Mineral County	612	53	11.5	11.2
Nye County	6,427	396	16.2	9.0
ROI	7,116	457	15.6	9.2

^a Number of teachers per 1,000 population.

Source: NCES (2009).

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TABLE 11.7.19.1-9 Physicians in the Proposed Millers SEZ ROI, 2007

Location	Number of Primary Care Physicians	Level of Service ^a
Esmeralda County	0	--
Mineral County	4	0.8
Nye County	41	0.9
ROI	45	0.9

^a Number of physicians per 1,000 population.

Source: AMA (2009).

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Public Safety

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Several state, county, and local police departments provide law enforcement in the ROI (Table 11.7.19.1-10). Esmeralda County has 10 officers and would provide law enforcement services to the SEZ; there are 104 officers in Nye County and 18 officers in Mineral County. Levels of service of police protection are 14.5 per 1,000 population in Esmeralda County, 3.8 in Mineral County, and 2.4 in Nye County. Currently, there are 110 professional firefighters in the ROI (Table 11.7.19.1-10).

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11.7.19.1.9 ROI Social Structure and Social Change

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Community social structures and other forms of social organization within the ROI are related to various factors, including historical development, major economic activities and

TABLE 11.7.19.1-10 Public Safety Employment in the Proposed Millers SEZ ROI

Location	Number of Police Officers ^a	Level of Service ^b	Number of Firefighters ^c	Level of Service
Esmeralda County	10	14.5	0	0.0
Mineral County	18	3.8	28	6.0
Nye County	104	2.4	82	1.9
ROI	132	2.7	110	2.2

^a 2007 data.

^b Number per 1,000 population.

^c 2008 data; number does not include volunteers.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2008); Fire Departments Network (2009).

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3 sources of employment, income levels, race and ethnicity, and forms of local political
4 organization. Although an analysis of the character of community social structures is beyond the
5 scope of the current programmatic analysis, project-level NEPA analyses would include a
6 description of ROI social structures, contributing factors, their uniqueness, and, consequently,
7 the susceptibility of local communities to various forms of social disruption and social change.
8

9 Various energy development studies have suggested that once the annual growth in
10 population is between 5 and 15% in smaller rural communities, alcoholism, depression, suicide,
11 social conflict, divorce, and delinquency would increase and levels of community satisfaction
12 would deteriorate (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996). Data on violent crime and property crime rates and
13 on alcoholism and illicit drug use, mental health, and divorce, which might be used as indicators
14 of social change, are presented in Tables 11.7.19.1-11 and 11.7.19.1-12, respectively.
15

16 There is some variation in the level of crime across the ROI, with higher rates of violent
17 crime in Esmeralda County (4.5 per 1,000 population) than in Mineral County (3.2) and Nye
18 County (2.9) (Table 11.7.19.1-11). Property-related crime rates are higher in Nye County (20.8)
19 than in Esmeralda County (15.1) and Mineral County (5.2); overall crime rates in Nye County
20 (23.0) were higher than in Esmeralda County (19.6) and Mineral County (8.4).
21

22 Data on other measures of social change—alcoholism, illicit drug use, and mental
23 health—are not available at the county level and thus are presented for the SAMHSA region in
24 which the ROI is located (Table 11.7.19.1-12).
25
26
27

TABLE 11.7.19.1-11 County and ROI Crime Rates for the Proposed Millers SEZ^a

	Violent Crime ^b		Property Crime ^c		All Crime	
	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate
Esmeralda County	3	4.5	10	15.1	13	19.6
Mineral County	15	3.2	24	5.2	39	8.4
Nye County	124	2.9	892	20.8	1,016	23.0
ROI	142	2.9	926	18.7	1,068	21.6

^a Rates are the number of crimes per 1,000 population.

^b Violent crime includes murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

^c Property crime includes burglary, larceny, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2009a,b).

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TABLE 11.7.19.1-12 Alcoholism, Drug Use, Mental Health and Divorce in the Proposed Millers SEZ ROI^a

Geographic Area	Alcoholism	Illicit Drug Use	Mental Health ^b	Divorce ^c
Nevada Rural (includes Esmeralda, Mineral and Nye County)	8.0	2.7	9.5	– ^d
Nevada				6.5

^a Data for alcoholism and drug use represent percentage of the population over 12 years of age with dependence or abuse of alcohol, illicit drugs. Data are averages for 2004 to 2006.

^b Data for mental health represent percentage of the population over 18 years of age suffering from serious psychological distress. Data are averages for 2002 to 2004.

^c Divorce rates are the number of divorces per 1,000 population. Data are for 2007.

^d A dash indicates data not available.

Sources: SAMHSA (2009); CDC (2009).

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11.7.19.1.10 ROI Recreation

Various areas in the vicinity of the proposed Millers SEZ are used for recreational purposes, with natural, ecological, and cultural resources in the ROI attracting visitors for a range of activities, including backcountry driving, OHV use and hunting. These activities are discussed in Section 11.7.5.

1 Because the number of visitors using state and federal lands for recreational activities is
 2 not available from the various administering agencies, the value of recreational resources in these
 3 areas, based solely on the number of recorded visitors, is likely to be an underestimation. In
 4 addition to visitation rates, the economic valuation of certain natural resources can also be
 5 assessed in terms of the potential recreational destination for current and future users, that is,
 6 their nonmarket value (see Section 5.17.1.1.1).

7
 8 Another method is to estimate the economic impact of the various recreational activities
 9 supported by natural resources on public land in the vicinity of the proposed solar development,
 10 by identifying sectors in the economy in which expenditures on recreational activities occur. Not
 11 all activities in these sectors are directly related to recreation on state and federal lands, with
 12 some activity occurring on private land (e.g., dude ranches, golf courses, bowling alleys, and
 13 movie theaters). Expenditures associated with recreational activities form an important part of
 14 the economy of the ROI. In 2007, 1,859 people were employed in the ROI in the various sectors
 15 identified as recreation, constituting 9.8 % of total ROI employment (Table 11.7.19.1-13).
 16 Recreation spending also produced almost \$41.5 million in income in the ROI in 2007. The
 17 primary sources of recreation-related employment were hotels and lodging places and eating
 18 and drinking places.

19
 20
 21 **11.7.19.2 Impacts**

22
 23 The following analysis begins with a description of the common impacts of solar
 24 development, including common impacts on recreation, social change, and livestock grazing.
 25 These impacts would occur regardless of the solar technology developed in the SEZ. The
 26 impacts of facilities employing various solar energy technologies are analyzed in detail in
 27 subsequent sections.

28
 29 **TABLE 11.7.19.1-13 Recreation Sector Activity in the Proposed
 Millers SEZ ROI, 2007**

ROI	Employment	Income (\$ million)
Amusement and recreation services	105	3.8
Automotive rental	13	0.4
Eating and drinking places	923	16.5
Hotels and lodging places	691	17.8
Museums and historic sites,	1	0.2
Recreational vehicle parks and campsites	56	1.5
Scenic tours	39	1.0
Sporting goods retailers	31	0.4
Total ROI	1,859	41.5

Source: MIG, Inc. (2010).

1 **11.7.19.2.1 Common Impacts**
2

3 Construction and operation of a solar energy facility at the proposed Millers SEZ would
4 produce direct and indirect economic impacts. Direct impacts would occur as a result of
5 expenditures on wages and salaries and on procurement of goods and services required for
6 project construction and operation, and the collection of state sales and income taxes. Indirect
7 impacts would occur as project wages and salaries, procurement expenditures, and tax revenues
8 subsequently circulate through the economy of each state, thereby creating additional
9 employment, income, and tax revenues. Facility construction and operation would also
10 require in-migration of workers and their families into the ROI surrounding the site, which
11 would affect population, rental housing, health service employment, and public safety
12 employment. Socioeconomic impacts common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities
13 are discussed in detail in Section 5.17. These impacts will be minimized through the
14 implementation of programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2.
15

16
17 **Recreation Impacts**
18

19 Estimating the impact of solar facilities on recreation is problematic, because it is not
20 clear how solar development in the SEZ would affect recreational visitation and nonmarket
21 values (i.e., the value of recreational resources for potential or future visits; see
22 Section 5.17.1.2.3). While it is clear that some land in the ROI would no longer be accessible
23 for recreation, the majority of popular recreational locations would be precluded from solar
24 development. It is also possible that solar development in the ROI would be visible from popular
25 recreation locations, and that construction workers residing temporarily in the ROI would occupy
26 accommodations otherwise used for recreational visits, thus reducing visitation and consequently
27 affecting the economy of the ROI.
28

29
30 **Social Change**
31

32 Although an extensive literature in sociology documents the most significant components
33 of social change in energy boomtowns, the nature and magnitude of the social impact of energy
34 development in small rural communities are still unclear (see Section 5.17.1.1.4). While some
35 degree of social disruption is likely to accompany large-scale in-migration during the boom
36 phase, there is insufficient evidence to predict the extent to which specific communities are
37 likely to be affected, which population groups within each community are likely to be most
38 affected, and the extent to which social disruption is likely to persist beyond the end of the boom
39 period (Smith et al. 2001). Accordingly, because of the lack of adequate social baseline data, it
40 has been suggested that social disruption is likely to occur once an arbitrary population growth
41 rate associated with solar energy projects has been reached, with an annual rate of between
42 5 and 10% growth in population assumed to result in a breakdown in social structures, with a
43 consequent increase in alcoholism, depression, suicide, social conflict, divorce, and delinquency
44 and deterioration in levels of community satisfaction (BLM 1980, 1983, 1996).
45

1 In overall terms, the in-migration of workers and their families into the ROI would
2 represent an increase of 4.4% in regional population during construction of the trough
3 technology, with smaller increases for the power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies, and
4 during the operation of each technology. While it is possible that some construction and
5 operations workers will choose to locate in communities closer to the SEZ, the lack of available
6 housing in smaller rural communities in the ROI to accommodate all in-migrating workers and
7 families and insufficient range of housing choices to suit all solar occupations, many workers are
8 likely to commute to the SEZ from larger communities elsewhere in the ROI, thereby reducing
9 the potential impact of solar development on social change. Regardless of the pace of population
10 growth associated with the commercial development of solar resources and the likely residential
11 location of in-migrating workers and families in communities some distance from the SEZ itself,
12 the number of new residents from outside the ROI is likely to lead to some demographic and
13 social change in small rural communities in the ROI. Communities hosting solar development
14 are likely to be required to adapt to a different quality of life, with a transition away from a more
15 traditional lifestyle involving ranching and taking place in small, isolated, close-knit,
16 homogenous communities with a strong orientation toward personal and family relationships,
17 toward a more urban lifestyle, with increasing cultural and ethnic diversity and increasing
18 dependence on formal social relationships within the community.
19
20

21 **Livestock Grazing Impacts**

22

23 Cattle ranching and farming supported 82 jobs, and \$1.8 million in income in the ROI in
24 2007,(MIG, Inc. 2010). The construction and operation of solar facilities in the Millers SEZ
25 could result in a decline in the amount of land available for livestock grazing. However, because
26 the amount of acreage that would be used in the proposed SEZ would be small compared to the
27 overall size of locally affected land allotments, acreage loss would not have a significant impact
28 on overall grazing operations, with livestock management changes, or the provision of additional
29 livestock management facilities, meaning that no loss of AUMs is anticipated.
30
31

32 ***11.7.19.2.2 Technology-Specific Impacts***

33

34 The economic impacts of solar energy development in the proposed SEZ were measured
35 in terms of employment, income, state tax revenues (sales and income), population in-migration,
36 housing, and community service employment (education, health, and public safety). More
37 information on the data and methods used in the analysis is presented in Appendix M.
38

39 The assessment of the impact of the construction and operation of each technology was
40 based on SEZ acreage, assuming 80% of the area could be developed. To capture a range of
41 possible impacts, solar facility size was estimated on the basis of the land requirements of
42 various solar technologies, assuming that 9 acres/MW (0.04 km²/MW) would be required for
43 power tower, dish engine, and PV technologies and 5 acres/MW (0.02 km²/MW) for solar trough
44 technologies. Impacts of multiple facilities employing a given technology at each SEZ were
45 assumed to be the same as impacts for a single facility with the same total capacity. Construction
46 impacts were assessed for a representative peak year of construction, assumed to be 2021 for

1 each technology. Construction impacts assumed that a maximum of two projects could be
2 constructed within a given year, with a corresponding maximum land disturbance of up to
3 6,000 acres (24 km²). For operations impacts, a representative first year of operations was
4 assumed to be 2023 for trough and power tower, 2022 for the minimum facility size for dish
5 engine and PV, and 2023 for the maximum facility size for these technologies. The years of
6 construction and operations were selected as representative of the entire 20-year study period,
7 because they are the approximate midpoint; construction and operations could begin earlier.
8
9

10 **Solar Trough**

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12

13 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
14 and indirect impacts) from the use of solar trough technologies would be up to 4,578 jobs
15 (Table 11.7.1.19.2-1). Construction activities would constitute 14.7% of total ROI employment.
16 A solar facility would also produce \$278.3 million in income and \$0.2 million in direct sales
17 taxes.
18

19 Based on the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker
20 availability in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean
21 that some in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required,
22 with 3,654 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
23 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
24 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
25 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would be expected to be large, with
26 1,827 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
27 91.7% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
28

29 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
30 community service employment (education, health, and public safety). An increase in such
31 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
32 34 new teachers, 3 physicians, and 17 public safety employees (career firefighters and uniformed
33 police officers) would be required in the ROI. These increases would represent 4.4% of total ROI
34 employment expected in these occupations.
35
36

37 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
38 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using solar trough technologies would be 785 jobs
39 (Table 11.7.19.2-1). Such a solar facility would also produce \$26.3 million in income and
40 \$0.2 million in direct sales taxes. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy
41 Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), acreage-related fees would be \$1.1 million, and solar
42 generating capacity fees would total at least \$17.6 million.
43

44 Based on the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational
45 categories, operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their
46 families from outside the ROI would be required, with 373 persons in-migrating into the ROI.

TABLE 11.7.19.2-1 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Millers SEZ with Trough Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	3,283	585
Total	4,578	785
Income ^b		
Total	278.3	26.3
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.2	0.2
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA	1.1
Capacity fee ^d	NA	17.6
In-migrants (no.)	3,654	373
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	1,827	336
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	34	3
Physicians (no.)	3	0
Public safety (no.)	17	2

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 1,200 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 2,686 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number
2 of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile
3 home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-
4 occupied housing units would not be expected to be large, with 336 owner-occupied units
5 expected to be occupied in the ROI.
6

7 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
8 community service (health, education, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
9 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the provision of these
10 services in the ROI. Accordingly, 3 new teachers and 2 public safety employees (career
11 firefighters and uniformed police officers) would be required in the ROI.
12

13 **Power Tower**

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15
16
17 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
18 and indirect impacts) from the use of power tower technologies would be up to 1,823 jobs
19 (Table 11.7.19.2-2). Construction activities would constitute 5.9% of total ROI employment.
20 Such a solar facility would also produce \$110.8 million in income and \$0.1 million in direct sales
21 taxes.
22

23 Based on the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker
24 availability in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean
25 that some in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required,
26 with 1,456 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
27 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
28 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
29 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
30 with 728 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
31 36.5% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
32

33 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
34 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
35 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
36 13 new teachers, 1 physician, and 7 public safety employees would be required in the ROI.
37 These increases would represent 1.8% of total ROI employment expected in these occupations.
38

39
40 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
41 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using power tower technologies would be 370 jobs
42 (Table 11.7.19.2-3). Such a solar facility would also produce \$12.0 million in income.
43 Direct sales taxes would be less than \$0.1 million. Based on fees established by the BLM in its
44 Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), acreage-related fees would be \$1.1 million,
45 and solar generating capacity fees would total at least \$9.8 million.
46

TABLE 11.7.19.2-2 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Millers SEZ with Power Tower Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	1,308	302
Total	1,823	370
Income ^b		
Total	110.8	12.0
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	0.1	<0.1
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA	1.1
Capacity fee ^d	NA	9.8
In-migrants (no.)	1,456	193
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	728	173
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	13	2
Physicians (no.)	1	0
Public safety (no.)	7	1

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 667 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 1,492 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 Based on the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational
2 categories, operation of a solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and their
3 families from outside the ROI would be required, with 193 persons in-migrating into the ROI.
4 Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number
5 of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile
6 home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant
7 owner-occupied housing units would not be expected to be large, with 173 owner-occupied
8 units expected to be required in the ROI.
9

10 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
11 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
12 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
13 2 new teachers and 1 public safety employee would be required in the ROI.
14

15 **Dish Engine**

16
17
18

19 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
20 and indirect impacts) from the use of dish engine technologies would be up to 741 jobs
21 (Table 11.7.19.2-3). Construction activities would constitute 2.4% of total ROI employment.
22 Such a solar facility would also produce \$45.1 million in income and less than \$0.1 million in
23 direct sales taxes.
24

25 Based on the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker
26 availability in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean
27 that some in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required,
28 with 592 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
29 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
30 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
31 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
32 with 296 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would represent
33 14.9% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.
34

35 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
36 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
37 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
38 5 new teachers, 1 physician, and 3 public safety employees would be required in the ROI.
39 These increases would represent less than 0.7% of total ROI employment expected in these
40 occupations.
41

42
43 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct
44 and indirect impacts) of a build-out using dish engine technologies would be 360 jobs
45 (Table 11.7.19.2-3). Such a solar facility would also produce \$11.7 million in income and
46 less than \$0.1 million in direct sales taxes. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar

TABLE 11.7.19.2-3 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Millers SEZ with Dish Engine Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	532	294
Total	741	360
Income ^b		
Total	45.1	11.7
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	<0.1	<0.1
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA	1.1
Capacity fee ^d	NA	9.8
In-migrants (no.)	592	187
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	296	168
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	5	2
Physicians (no.)	1	0
Public safety (no.)	3	1

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 667 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 1,492 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect vacant owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$6,570 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), assuming a solar facility with no storage capability, and full build-out of the site. Projects with three or more hours of storage would generate higher payments, based on a fee of \$7,884 per MW.

1 Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), acreage-related fees would be \$1.1 million, and
2 solar generating capacity fees would total at least \$9.8 million.

3
4 Based on the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational
5 categories, operation of a dish engine solar facility means that some in-migration of workers and
6 their families from outside the ROI would be required, with 187 persons in-migrating into the
7 ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small
8 number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and
9 mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant
10 owner-occupied housing units would not be expected to be large, with 168 owner-occupied units
11 expected to be required in the ROI.

12
13 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
14 community service employment (education, health, and public safety). An increase in such
15 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly,
16 2 new teachers and 1 public safety employee would be required in the ROI.

17 18 19 **Photovoltaic**

20
21
22 **Construction.** Total construction employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
23 indirect impacts) from the use of PV technologies would be up to 346 jobs (Table 11.7.19.2-4).
24 Construction activities would constitute 1.1% of total ROI employment. Such a solar
25 development would also produce \$21.0 million in income and less than \$0.1 million in direct
26 sales taxes.

27
28 Based on the scale of construction activities and the likelihood of local worker
29 availability in the required occupational categories, construction of a solar facility would mean
30 that some in-migration of workers and their families from outside the ROI would be required,
31 with 276 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although in-migration may potentially affect local
32 housing markets, the relatively small number of in-migrants and the availability of temporary
33 accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home parks) mean that the impact of solar facility
34 construction on the number of vacant rental housing units would not be expected to be large,
35 with 138 rental units expected to be occupied in the ROI. This occupancy rate would
36 represent 6.9% of the vacant rental units expected to be available in the ROI.

37
38 In addition to the potential impact on housing markets, in-migration would affect
39 community service (education, health, and public safety) employment. An increase in such
40 employment would be required to meet existing levels of service in the ROI. Accordingly, 3 new
41 teachers and 1 public safety employee would be required in the ROI. This increase
42 would represent less than 0.3% of total ROI employment expected in this occupation.

TABLE 11.7.19.2-4 ROI Socioeconomic Impacts Assuming Full Build-out of the Proposed Millers SEZ with PV Facilities^a

Parameter	Maximum Annual Construction Impacts	Operations Impacts
Employment (no.)		
Direct	248	29
Total	346	36
Income ^b		
Total	21.0	1.2
Direct state taxes ^b		
Sales	<0.1	<0.1
BLM payments		
Acreage-related fee	NA	1.1
Capacity fee ^d	NA	7.8
In-migrants (no.)	276	19
Vacant housing ^c (no.)	138	17
Local community service employment		
Teachers (no.)	3	0
Physicians (no.)	0	0
Public safety (no.)	1	0

^a Construction impacts are based on the development at the site in a single year; it was assumed that several facilities with a combined capacity of up to 667 MW (corresponding to 6,000 acres [24 km²] of land disturbance) could be built. Operations impacts were based on full build-out of the site, producing a total output of 1,492 MW.

^b Unless indicated otherwise, values are reported in \$ million 2008. There is currently no individual income tax in Nevada.

^c Construction activities would affect vacant rental housing; operations activities would affect owner-occupied housing.

^d The BLM annual capacity payment was based on a fee of \$5,256 per MW, established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental Policy (BLM 2010d), assuming full build-out of the site.

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2
3
4

1 **Operations.** Total operations employment impacts in the ROI (including direct and
2 indirect impacts) of a build-out using PV technologies would be 36 jobs (Table 11.7.19.2-4).
3 Such a solar facility would also produce \$1.2 million in income and less than \$0.1 million in
4 direct sales taxes. Based on fees established by the BLM in its Solar Energy Interim Rental
5 Policy (BLM 2010d), acreage-related fees would be \$1.1 million, and solar generating capacity
6 fees would total at least \$7.8 million.

7
8 Given the likelihood of local worker availability in the required occupational categories,
9 operation of a solar facility would mean that some in-migration of workers and their families
10 from outside the ROI would be required, with 19 persons in-migrating into the ROI. Although
11 in-migration may potentially affect local housing markets, the relatively small number of
12 in-migrants and the availability of temporary accommodations (hotels, motels, and mobile home
13 parks) mean that the impact of solar facility operation on the number of vacant owner-occupied
14 housing units would not be expected to be large, with 17 owner-occupied units expected to be
15 required in the ROI.

16
17 No new community service employment would be required to meet existing levels of
18 service in the ROI.

21 **11.7.19.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

22
23 No SEZ-specific design features addressing socioeconomic impacts have been identified
24 for the proposed Millers SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features described in
25 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would reduce the
26 potential for socioeconomic impacts during all project phases.

1 **11.7.20 Environmental Justice**

2
3
4 **11.7.20.1 Affected Environment**

5
6 Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority
7 Populations and Low-Income Populations,” formally requires federal agencies to incorporate
8 environmental justice as part of their missions (*Federal Register*, Volume 59, page 7629,
9 Feb. 11, 1994). Specifically, it directs them to address, as appropriate, any disproportionately
10 high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their actions, programs, or policies on
11 minority and low-income populations.
12

13 The analysis of the impacts of solar energy projects on environmental justice issues
14 follows guidelines described in the CEQ’s *Environmental Justice Guidance under the National*
15 *Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997). The analysis method has three parts: (1) a description
16 of the geographic distribution of low-income and minority populations in the affected area is
17 undertaken; (2) an assessment is conducted to determine whether construction and operation
18 would produce impacts that are high and adverse; and (3) if impacts are high and adverse, a
19 determination is made as to whether these impacts disproportionately affect minority and
20 low-income populations.
21

22 Construction and operation of solar energy projects in the proposed Millers SEZ could
23 affect environmental justice if any adverse health and environmental impacts resulting from
24 either phase of development are significantly high and if these impacts disproportionately affect
25 minority and low-income populations. If the analysis determines that health and environmental
26 impacts are not significant, there can be no disproportionate impacts on minority and low-income
27 populations. In the event impacts are significant, disproportionality would be determined by
28 comparing the proximity of any high and adverse impacts with the location of low-income and
29 minority populations.
30

31 The analysis of environmental justice issues associated with the development of solar
32 facilities considered impacts within the SEZ and an associated 50-mi (80-km) radius around the
33 boundary of the SEZ. A description of the geographic distribution of minority and low-income
34 groups in the affected area was based on demographic data from the 2000 Census (U.S. Bureau
35 of the Census 2009j,k). The following definitions were used to define minority and low-income
36 population groups:
37

- 38 • **Minority.** Persons who identify themselves as belonging to any of the
39 following racial groups: (1) Hispanic, (2) Black (not of Hispanic origin) or
40 African American, (3) American Indian or Alaska Native, (4) Asian, or
41 (5) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.
42

43 Beginning with the 2000 Census, where appropriate, the census form allows
44 individuals to designate multiple population group categories to reflect their
45 ethnic or racial origin. In addition, persons who classify themselves as being
46 of multiple racial origin may choose up to six racial groups as the basis of

1 their racial origins. The term minority includes all persons, including those
2 classifying themselves in multiple racial categories, except those who classify
3 themselves as not of Hispanic origin and as White or “Other Race”
4 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009j).

5
6 The CEQ guidance proposed that minority populations should be identified
7 where either (1) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50% or
8 (2) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully
9 greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or
10 other appropriate unit of geographic analysis.

11
12 This PEIS applies both criteria in using the Census data for census block
13 groups, wherein consideration is given to the minority population that is both
14 greater than 50% and 20 percentage points higher than in the state (the
15 reference geographic unit).

- 16
17 • **Low-Income.** Individuals who fall below the poverty line. The poverty line
18 takes into account family size and age of individuals in the family. In 1999,
19 for example, the poverty line for a family of five with three children below
20 the age of 18 was \$19,882. For any given family below the poverty line, all
21 family members are considered as being below the poverty line for the
22 purposes of analysis (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009k).

23
24 The data in Table 11.7.20.1-1 show the minority and low-income composition of the
25 total population located in the proposed SEZ based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines.
26 Individuals identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino are included in the table as a separate
27 entry. However, because Hispanics can be of any race, this number also includes individuals
28 identifying themselves as being part of one or more of the population groups listed in the table.

29
30 Minority and low-income individuals are located in the 50-mi (80-km) area around the
31 boundary of the SEZ. Within the 50-mi (80-km) radius in California, 18.2% of the population is
32 classified as minority, while 9.3% is classified as low-income. However, the number of minority
33 individuals does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area, and the number of minority
34 individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more; thus, in
35 aggregate, there is no minority population in the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ
36 guidelines. The number of low-income individuals does not exceed the state average by
37 20 percentage points or more and does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus,
38 in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the SEZ area.

39
40 In the Nevada portion of the 50-mi (80-km) radius, 16.2% of the population is classified
41 as minority, while 11.6% is classified as low-income. The number of minority individuals does
42 not exceed 50% of the total population in the area and the number of minority individuals does
43 not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or more; thus, in aggregate, there is no
44 minority population in the SEZ area based on 2000 Census data and CEQ guidelines. The
45 number of low-income individuals does not exceed the state average by 20 percentage points or

TABLE 11.7.20.1-1 Minority and Low-Income Populations within the 50-mi (80-km) Radius Surrounding the Proposed Millers SEZ

Parameter	California	Nevada
Total population	3,162	7,713
White, non-Hispanic	2,586	6,464
Hispanic or Latino	348	535
Non-Hispanic or Latino minorities	228	714
One race	170	460
Black or African American	3	66
American Indian or Alaskan Native	144	337
Asian	13	24
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	5	12
Some other race	5	21
Two or more races	58	254
Total minority	576	1,249
Low-income	293	893
Percentage minority	18.2	16.2
State percentage minority	53.3	34.8
Percentage low-income	9.3	11.6
State percentage low-income	14.2	10.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009j,k).

more and does not exceed 50% of the total population in the area; thus, in aggregate, there are no low-income populations in the SEZ area.

11.7.20.2 Impacts

Environmental justice concerns common to all utility-scale solar energy facilities are described in detail in Section 5.18. These impacts will be minimized through the implementation of the programmatic design features described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, which address the underlying environmental impacts contributing to the concerns. The potentially relevant environmental impacts associated with solar facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ include noise and dust during the construction; noise and electromagnetic field (EMF) effects associated with operations; visual impacts of solar generation and auxiliary facilities, including transmission lines; access to land used for economic, cultural, or religious purposes; and effects on property values as areas of concern that might potentially affect minority and low-income populations.

1 Potential impacts on low-income and minority populations could be incurred as a result
2 of the construction and operation of solar facilities involving each of the four technologies.
3 Impacts are likely to be small, however, and there are no minority populations defined by CEQ
4 guidelines (Section 11.7.20.1) within the 50-mi (80-km) radius around the boundary of the SEZ;
5 this means that any adverse impacts of solar projects could not disproportionately affect minority
6 populations. Because there are no low-income populations within the 50-mi (80-km) radius,
7 there could be no impacts on low-income populations.
8

9 10 **11.7.20.3 SEZ-Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**

11
12 No SEZ-specific design features addressing environmental justice impacts have been
13 identified for the proposed Millers SEZ. Implementing the programmatic design features
14 described in Appendix A, Section A.2.2, as required under BLM's Solar Energy Program, would
15 reduce the potential for environmental justice impacts during all project phases.
16
17
18

1 **11.7.21 Transportation**
2

3 The proposed Millers SEZ is accessible by road. One U.S. highway serves the immediate
4 area. The nearest railroad access is approximately 90 mi (145 km) away. Five small airports
5 serve the area within a drive of approximately 90 mi (145 km). General transportation
6 considerations and impacts are discussed in Sections 3.4 and 5.19, respectively.
7

8
9 **11.7.21.1 Affected Environment**
10

11 U.S. 95/U.S. 6 runs east–west along the southern border of the Millers SEZ, as shown in
12 Figure 11.7.21.1-1. The small town of Tonopah is approximately 15 mi (24 km) to the east of the
13 SEZ along U.S. 95. To the southeast of the SEZ, U.S. 95 intersects Interstate 15 (I-15) in the
14 center of the Las Vegas metropolitan area, about 230 mi (370 km) away. The town of Fernley
15 to the northwest, at about the closest approach of I-80 to the SEZ, is approximately a 185-mi
16 (298-km) drive. From the east, U.S. 6 merges with U.S. 95 at Tonopah before they pass along
17 the southern edge of the SEZ. Approximately 20 mi (32 km) to the west of the SEZ, U.S. 95
18 and U.S. 6 again become separate highways. Several local unimproved dirt roads cross the SEZ
19 as shown in Figure 11.7.21.1-1. Data identifying open OHV routes within the proposed SEZ
20 were not available. As listed in Table 11.7.21.1-1, U.S. 95 carries an average traffic volume of
21 about 2,000 vehicles per day in the vicinity of the Millers SEZ (NV DOT 2010).
22

23 The UP Railroad serves the region. A spur from the main line that crosses northern
24 Nevada ends at Thorne (UP Railroad 2009), 90 mi (145 km) northwest of the SEZ along U.S. 95,
25 immediately north of Hawthorne.
26

27 The nearest public airport is the Tonopah Airport, a small county airport about a 23-mi
28 (37-km) drive to the east of the SEZ on U.S. 6. The airport has two asphalt runways in good
29 condition, as listed in Table 11.7.21.1-2. Three small airports with single dirt runways managed
30 by the BLM—Dyer, Lida Junction, and Mina—are within a 64-mi (103-km) drive of the Millers
31 SEZ. Hawthorne Industrial Airport, in Hawthorne, has one asphalt and one dirt runway. None of
32 the airports has scheduled commercial passenger service or regular freight service.
33

34 Nellis Air Force Base, available only to military aircraft, lies on the northeastern edge of
35 the Las Vegas metropolitan area. Nellis Air Force Base is one of the largest fighter bases in the
36 world and is involved in conducting advanced fighter training. Operations occur over the NTTR,
37 which offers 4,700 mi² (12,173 km²) of restricted land (U.S. Air Force 2010). The northwestern
38 corner of the NTTR is approximately 26 mi (42 km) to the southeast of the Millers SEZ.
39

40
41 **11.7.21.2 Impacts**
42

43 As discussed in Section 5.19, the primary transportation impacts are anticipated to be
44 from commuting worker traffic. Single projects could involve up to 1,000 workers each day,
45 with an additional 2,000 vehicle trips per day (maximum) or possibly 4,000 vehicle trips per day
46 if two larger projects were to be developed at the same time. The volume of traffic on U.S. 95

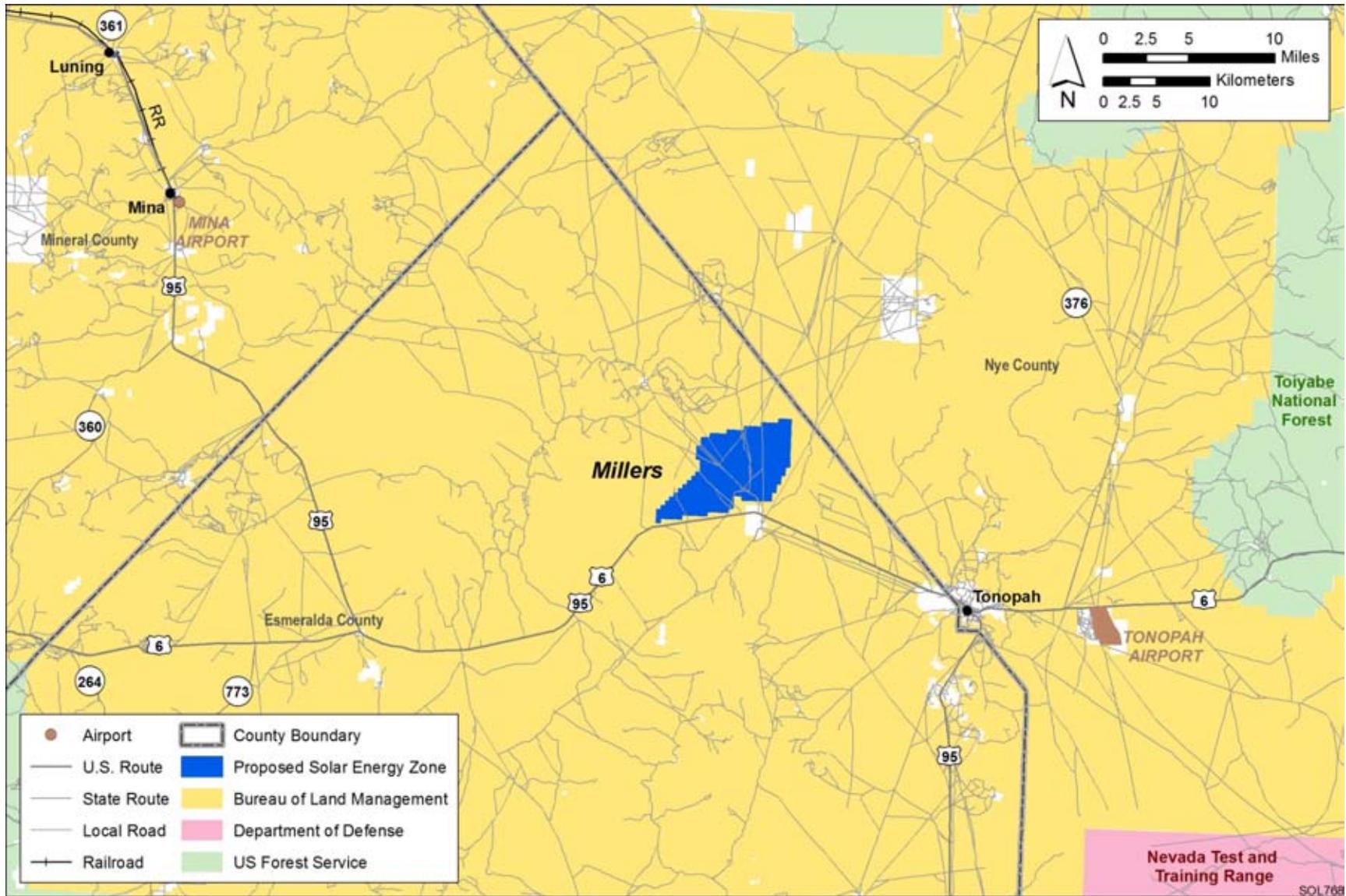


FIGURE 11.7.21.1-1 Local Transportation Network Serving the Proposed Millers SEZ

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2

TABLE 11.7.21-1 AADT on Major Roads near the Proposed Millers SEZ for 2009

Road	General Direction	Location	AADT (Vehicles)
U.S. 6	East–West	<i>East of merge with U.S. 95</i>	
		East of State Route 376	580
		East of Tonopah (west of State Route 376)	1,100
U.S. 95	Northwest–Southeast	<i>West of merge with U.S. 95</i>	
		West of Coaldale junction	280
		North of Coaldale junction	1,700
State Route 265	North–South	West of junction with State Route 265 (west of SEZ)	2,000
		North of Tonopah, 13 mi (21 km) past the Nye/ Esmeralda County line (east of the SEZ)	1,900
		South of Tonopah	2,100
		South of Goldfield	2,000
		North of junction with State Route 266	1,900
		South of junction with State Route 266	2,000
		South of junction with U.S. 95	110
State Route 376	North–South	North of U.S. 6	490
State Route 773	Southwest–Northeast	South of junction with U.S. 6	70

Source: NV DOT (2010).

1
2
3 along the southern edge of the Millers SEZ would represent an increase in traffic of about 100 or
4 200% for one or two projects, respectively, should all traffic access the SEZ in that area.

5
6 Because higher traffic volumes would be experienced during shift changes, traffic on
7 U.S. 95 would experience slowdowns during these time periods in the vicinity of access roads
8 for projects in the SEZ. Local road improvements would be necessary on any portion of U.S. 95
9 that might be developed so as not to overwhelm the local access roads near any site access
10 point(s).

11
12 Solar development within the SEZ would affect public access along OHV routes
13 designated open and available for public use. If there are any designated as open within the
14 proposed SEZ, open routes crossing areas issued ROWs for solar facilities would be re-
15 designated as closed (see Section 5.5.1 for more details on how routes coinciding with proposed
16 solar facilities would be treated).

17

1 **11.7.21.3 Specific Design Features and Design Feature Effectiveness**
2

3 No SEZ-specific design features have been identified related to impacts on transportation
4 systems around the proposed Millers SEZ. The programmatic design features described in
5 Appendix A, Section A.2.2, including local road improvements, multiple site access locations,
6 staggered work schedules, and ride-sharing, would all provide some relief to traffic congestion
7 on local roads leading to the site. Depending on the location of solar facilities within the SEZ,
8 more specific access locations and local road improvements could be implemented.
9
10

TABLE 11.7.21-2 Airports Open to the Public in the Vicinity of the Proposed Millers SEZ

Airport	Location	Owner/Operator	Runway 1 ^a			Runway 2 ^a		
			Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition	Length (ft [m])	Type	Condition
Dyer	Southeast of Dyer, 64 mi (103 km) from the SEZ via U.S. 95, U.S. 6, and State Route 264	BLM	2,870 (875)	Dirt	Fair	NA ^b	NA	NA
Hawthorne Industrial	89 mi (143 km) northwest of the SEZ on U.S. 95 in Hawthorne	Mineral County	3,500 (1,067)	Dirt	Good	6,000 (1,829)	Asphalt	Good
Lida Junction	South-southeast of the SEZ on U.S. 95 at the junction with State Route 266, 58 mi (93 km) away	BLM	6,100 (1,859)	Dirt	Good	NA	NA	NA-
Mina	54 mi (87 km) northwest of the SEZ in Mina on U.S. 95	BLM	4,600 (1,402)	Dirt	Good	NA	NA	NA
Tonopah	East of Tonopah, 23 mi (37 km) east of the SEZ on U.S. 6	Nye County	6,196 (1,889)	Asphalt	Good	7,161 (2,183)	Asphalt	Good

^a Source: FAA (2009).

^b NA = not applicable.

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1 **11.7.22 Cumulative Impacts**
2

3 The analysis presented in this section addresses the potential cumulative impacts in the
4 vicinity of the proposed Millers SEZ in Esmeralda County, Nevada. The CEQ guidelines for
5 implementing NEPA define cumulative impacts as environmental impacts resulting from the
6 incremental impacts of an action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable
7 future actions (40 CFR 1508.7). The impacts of other actions are considered without regard to
8 the agency (federal or nonfederal), organization, or person that undertakes them. The time frame
9 of this cumulative impacts assessment could appropriately include activities that would occur up
10 to 20 years in the future (the general time frame for PEIS analyses), but little or no information is
11 available for projects that could occur further than 5 to 10 years in the future.
12

13 The Millers SEZ is located 15 mi (24 km) northwest of Tonopah, Nevada. The land
14 surrounding the Millers SEZ is undeveloped with few permanent residents living in the area. The
15 nearest population center is the small community of Tonopah, population approximately 1,500.
16 The NTTR is 30 mi (48 km) northeast of the SEZ. Several WAs in California are within 50 mi
17 (80 km) of the SEZ. The BLM administers approximately 68% of the land in the Southern
18 Nevada District, which contains the Millers SEZ, and about 56% of the land in Nye County.
19

20 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
21 resources near the Millers SEZ is identified in Section 11.7.22.1. An overview of ongoing and
22 reasonably foreseeable future actions is presented in Section 11.7.22.2. General trends in
23 population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate change are discussed in
24 Section 11.7.22.3. Cumulative impacts for each resource area are discussed in Section 11.7.22.4.
25
26

27 **11.7.22.1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis**
28

29 The geographic extent of the cumulative impacts analysis for potentially affected
30 resources evaluated near the Millers SEZ is provided in Table 11.7.22.1-1. These geographic
31 areas define the boundaries encompassing potentially affected resources. Their extent may vary
32 based on the nature of the resource being evaluated and the distance at which an impact may
33 occur (thus, for example, the evaluation of air quality may have a greater regional extent of
34 impact than visual resources). The BLM, USFS, and DoD administer most of the land around
35 the SEZ; there are also some Tribal lands nearby at the Yomba Reservation 48 mi (77 km) to
36 the north of the SEZ. The BLM administers approximately 76.6% of the lands within a 50-mi
37 (80-km) radius of the SEZ.
38
39

40 **11.7.22.2 Overview of Ongoing and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions**
41

42 The future actions described below are those that are “reasonably foreseeable”; that is,
43 they have already occurred, are ongoing, are funded for future implementation, or are included
44 in firm near-term plans. Types of proposals with firm near-term plans are as follows:
45

- 46 • Proposals for which NEPA documents are in preparation or finalized;

TABLE 11.7.22.1-1 Geographic Extent of the Cumulative Impacts Analysis by Resource Area: Proposed Millers SEZ

Resource Area	Geographic Extent
Land Use	Esmeralda County
Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Esmeralda County
Rangeland Resources	
Grazing	Esmeralda County
Wild Horses and Burros	A 50 mi (80 km) radius from the center of the Millers SEZ
Recreation	Esmeralda County
Military and Civilian Aviation	Esmeralda and Nye Counties
Soil Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Millers SEZ
Minerals	Esmeralda County
Water Resources	
Surface Water	Ione Wash, Peavine Creek, unnamed wash, Slime Wash, unnamed dry lake
Groundwater	Tonopah Flat Groundwater Basin
Air Quality and Climate	A 31-mi (50-m) radius from the center of the Millers SEZ
Vegetation, Wildlife and Aquatic Biota, Special Status Species	A 50-mi (80-km) radius from the center of the Millers SEZ, including portions of Esmeralda, Nye, and Mineral Counties in Nevada, and Inyo County in California
Visual Resources	Viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Millers SEZ
Acoustic Environment (noise)	Areas adjacent to the Millers SEZ
Paleontological Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Millers SEZ
Cultural Resources	Areas within and adjacent to the Millers SEZ for archaeological sites; viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Millers SEZ for other properties, such as traditional cultural properties.
Native American Concerns	Areas within and adjacent to the Millers SEZ in the Big Smoky Valley viewshed within a 25-mi (40-km) radius of the Millers SEZ
Socioeconomics	Esmeralda and Nye Counties
Environmental Justice	Esmeralda and Nye Counties
Transportation	U.S. 95, U.S. 6

- 1 • Proposals in a detailed design phase;
- 2
- 3 • Proposals listed in formal NOIs published in the *Federal Register* or state
- 4 publications;
- 5
- 6 • Proposals for which enabling legislations has been passed; and
- 7
- 8 • Proposals that have been submitted to federal, state, or county regulators to
- 9 begin a permitting process.

10
11 Projects in the bidding or research phase or that have been put on hold were not included in the
12 cumulative impact analysis.

13
14 The ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions described below are grouped
15 into two categories: (1) actions that relate to energy production and distribution, including
16 potential solar energy projects under the proposed action (Section 11.7.22.2.1); and (2) other
17 ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions, including those related to mining and mineral
18 processing, grazing management, transportation, recreation, water management, and
19 conservation (Section 11.7.22.2.2). Together, these actions have the potential to affect human
20 and environmental receptors within the geographic range of potential impacts over the next
21 20 years.

22 23 24 ***11.7.22.2.1 Energy Production and Distribution***

25
26 On February 16, 2007, Governor Gibbons signed an Executive Order to encourage the
27 development of renewable energy resources in Nevada (Gibbons 2007a). The Executive Order
28 requires all relevant state agencies to review their permitting processes to ensure the timely and
29 expeditious permitting of renewable energy projects. On May 9, 2007, and June 12, 2008, the
30 Governor signed Executive Orders creating the Nevada Renewable Energy Transmission
31 Access Advisory Committee Phase I and Phase II, which will propose recommendations for
32 improved access to the grid system for renewable energy industries (Gibbons 2007b, 2008). In
33 May 28, 2009, the Nevada Legislature passed a bill modifying the Renewable Energy Portfolio
34 Standards (Nevada Senate 2009). The bill requires that 25% of the electricity sold to be
35 produced by renewable energy sources by 2025.

36
37 Reasonably foreseeable future actions related to energy production and distribution are
38 identified in Table 11.7.22.2-1 and described in the following sections.
39

TABLE 11.7.22.2-1 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions Related to Energy Development and Distribution near the Proposed Millers SEZ^a

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
<i>Fast-Track Solar Energy Projects on BLM-Administered Land</i>			
Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project (NVN-86292); 180 MW, solar tower, 1,600 acres	NOI, Nov. 24, 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, vegetation, water, soils, cultural, visual, aviation, and land use	3 mi (5 km) east of the SEZ
<i>Renewable Energy Development</i>			
Darrough Hot Springs Geothermal Leasing Project; 27 MW, 160 acres	ROD issued Aug. 18, 2009	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	45 mi (72 km) north of the SEZ
<i>Transmission and Distribution Systems</i>			
None			

^a Projects in later stages of agency environmental review and project development.

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Renewable Energy Development

Renewable energy ROW applications are considered as either foreseeable or potential projects. Fast-track applications are considered to represent foreseeable projects, since the environmental review and public participation process is completed or under way and the applications could be approved by December 2010. There is one fast-track solar project and one other foreseeable geothermal project within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed Millers SEZ, the Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project, and Darrough Hot Springs Geothermal Leasing Project, respectively. Regular-track applications are considered potential future projects, but not necessarily foreseeable projects, since not all applications would be expected to result in completed projects. These proposals are considered together as a general level of interest in development of renewable energy in the region. Identified foreseeable and potential (pending) renewable energy projects are discussed in the following sections.

Foreseeable Renewable Energy Projects

Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project (NVN 86292). This proposed fast-track project would be a CSP/tower facility with an output of 180 MW. Tonopah Solar Energy proposed to construct and operate the facility. The project would be located about 3 mi (5 km) east of the SEZ on 1,600 acres (6.5 km²) of the 7,680-acre (31-km²) site on BLM-administered land 13 mi

1 (21 km) northwest of Tonopah, Nevada. The facility would include a circular array of
2 17,350 heliostats that reflect the sunlight onto a central 633-ft (193-m) tall receiver tower. A
3 liquid salt circulating through the tubes of the receiver is heated to more than 1,000°F (538°C)
4 and routed to a thermal storage tank. When electricity is to be generated, the hot salt passes
5 through a heat exchanger to produce steam for use in a steam turbine/generator. A hybrid
6 cooling system would consist of an air-cooled condenser augmented with a wet-cooling system.
7 The facility would also include associated equipment, an 8-mi (13-km) transmission line, an
8 operation and maintenance building, and access roads (Tonopah Solar Energy 2009;
9 BLM 2009a).

10
11
12 ***Darrough Hot Springs Geothermal Leasing Project.*** Great America Energy is proposing
13 to construct and operate a 27-MW geothermal plant on 160 acres (0.65 km²) of Humboldt-
14 Toiyabe National Forest land, 45 mi (72 km) north of the SEZ. The physical facilities comprise
15 production and injection wells, a gathering and injection system, and a power generation plant
16 on site, with a transmission line connecting it to the grid (Great American Energy 2010).

17
18
19 ***Pending Solar, Wind, and Geothermal ROW Applications on BLM-Administered***
20 ***Lands.*** Applications for ROWs that have been submitted to the BLM include one fast-track solar
21 application, one pending solar project, one pending wind site testing application, four authorized
22 wind site testing projects, and two authorized geothermal projects that would be located within
23 50 mi (80 km) of the Millers SEZ. Table 11.7.22.2-2 lists these applications and Figure
24 11.7.22.2-1 shows their locations.

25
26 There is a pending solar project that would be on private land adjacent to the Millers
27 SEZ. In 2010, Altella Energy Corporation proposed to Esmeralda County the development of a
28 100-MW solar energy facility on private land. The proposed site is located within one mile south
29 of the Millers SEZ, near Highways 6 and 95. The site is known as the Miller's Well site. The
30 project's estimated cost is \$500 million (Esmeralda County 2010a,b).

31
32 The likelihood of any of the regular-track application projects actually being developed is
33 uncertain, but it is generally assumed to be less than that for fast-track applications. The number
34 and types of applications listed in Table 11.7.22.2-2 are an indication of the level of interest in
35 the development of renewable energy in the region. Some number of these applications would be
36 expected to result in actual projects. Thus, the cumulative impacts of these potential projects are
37 analyzed in their aggregate effects.

38
39 Wind testing would involve some relatively minor activities that could have some
40 environmental effects, mainly the erection of meteorological towers and monitoring of wind
41 conditions. These towers may or may not employ guy wires and may be 200 ft (60 m) high.
42

TABLE 11.7.22.2-2 Pending Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on BLM-Administered Land within 50 mi (80 km) of the Proposed Millers SEZ^{a,b}

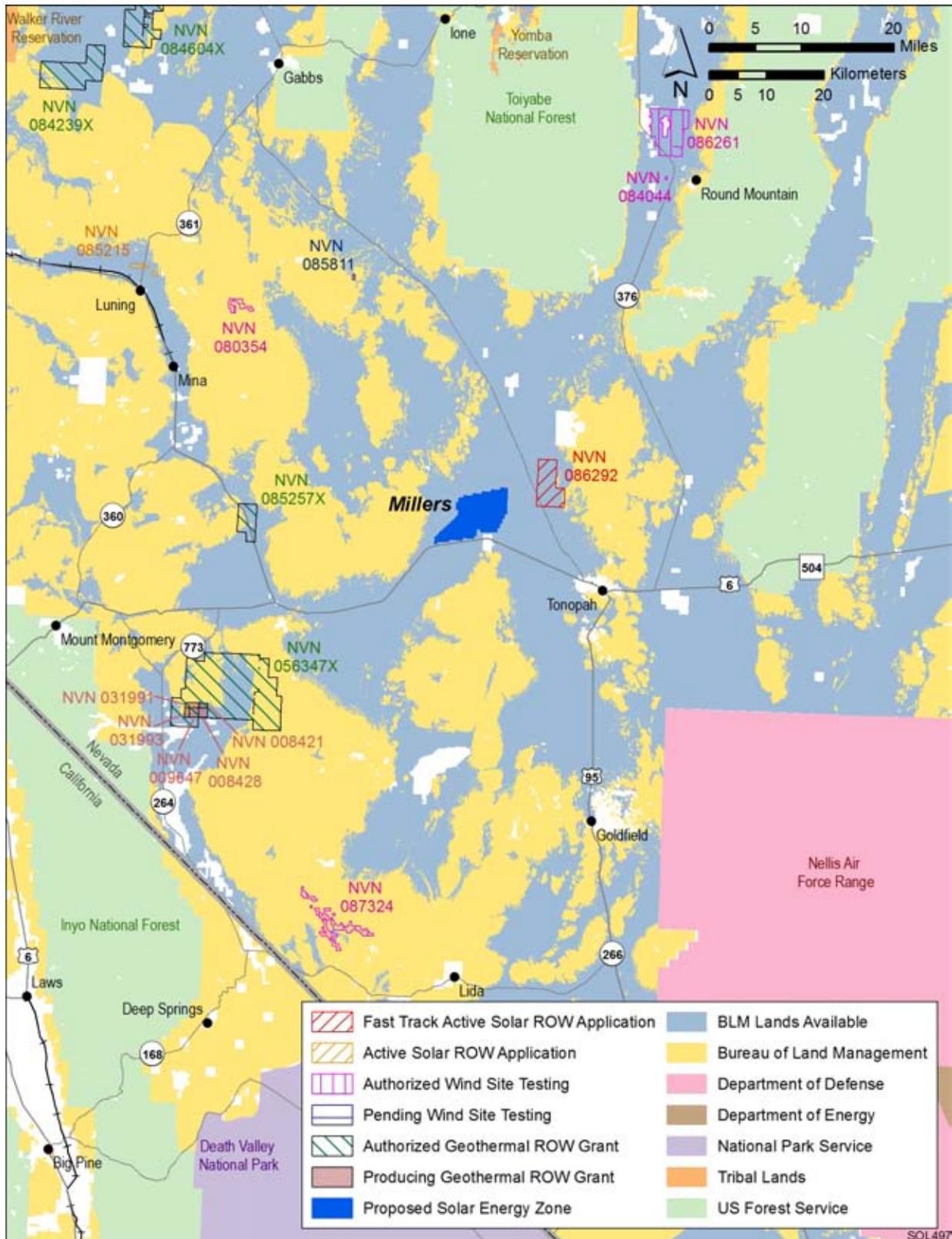
Serial Number	Applicant	Application Received	Size (acres) ^c	MW	Technology	Status	Field Office
Solar Applications							
NVN 85215	Luning Solar Energy	May 20, 2008	575	30	PV	Pending	Stillwater
Wind Applications							
NVN 85811	Wasatch Wind	June 4, 2008	6,023	–	Wind	Pending wind site testing	Stillwater
NVN 80354	Windqwest, LLC	June 10, 2005	1,248	–	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Stillwater
NVN 84404	– ^d	–	–	–	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Tonopah
NVN 86261	Greenwing Energy Management	Oct. 24, 2008	15,680	–	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Tonopah
NVN 87324	Pacific Wind Development	March 23, 2009	4,280	–	Wind	Authorized wind site testing	Tonopah
Geothermal Leases							
NVN 56347X	Fish Lake Power	–	47,769	–	Geothermal	Authorized	Tonopah
NVN 85257X	Ormat Technologies	–	5,130	–	Geothermal	Authorized	Tonopah

^a Source: BLM (2009b).

^b Information for pending solar and pending wind (BLM and USFS 2010b) energy projects downloaded from GeoCommunicator.

^c To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

^d A dash indicates data not available.



1

2 **FIGURE 11.7.22.2-1 Locations of Renewable Energy Project ROW Applications on Public Land**
 3 **within a 50-mi (80-km) Radius of the Proposed Millers SEZ**

1 **11.7.22.2.2 Other Actions**

2
3 Other major ongoing and foreseeable actions identified within 50 mi (80 km) of the
4 proposed Millers SEZ are listed in Table 11.7.22.2-3 and are described in the following
5 subsections. Producing geothermal leases are covered in the previous section.
6

7
8 **Round Mountain Mine Expansion.** The Round Mountain Gold Corporation proposes to
9 expand its existing Round Mountain Mine, located east and southeast of the town of Carver and
10 45 mi (72 km) north of the SEZ, including expansion of the Round Mountain open pit, North
11 Waste Rock Dump, mill facility, tailings impoundment, growth media and ore stockpiles,
12 stormwater control and diversion structures, dewatering operations for the open pit, west and
13 south dedicated leach pads, reusable pad, and process facilities. The proposed action would
14 include the expansion and development of facilities and construction of new facilities in the Gold
15 Hill area, 1.6 mi (2.4 km) north, and would include the construction of a 1.1-mi (1.8-km) long
16
17

TABLE 11.7.22.2-3 Other Major Actions near the Proposed Millers SEZ^a

Description	Status	Resources Affected	Primary Impact Location
Round Mountain Mine Expansion	FEIS issued April 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, cultural resources	45 mi (72 km) north of the SEZ
Chemetall Foote Lithium Carbonate Facility Expansion	EA issued Sept 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife, air quality	30 mi (48 km) south of the SEZ
Mineral Ridge Project	Restarting in 2011	Terrestrial habitats, groundwater, air quality	28 mi (45 km) south of the SEZ
Caliente Rail Realignment	FEIS June 2008	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife cultural resources	24 mi (38 km) southeast of the SEZ
Montezuma Peak Herd Management Area (HMA) and Paymaster HMA Wild Horse and Burro Gather	EA issued June 2010	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	32 mi (51 km) and 8 mi (13 km) southeast of the SEZ
Five Producing Geothermal Leases: NVN 8421, 8428, 9647, 31991, and 31993	Operating	Terrestrial habitats, wildlife	32 mi (51 km) southwest of the SEZ

^a Projects in latter stages of agency environmental review and project development.

1 Transportation/Utility Corridor between the Round Mountain and Gold Hill areas, which would
2 include a haul road, electric transmission line, water pipeline, and communication lines. The total
3 disturbed area would be 4,698 acres (19.0 km²) The existing total employment level of
4 approximately 730 workers would grow to a maximum of 1,140 during construction and would
5 range between 760 and 940 through completion of surface mining in 2016 (BLM 2010a).
6
7

8 ***Chemetall Foote Lithium Carbonate Facility Expansion.*** The DOE is proposing to
9 upgrade an existing brine field production system, brine evaporation pond system, and lithium
10 carbonate plant at the Chemetall Foote facility adjacent to the unincorporated town of Silver
11 Peak, Nevada and 30 mi (48 km) south of the SEZ. The site is about 15,000 acres (61 km²),
12 mostly occupied by large evaporation ponds. The plant and administrative offices occupy
13 approximately 20 acres (0.08 km²). Existing lithium brine ponds would be expanded through
14 recovering old ponds and rebuilding the dikes. Construction of new brine production wells would
15 require soil placement for drill pads (DOE 2010).
16
17

18 ***Mineral Ridge Project.*** Mineral Ridge, a formerly producing gold and silver mine, has
19 both underground workings and open pits, with a six-acre (0.024-km²) deep leach operation and
20 a high volume crusher plant. It is currently not operational but engineering work is being
21 performed for future operations. It is anticipated that active mining will commence in 2011. The
22 site is 3 mi (3 km) northwest of the unincorporated town of Silver Peak and approximately 28 mi
23 (45 km) south of the SEZ (Top Stock Picks 2010).
24
25

26 ***Caliente Rail Alignment.*** The DOE proposes to construct and operate a railroad for the
27 shipment of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste to the geologic repository at
28 Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The rail line would begin near Caliente, Nevada and extend north,
29 then turn in a westerly direction, passing about 24 mi (38 km) southeast of the SEZ, to a location
30 near the northwest corner of the Nevada Test and Training Range (labeled Nellis Air Force
31 Range in Figure 11.7.22.2-1), and then continue south-southwest to Yucca Mountain. The rail
32 line would range in length from approximately 328 mi (528 km) to 336 mi (541 km), depending
33 upon the exact location of the alignment, and would be restricted to DOE shipments. Over a
34 50-year period, 9,500 casks containing spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste, and
35 approximately 29,000 rail cars of other materials, including construction materials, would be
36 shipped to the repository. An average of 17 one-way trains per week would travel along the rail
37 line. Construction of support facilities - interchange yard, staging yard, maintenance-of-way
38 facility, rail equipment maintenance yard, cask maintenance facility, and Nevada Rail Control
39 Center and National Transportation Operation Center would also be required. Construction
40 would take 4 to 10 years and cost \$2.57 billion. Construction activities would occur inside a
41 1000 ft (300 m) wide ROW for a total footprint of 40,600 acres (164 km²) (DOE 2008).
42
43

44 ***Montezuma Peak HMA and Paymaster HMA Wild Horse and Burro Gather.*** The BLM
45 Tonopah Field Office is proposing to conduct a wild horse and burro gather to remove
46 approximately 182 wild horses and burros residing primarily outside the boundaries of the

1 HMAs. The Montezuma Peak HMA is located west of the town of Goldfield, 32 mi (51 km)
2 southeast of the SEZ and encompasses approximately 77,931 acres (315 km²). The Paymaster
3 HMA is 7 mi (11 km) west of Tonopah, 8 mi (13 km) southeast of the SEZ and encompasses
4 100,500 acres (425 km²) (BLM 2010b).
5
6

7 **Existing Geothermal Leases.** There is a small, contiguous cluster of five producing
8 geothermal leases located about 32 mi (51 km) southwest of the proposed SEZ, shown in
9 Figure 11.7.22.2-1.
10

11 **Grazing**

12 The Monte Cristo grazing allotment is in the immediate vicinity of the SEZ.
13

14 **Mining**

15 The existing Round Mountain gold mine and proposed expansion is discussed above in
16 this section.
17

18 **11.7.22.3 General Trends**

19 General trends of population growth, energy demand, water availability, and climate
20 change for the proposed Millers SEZ are presented in this section. Table 11.7.22.2-4 lists the
21 relevant impacting factors for the trends.
22

23 **11.7.22.3.1 Population Growth**

24 Over the period 2000 to 2008, the population grew annually by 3.9% in Nye County but
25 the population fell by -4.6% annually in Esmeralda County and by -1.1 in Mineral County, the
26 ROI for the Millers SEZ (see Section 11.7.19.1.5). The population of the ROI in 2008 was
27 49,487, having grown at an average annual rate of 3.2% since 2000. The annual growth rate for
28 the state of Nevada as a whole was 3.4%.
29

30 **11.7.22.3.2 Energy Demand**

31 The growth in energy demand is related to population growth through increases in
32 housing, commercial floorspace, transportation, manufacturing, and services. Given that
33 population growth is expected in seven-SEZ areas in Nevada between 2006 and 2016, an
34 increase in energy demand is also expected. However, the EIA projects a decline in per-capita
35 energy use through 2030, mainly because of improvements in energy efficiency and the high
36 cost of oil throughout the projection period. Primary energy consumption in the United States
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TABLE 11.7.22.2-4 General Trends Relevant to the Proposed SEZs in Nevada

General Trend	Impacting Factors
Population growth	Urbanization Increased use of roads and traffic Land use modification Employment Education and training Increased resource use (e.g., water and energy) Tax revenue
Energy demand	Increased resource use Energy development (including alternative energy sources) Energy transmission and distribution
Water availability	Drought conditions and water loss Conservation practices Changes in water distribution
Climate change	Water cycle changes Increased wildland fires Habitat changes Changes in farming production and costs

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between 2007 and 2030 is expected to grow by about 0.5% each year, with the fastest growth projected for the commercial sector (at 1.1% each year). Transportation, residential, and industrial energy consumption are expected to grow by about 0.5, 0.4, and 0.1% each year, respectively (EIA 2009).

11.7.22.3.3 Water Availability

As described in Section 11.7.9.1.3, the perennial yield of the Tonopah Flat groundwater basin is set at 6,000 ac-ft/yr (7.4 million m³/yr), and water rights in the basin are over-appropriated with a total of 19,588 ac-ft/yr (24.2 million m³/yr) being allotted for irrigation, mining, municipal, and stockwater uses (95% of allotments used for irrigation and mining [NDWR 2010a]).

The general groundwater flow pattern in the Tonopah Flat basin is from northeast to southwest along the axis of the valley. The depth to groundwater ranges from 8 to 78 ft (2 to 24 m) below the land surface within a 5-mi (8-km) radius of the proposed SEZ (USGS 2010b). In general, depth to groundwater is greater in the northern portion of the Tonopah Flat basin and is near surface levels in the vicinity of the dry lake playas in the south portion of the basin (Meinzer 1917; Rush and Schroer 1971).

1 In 2005, water withdrawals from surface waters and groundwater in Esmeralda County
2 were 46,786 million ac-ft/yr (57.7 million m³/yr), of which 9% came from surface waters and
3 91% came from groundwater. The largest water use categories for groundwater were irrigation
4 and mining at 28,235 and 14,202 ac-ft/yr (34.8 million and 17.5 million m³/yr), respectively. The
5 remaining groundwater withdrawals were used for domestic and livestock (Kenny et al. 2009). In
6 the Tonopah Flat basin, groundwater extractions totaled 260 ac-ft/yr (320,700 m³/yr) in 1968,
7 which was primarily used for irrigation purposes (Rush and Schroer 1971).
8
9

10 **11.7.22.3.4 Climate Change**

11
12 Governor Jim Gibbons' Nevada Climate Change Advisory committee (NCCAC)
13 conducted a study of climate change and its effects on Nevada (NCCAC 2008). The report
14 summarized the present scientific understanding of climate change and its potential impacts
15 on Nevada. A report on global climate change in the United States prepared by the U.S. Global
16 Research Change Program (GCRP 2009) documents current temperature and precipitation
17 conditions and historic trends. Excerpts of the conclusions from these reports indicate:
18

- 19 • Decreased precipitation, with a greater percentage of that precipitation coming
20 from rain, will result in a greater likelihood of winter and spring flooding and
21 decreased stream flow in the summer.
22
- 23 • The average temperature in the Southwest has already increased by about
24 1.5°F (0.08°C) compared to a 1960 to 1979 baseline, and by the end of the
25 century, the average annual temperature is projected to rise 4°F to 10°F (2.2 to
26 5.5°C).
27
- 28 • Warming climate and the related reduction in spring snowpack and soil
29 moisture have increased the length of the wildfire season and intensity of
30 forest fires.
31
- 32 • Later snow and less snow coverage in ski resort areas could force ski areas to
33 shut down before the season would otherwise end.
34
- 35 • Much of the Southwest has experienced drought conditions since 1999. This
36 represents the most severe drought in the last 110 years. Projections indicate
37 an increasing probability of drought in the region.
38
- 39 • As temperatures rise, landscape will be altered as species shift their ranges
40 northward and upward to cooler climates.
41
- 42 • Temperature increases, when combined with urban heat island effects for
43 major cities such as Las Vegas, present significant stress to health, electricity,
44 and water supply.
45

- 1 • Increased minimum temperatures and warmer springs extend the range and
2 lifetime of many pests that stress trees and crops, and lead to northward
3 migration of weed species.
4
5

6 **11.7.22.4 Cumulative Impacts on Resources** 7

8 This section addresses potential cumulative impacts in the proposed Millers SEZ on the
9 basis of the following assumptions: (1) because of the moderate size of the proposed SEZ
10 (10,000 to 30,000 acres [40.5 to 121 km²]), up to two projects could be constructed at a time,
11 and (2) maximum total disturbance over 20 years would be about 13,430 acres (54.4 km²)
12 (80% of the entire proposed SEZ). For purposes of analysis, it is also assumed that no more
13 than 3,000 acres (12.1 km²) would be disturbed per project annually and 250 acres (1.01 km²)
14 monthly on the basis of construction schedules planned in current applications. Since an existing
15 120-kV transmission line runs through the SEZ, no analysis of impacts has been conducted for
16 the construction of a new transmission line outside of the SEZ that might be needed to connect
17 solar facilities to the regional grid (see Section 11.7.1.2). Regarding site access, because U.S.
18 95/U.S. 6 runs from east to west along the southern border of the SEZ, no major road
19 construction activities outside of the SEZ would be needed to support solar development in the
20 SEZ.
21

22 Cumulative impacts that would result from the construction, operation, and
23 decommissioning of solar energy development projects within the proposed SEZ when added
24 to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions described in the previous
25 section in each resource area are discussed below. At this stage of development, because of the
26 uncertain nature of the future projects in terms of size, number, location within the proposed
27 SEZ, and the types of technology that would be employed, the impacts are discussed
28 qualitatively or semi-quantitatively, with ranges given as appropriate. More detailed analyses
29 of cumulative impacts would be performed in the environmental reviews for the specific
30 projects in relation to all other existing and proposed projects in the geographic areas.
31
32

33 **11.7.22.4.1 Lands and Realty** 34

35 The area covered by the proposed Millers SEZ is largely isolated and undeveloped. In
36 general, the areas surrounding the SEZ are rural in nature. Existing dirt roads from separate
37 access points on U.S. 95/U.S. 6 provide access to the southern portion of the SEZ. Numerous
38 dirt/ranch roads provide access throughout the SEZ (Section 11.7.2.1).
39

40 Development of the SEZ for utility-scale solar energy production would establish a large
41 industrial area that would exclude many existing and potential uses of the land, perhaps in
42 perpetuity. Access to such areas by both the general public and much wildlife would be
43 eliminated. Traditional uses of public lands would no longer be allowed. Utility-scale solar
44 energy development would be a new and discordant land use in the area.
45

1 As shown in Table 11.7.22.2-2 and Figure 11.7.22.2-1, there is one fast-track solar
2 application, one pending solar application, one pending wind site testing application, four
3 authorized wind site testing projects, two authorized geothermal projects, and five producing
4 geothermal lease agreements within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the proposed Millers SEZ. There
5 are currently no solar applications within the SEZ. The Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project
6 fast-track solar application lies about 3 mi (5 km) northeast of the SEZ. The mix of renewable
7 energy applications indicates modest interest in renewable energy development of all three major
8 types within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ, but only the fast-track solar application and the
9 Darrough Hot Springs geothermal project are considered firmly foreseeable projects
10 (Section 11.7.22.2.1).

11
12 The Round Mountain Mine Expansion project is the only other major foreseeable action
13 identified within this distance. The mine is located 45 mi (72 km) north of the proposed SEZ
14 (Section 11.7.22.2.2), and the expansion would have minimal impacts on land use near the SEZ.

15
16 The development of utility-scale solar projects in the proposed Millers SEZ in
17 combination with other ongoing, foreseeable, and potential actions within the geographic extent
18 of effects, nominally 50 mi (80 km), could have cumulative effects on land use in the vicinity of
19 the proposed SEZ. Ongoing and foreseeable actions on or near the SEZ could result in small
20 cumulative impacts on land use through impacts on land access, groundwater availability, and on
21 visual resources, especially if the SEZ is fully developed with solar projects.

22 23 24 ***11.7.22.4.2 Specially Designated Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics***

25
26 There are no specially designated areas within 25 mi (40 km) of the proposed Millers
27 SEZ in Nevada (Section 11.7.3.1). Thus, no potential exists for cumulative visual impacts on
28 such areas from the construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the SEZ.

29 30 31 ***11.7.22.4.3 Rangeland Resources***

32
33 The proposed Millers SEZ contains a small portion of one perennial grazing allotment
34 (Section 11.7.4.1.1). If utility-scale solar facilities were constructed on the SEZ, those areas
35 occupied by the solar projects would be excluded from grazing. The effects of other renewable
36 energy projects within the geographic extent of effects, including pending solar, wind, and
37 geothermal applications within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ that are ultimately developed, would
38 not likely result in cumulative impacts on grazing due to the small number and distance of the
39 proposed facilities from the proposed SEZ. Other foreseeable projects would likewise have
40 minimal effects on grazing. However, any closure of county roads or interconnected roads on the
41 SEZ could affect access to grazing areas outside the SEZ unless rerouted. Mitigations would
42 minimize such effects.

43
44 A number of BLM HMAs and HAs occur within the 50-mi (80-km) SEZ region for the
45 proposed Millers SEZ (Section 11.7.4.2.1), including two within the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect
46 effects. While such areas near the proposed SEZ contain wild horses, potential indirect impacts

1 from development within the SEZ would be mitigated. Since foreseeable projects within this
2 distance would have minimal effects on wild horses and burros, cumulative impacts are unlikely
3 to occur.
4

6 ***11.7.22.4.4 Recreation***

7
8 Limited outdoor recreation (e.g., backcountry driving, OHV use, and some camping and
9 hunting) occurs on or in the immediate vicinity of the SEZ. While there are no current solar
10 applications within the proposed SEZ, construction of utility-scale solar projects on the SEZ
11 would preclude recreational use of the affected lands for the duration of the projects. Road
12 closures and access restrictions within the proposed SEZ would affect access to recreation both
13 inside and outside the SEZ. OHV use in particular could be affected. Foreseeable and potential
14 actions would also affect areas of low recreational use and would have minimal effects on
15 current recreational activities. Thus, cumulative impacts on recreation within the geographic
16 extent of effects are not expected.
17

18 19 ***11.7.22.4.5 Military and Civilian Aviation***

20
21 The eastern two-thirds of the proposed SEZ is covered by MTRs with 50- and 100-ft
22 (15- and 30-m) AGL operating limits. The area is located about 30 mi (48 km) northwest of the
23 boundary of the NTTR. The closest civilian municipal aviation facility is the Tonopah Municipal
24 Airport, which is located about 20 mi (32 km) southeast of the SEZ. The military has expressed
25 serious concern over possible solar energy facilities within the SEZ and at the fast-track solar
26 energy site east of the SEZ. Nellis Air Force Base has indicated that any facilities higher than
27 50 ft (15 m) AGL may present unacceptable electromagnetic compatibility concerns for their test
28 mission (Section 11.7.6.2). Potential new solar, wind, and geothermal facilities and associated
29 new transmission lines outside the SEZ could present additional concerns for military aviation,
30 depending on the eventual location of such facilities with respect to training routes, and thus,
31 could result in cumulative impacts on military aviation. The Tonopah Airport is located at a
32 distance where there would be no effect on airport operations by facilities in the SEZ.
33

34 35 ***11.7.22.4.6 Soil Resources***

36
37 Ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, excavating, and drilling) during the
38 construction phase of a solar project, including the construction of any associated transmission
39 line connections and new roads, would contribute to soil loss due to wind erosion. Road use
40 during construction, operations, and decommissioning of the solar facilities would further
41 contribute to soil loss. Programmatic design features would be employed to minimize erosion
42 and loss. Residual soil losses with mitigations in place would be in addition to losses from
43 construction of other potential renewable energy facilities, proposed transmission lines, proposed
44 water line, and recreational uses. Cumulative impacts on soil resources from other foreseeable
45 projects within the geographic extent of effects are possible. The proposed 1,600-acre (6.5-km²)
46 fast-track Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project would be located 3 mi (5 km) east of the SEZ

1 and would contribute incremental impacts on soils, as could some number of the pending
2 geothermal projects located to the southwest. Such future impacts from renewable energy
3 projects could produce small cumulative increases over those from any development in the SEZ.
4

5 Landscaping of solar energy facility areas in the SEZ could alter drainage patterns and
6 lead to increased siltation of surface water streambeds, in addition to that from other foreseeable
7 projects and other activities (e.g., OHV use, outside the SEZ). However, with the required
8 programmatic design features in place, cumulative impacts would be small.
9

10 ***11.7.22.4.7 Minerals (Fluids, Solids, and Geothermal Resources)***

11 As discussed in Section 11.7.8, about two-thirds of the proposed Millers SEZ is covered
12 by placer mining claims, which would represent prior existing rights, as well as potential
13 limitations on solar development. Conversely, additional mining claims could be foreclosed if
14 the SEZ was identified for solar development. In addition, any road closures on the SEZ could
15 affect access to mining areas outside the SEZ. There are currently no active oil and gas leases
16 within the proposed SEZ, while there are proposals for geothermal energy development pending.
17 Because of the expected low impact on mineral accessibility of other foreseeable actions within
18 the geographic extent of effects, and minimization and mitigation of road access closures,
19 cumulative impacts on mineral resources are not expected.
20
21
22

23 ***11.7.22.4.8 Water Resources***

24 Section 11.7.9.2 describes the water requirements for various technologies if they were to
25 be employed on the proposed SEZ to develop utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount of
26 water needed during the peak construction year for all evaluated solar technologies would be
27 2,288 to 3,300 ac-ft (2.8 million to 4.1 million m³). During operations, with full development of
28 the SEZ over 80% of its available land area, the amount of water needed for all evaluated solar
29 technologies would range from 77 to 40,327 ac-ft/yr (95 thousand to 50 million m³). The amount
30 of water needed during decommissioning would be similar to or less than the amount used
31 during construction. As discussed in Section 11.7.22.3.3, water withdrawals in 2005 from surface
32 waters and groundwater in Esmeralda County were 46,786 ac-ft/yr (57.7 million m³/yr), of
33 which 9% came from surface waters and 91% came from groundwater. The largest water
34 use categories for groundwater were irrigation and mining at 28,235 and 14,202 ac-ft/yr
35 (34.8 million and 17.5 million m³/yr), respectively. Therefore, cumulatively the additional
36 water resources needed for solar facilities in the SEZ during operations would constitute from a
37 relatively small (0.2%) to a very large (86%) increment (the ratio of the annual operations water
38 requirement to the annual amount withdrawn in Esmeralda County), depending on the solar
39 technology used (PV technology at the low end and the wet-cooled parabolic trough technology
40 at the high end). However, as discussed in Section 11.7.9.1.3, very little water has been
41 historically withdrawn from the Tonopah Flat basin, roughly 260 ac-ft/yr (320,700 m³/yr). The
42 perennial yield of the basin is set at 6,000 ac-ft/yr (7.4 million m³/yr), and water rights in the
43 basin are over-appropriated. Thus, even if water rights were available, solar facilities on the SEZ
44 would have the capacity to far exceed the physically available groundwater in the basin using
45
46

1 wet cooling, while full development with dry-cooled solar trough technologies could require
2 two-thirds of estimated basin yields (Section 11.7.9.2.2).

3
4 While solar development of the proposed SEZ with water-intensive technologies would
5 likely be infeasible due to impacts on groundwater supplies and restrictions on water rights,
6 excessive groundwater withdrawals could affect groundwater and surface water flows, cause
7 drawdown of groundwater, modify natural drainage pathways, obstruct natural recharge zones,
8 and alter surface water-wetland-groundwater connectivity in the Tonopah Flat basin
9 (Section 11.7.9.2). Therefore the use of groundwater monitoring wells is encouraged in order to
10 determine the actual impact of development within the SEZ on the water table. Small cumulative
11 impacts could occur when combined with other future projects in the region. The proposed fast-
12 track Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project, which would be located 3 mi (5 km) east of the SEZ,
13 would use hybrid cooling, which would minimize water use, while the authorized geothermal
14 leases to the southwest would not likely contribute to groundwater impacts in the Tonopah Flats
15 basin.

16
17 Small quantities of sanitary wastewater would be generated during the construction and
18 operation of the potential utility-scale solar energy facilities. The amount generated from solar
19 facilities would be in the range of 19 to 148 ac-ft (23 to 183 thousand m³) during the peak
20 construction year and would range from 2 to 38 ac-ft/yr (up to 47,000 m³/yr) during operations.
21 Because of the small quantity, the sanitary wastewater generated by the solar energy facilities
22 would not be expected to put undue strain on available sanitary wastewater treatment facilities
23 in the general area of the SEZ. For technologies that rely on conventional wet-cooling systems,
24 there would also be from 424 to 763 ac-ft/yr (0.52 to 0.94 million m³) of blowdown water from
25 cooling towers. Blowdown water would need to be either treated on-site or sent to an off-site
26 facility. Any on-site treatment of wastewater would have to ensure that treatment ponds are
27 effectively lined in order to prevent any groundwater contamination. Thus, blowdown water
28 would not contribute to cumulative effects on treatment systems or on groundwater.

31 ***11.7.22.4.9 Vegetation***

32
33 The proposed Millers SEZ is located within the Tonopah Basin ecoregion, which
34 primarily supports sparse shadscale communities. Lands within the SEZ are classified primarily
35 as Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. Much of the SEZ consists of north to south
36 trending broad, barren, gravel-covered washes, with small scattered playa areas, with shadscale
37 and fourwing saltbush along the margins or in isolated stands. In the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect
38 effects, the predominant cover type is Inter-Mountain Basins Mixed Salt Desert Scrub. If utility-
39 scale solar energy projects were to be constructed within the SEZ, all vegetation within the
40 footprints of the facilities would likely be removed during land-clearing and land-grading
41 operations. Full development of the SEZ over 80% of its area would result in up to moderate
42 impacts on certain cover types (Section 11.7.10.2.1). Wetlands and associated playa habitats
43 could be affected by project development, while intermittently flooded areas downgradient
44 from solar projects or access road could be affected by ground-disturbing activities. Alteration
45 of surface drainage patterns or hydrology could adversely affect downstream dry wash

1 communities. Wetland and riparian habitats outside of the SEZ that are supported by
2 groundwater discharge could be affected by hydrologic changes resulting from project activities.
3

4 The fugitive dust generated during the construction of the solar facilities could increase
5 the dust loading in habitats outside a solar project area, in combination with that from other
6 construction, mining, agriculture, recreation, and transportation. The cumulative dust loading
7 could result in reduced productivity or changes in plant community composition. Similarly,
8 surface runoff from project areas after heavy rains could increase sedimentation and siltation in
9 areas downstream. Programmatic design features would be used to reduce the impacts from solar
10 energy projects and thus reduce the overall cumulative impacts on plant communities and
11 habitats. While most of the cover types within the SEZ are relatively common in the greater SEZ
12 region, at least one cover type, Mojave Mid-Elevation Mixed Desert Scrub, is relatively
13 uncommon, representing 1% or less of the land area within the region. Thus, other ongoing and
14 reasonably foreseeable future actions would have a cumulative effect on this and other rare cover
15 types as well as on more abundant species. Such effects could be moderate with full build-out of
16 the SEZ, but would likely fall to small for foreseeable development due to the abundance of the
17 primary species and the relatively small number of foreseeable actions within the geographic
18 extent of effects. However, the proposed fast-track Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project
19 covering 1,600 acres (174 km²) and located about 3 mi (5 km) east of the proposed SEZ
20 (Section 11.7.22.2.2), could contribute to cumulative effects on some rare cover types if they are
21 present in the development area. In addition, cumulative effects on wetland species could occur
22 from water use, drainage modifications, and stream sedimentation from this and any other future
23 projects in the region. The magnitude of such effects is difficult to predict at the current time.
24
25

26 ***11.7.22.4.10 Wildlife and Aquatic Biota*** 27

28 Wildlife species that could potentially be affected by the development of utility-scale
29 solar energy facilities in the proposed Millers SEZ include amphibians, reptiles, birds, and
30 mammals. The construction of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ and any associated
31 transmission lines and roads in or near the SEZ would have an impact on wildlife through habitat
32 disturbance (i.e., habitat reduction, fragmentation, and alteration), wildlife disturbance, and
33 wildlife injury or mortality. In general, impacted species with broad distributions and a variety of
34 habitats would be less affected than species with a narrowly defined habitat within a restricted
35 area. The use of programmatic design features would reduce the severity of impacts on wildlife.
36 These design features may include pre-disturbance biological surveys to identify key habitat
37 areas used by wildlife, followed by avoidance or minimization of disturbance to those habitats.
38

39 As noted in Section 11.7.22.2, other ongoing, reasonably foreseeable and potential future
40 actions within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ include one fast-track solar application, one
41 pending solar development application, one pending wind site testing application, four
42 authorized wind site testing applications, two authorized geothermal lease agreements, and five
43 producing geothermal lease agreements (Figure 11.7.22.2-1). While impacts from full build-out
44 over 80% of the proposed SEZ would result in small to moderate impacts on some amphibian,
45 reptile, and bird species and small impacts on mammal species (Section 11.7.11), impacts from
46 foreseeable development within the 50-mi (80-km) geographic extent of effects would be small.

1 Many of the wildlife species present within the proposed SEZ that could be affected by other
2 actions have extensive available habitat within the region, while only one foreseeable solar and
3 no foreseeable wind projects have been firmly identified within the geographic extent of effects.
4 The pending solar, wind, and geothermal applications in the region could contribute to small
5 cumulative effects, however, as would one foreseeable fast-track solar project. The proposed
6 Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project covering 1,600 acres (174 km²) would be located about
7 3 mi (5 km) east of the proposed SEZ and could contribute to cumulative effects on some species
8 from habitat disturbance.
9

10 There are no surface water bodies or perennial streams within the proposed Millers SEZ
11 or within the 5-mi (8-km) area of indirect effects. One named intermittent/ephemeral wash
12 (Ione Wash) runs for approximately 3 mi (5 km) through the center of the SEZ. This and other
13 ephemeral washes in the SEZ are typically dry and flow only after precipitation, while identified
14 wetlands present in the SEZ rarely contain water. Thus, no standing aquatic communities are
15 likely to be present in the proposed SEZ. Aquatic communities do exist within the 50-mi (80-km)
16 geographic extent of effects, but the nearest perennial surface water feature is more than 35 mi
17 (56 km) from the SEZ (Section 11.7.11.2). Thus, potential contributions to cumulative impacts
18 on aquatic biota and habitats resulting from water or airborne soil transport to surface streams
19 from solar facilities within the SEZ and within the geographic extent of effects are unlikely.
20 There is little foreseeable development within the geographic extent of effects that would affect
21 the same aquatic habitats potentially affected by the proposed SEZ. Adverse impacts on aquatic
22 habitats from groundwater drawdown are unlikely because groundwater is already fully
23 appropriated, and solar energy developers would have to purchase and transfer existing water
24 rights.
25
26

27 ***11.7.22.4.11 Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, 28 and Rare Species)*** 29

30 On the basis of recorded occurrences or suitable habitat, as many as 19 special status
31 species could occur within the Millers SEZ. Of these species, two are known to occur within the
32 affected area of the SEZ: Tonopah milkvetch and western small-footed bat. No groundwater-
33 dependent species and no potentially suitable habitat for the desert tortoise, a species listed as
34 threatened under the ESA, occurs within the affected area of the SEZ. Numerous additional
35 species that occur on or in the vicinity of the SEZ are listed as threatened or endangered by the
36 states of Nevada or California or listed as a sensitive species by the BLM (Section 11.7.12.1).
37 Programmatic design features to be used to reduce or eliminate the potential for effects on these
38 species from the construction and operation of utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZs and
39 related projects (e.g., access roads and transmission line connections) outside the SEZ include
40 avoidance of habitat and minimization of erosion, sedimentation, and dust deposition. Ongoing
41 effects on special status species include those from roads, transmission lines, and recreational
42 activities in the area. However, the amount of foreseeable development within the geographic
43 extent of effects is low, including mainly one foreseeable fast-track solar and several potential
44 solar, wind and geothermal projects. Cumulative impacts on protected species are possible but
45 are expected to be relatively low. Actual impacts would depend on the number, location, and

1 cooling technologies of projects that are actually built. Projects would employ mitigation
2 measures to limit effects.

3 4 5 **11.7.22.4.12 Air Quality and Climate** 6

7 While solar energy generates minimal emissions compared with fossil fuels, the site
8 preparation and construction activities associated with solar energy facilities would be
9 responsible for some amount of air pollutants. Most of the emissions would be particulate matter
10 (fugitive dust) and emissions from vehicles and construction equipment. When these emissions
11 are combined with those from other nearby projects outside the proposed Millers SEZ or when
12 they are added to natural dust generation from winds and windstorms, the air quality in the
13 general vicinity of the projects could be temporarily degraded. For example, the maximum
14 24-hour PM₁₀ concentration at or near the SEZ boundaries could at times exceed the applicable
15 standard of 150 µg/m³. The dust generation from the construction activities can be controlled by
16 implementing aggressive dust control measures, such as increased watering frequency or road
17 paving or treatment.

18
19 Because the area proposed for the SEZ is rural and undeveloped land, there are no
20 significant industrial sources of air emissions in the area. The only type of air pollutant of
21 concern is dust generated by winds. Because the number of other foreseeable and potential
22 actions that could produce fugitive dust emissions is small, while such projects are unlikely to
23 overlap in both time and affected area, cumulative air quality effects due to dust emissions
24 during any overlapping construction periods would be small.

25
26 Over the long term and across the region, the development of solar energy may have
27 beneficial cumulative impacts on the air quality and atmospheric values by offsetting the need
28 for energy production that results in higher levels of emissions, such as coal, oil, and natural gas.
29 As discussed in Section 11.7.13.2.2, air emissions from operating solar energy facilities are
30 relatively minor, while the displacement of criteria air pollutants, VOCs, TAPs, and GHG
31 emissions currently produced from fossil fuels could be significant. For example, if the Millers
32 SEZ were fully developed (80% of its acreage) with solar facilities, the quantity of pollutants
33 avoided could be as large as 12% of all emissions from the current electric power systems in
34 Nevada.

35 36 37 **11.7.22.4.13 Visual Resources** 38

39 The proposed Millers SEZ is located in a flat treeless plain in the Big Smoky Valley. The
40 SEZ is bounded by mountain ranges on the east, south and west, with open views to the northeast
41 and southwest (Section 11.7.14.1). The area is sparsely inhabited, remote, and rural in character.
42 Currently, there is a low level of cultural disturbance, including from existing transmission lines,
43 fences and roads. Construction of utility-scale solar facilities on the SEZ and associated
44 transmission lines outside the SEZ would significantly alter the natural scenic quality of the area.
45 Other potential solar, wind, and geothermal projects and related roads and transmission lines
46 outside the proposed SEZ would cumulatively affect the visual resources in the area. Because of

1 the large size of utility-scale solar energy facilities and the generally flat, open nature of the
2 proposed SEZ, some lands outside the SEZ would also be subjected to visual impacts related to
3 the construction, operation, and decommissioning of utility-scale solar energy facilities. Potential
4 impacts would include night sky pollution, including increased skyglow, light spillage, and glare.
5

6 Visual impacts resulting from solar energy development within the SEZ would be in
7 addition to impacts caused by other potential projects in the area. There is currently only one
8 foreseeable fast-track solar facility application, about 3 mi (5 km) east of the SEZ, and several
9 pending solar, wind and geothermal applications within 50 mi (80 km) of the SEZ
10 (Figure 11.7.22.2-1). While the contribution to cumulative impacts in the area of foreseeable and
11 potential projects would depend on the location of facilities that are actually built, it may be
12 concluded that the general visual character of the landscape within this distance could be
13 significantly altered by the presence of solar facilities, transmission lines, and other new
14 infrastructure. Because of the topography of the region, such projects, located in basin flats,
15 would be visible at great distances from surrounding mountains, which include sensitive
16 viewsheds. Given the proximity of the foreseeable fast-track solar project 3 mi (5 km) east of the
17 proposed SEZ, it is possible that two or more facilities would be viewable from a single location.
18 In addition, facilities would be located near major roads and thus would be viewable by
19 motorists, who would also be viewing transmission lines, towns, and other infrastructure, as well
20 as the road system itself.
21

22 As additional facilities are added, several projects might become visible from one
23 location, or in succession, as viewers move through the landscape, as by driving on local roads.
24 In general, the new projects would not be expected to be consistent in terms of their appearance
25 and, depending on the number and type of facilities, the resulting visual disharmony could
26 exceed the visual absorption capability of the landscape and add significantly to the cumulative
27 visual impact. Considering the above in light of the fact that relatively few foreseeable and
28 potential solar, wind, and geothermal projects have been identified, small cumulative visual
29 impacts could occur within the geographic extent of effects from future solar, wind, geothermal,
30 and other existing and future projects.
31
32

33 ***11.7.22.4.14 Acoustic Environment*** 34

35 The areas around the proposed Millers SEZ are relatively quiet. The existing noise
36 sources around the SEZ include road traffic, aircraft flyover, and cattle grazing. Other noise
37 sources are associated with current land use around the SEZ, including OHV use.
38 The construction of solar energy facilities could increase the noise levels periodically for up to
39 3 years per facility, but there would be little or no noise during the operation of solar facilities,
40 except from solar dish engine facilities and from parabolic trough or power tower facilities using
41 TES, which could also minimally affect nearby residences due to considerable separation
42 distances.
43

44 Other ongoing and reasonably foreseeable and potential future activities in the general
45 vicinity of the SEZs are described in Section 11.7.22.2. Because proposed projects and the
46 nearest residents are relatively far from the SEZ with respect to noise impacts and the area is

1 sparsely populated, cumulative noise effects during the construction or operation of solar
2 facilities are unlikely.

3 4 5 ***11.7.22.4.15 Paleontological Resources*** 6

7 The proposed Millers SEZ has unknown, but potentially high, potential for the
8 occurrence of significant fossil material in 94% of its area, mainly lacustrine deposits, and
9 low potential in about 6% of its area, mainly alluvial deposits (Section 11.7.16.1). Surveys of
10 the lacustrine and playa deposits would likely be needed prior to project approval. Any
11 paleontological resources encountered would be mitigated to the extent possible. No significant
12 cumulative impacts on paleontological resources are expected, but such a determination would
13 depend on the results of future paleontological investigations.
14

15 16 ***11.7.22.4.16 Cultural Resources*** 17

18 The proposed Millers SEZ is rich in cultural history, with settlements dating as far back
19 as 12,000 years. The area covered by the SEZ has the potential to contain significant cultural
20 resources. At least 4 surveys have been conducted within the boundaries of the SEZ, and
21 49 additional surveys have been conducted within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ, resulting in the
22 recording of 30 sites within SEZ and at least 100 sites located within 5 mi (8 km) of the SEZ
23 (Section 11.7.17.1). Areas with potential for significant sites within the proposed SEZ include
24 dune areas near the former Lake Tonopah, related to exploitation of lacustrine resources, and
25 historic resources associated with the Millers town site. It is possible that the development of
26 utility-scale solar energy projects in the SEZ, when added to other potential projects likely to
27 occur in the area, could contribute cumulatively to cultural resource impacts occurring in the
28 region. However, the amount of potential and foreseeable development is low, including one
29 fast-track solar project and four authorized geothermal leases within the 25-mi (40-km)
30 geographic extent of effects (Section 11.7.22.2). While any future solar projects would disturb
31 large areas, the specific sites selected for future projects would be surveyed; historic properties
32 encountered would be avoided or mitigated to the extent possible. Through ongoing consultation
33 with the Nevada SHPO and appropriate Native American Tribes, it is likely that many adverse
34 effects on significant resources in the region could be mitigated to some degree. Because the
35 proposed Millers SEZ occupies the area of a Late Pleistocene lakebed, it is possible that
36 development of this SEZ could cumulatively cause an irretrievable loss of information on
37 significant sites pertaining to this prehistoric lake system. Pre-disturbance surveys for cultural
38 sites would identify areas for potential use or avoidance.
39

40 41 ***11.7.22.4.17 Native American Concerns*** 42

43 Major Native American concerns in arid portions of the Great Basin include water,
44 culturally important plant and animal resources, and culturally important landscapes. The
45 development of utility-scale solar energy facilities within the proposed Millers SEZ in
46 combination with the foreseeable development in the surrounding area could cumulatively

1 contribute to effects on these resources. Development of the SEZ would result in the removal of
2 plant species from the footprint of the facility during construction. This would include some
3 plants of cultural importance. However, the primary species that would be affected are abundant
4 in the region; thus the cumulative effect would likely be small. Likewise, habitat for important
5 species, such as the black-tailed jack rabbit, would be reduced; however, extensive habitat is
6 available in the area, reducing the cumulative effect. The cultural importance of the mountains
7 surrounding the SEZ is as yet undetermined. If culturally important, the view from these features
8 can be an important part of their cultural integrity. The degree of impact on these resources of
9 development at specific locations must be determined in consultation with the Native American
10 Tribes whose traditional use area includes the proposed SEZ. In general, Tribes prefer that
11 development occur on previously disturbed land, and this SEZ is largely undeveloped.
12 Government-to-government consultation is under way with federally recognized Native
13 American Tribes with possible traditional ties to the Millers area. All federally recognized
14 Tribes with Western Shoshone, Northern Paiute, or Owens Valley Paiute roots have been
15 contacted and provided an opportunity to comment or consult regarding this PEIS. To date, no
16 specific concerns have been raised to the BLM regarding the proposed Millers SEZ. However,
17 the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley has commented on the scope of this PEIS,
18 recommending that already disturbed lands be preferred for solar development while preserving
19 undisturbed lands. Potential impacts on existing water supplies are also of concern to tribes
20 (Section 11.7.18.2). Continued discussions with the area Tribes through government-to-
21 government consultation is necessary to effectively consider and address the Tribes' concern tied
22 to solar energy development in the proposed Millers SEZ.

23 24 25 ***11.7.22.4.18 Socioeconomics*** 26

27 Solar energy development projects in the proposed Millers SEZ could cumulatively
28 contribute to socioeconomic effects in the immediate vicinity of the SEZs and in the surrounding
29 multicounty ROI. The effects could be positive (e.g., creation of jobs and generation of extra
30 income, increased revenues to local governmental organizations through additional taxes paid by
31 the developers and workers) or negative (e.g., added strain on social institutions such as schools,
32 police protection, and health care facilities). Impacts from solar development would be most
33 intense during facility construction, but of greatest duration during operations. Construction
34 would temporarily increase the number of workers in the area needing housing and services in
35 combination with temporary workers involved in other new projects in the area, including other
36 renewable energy development. Local, county, and state roads could be affected by traffic loads.
37 The number of workers involved in the construction of solar projects in the peak construction
38 year (including the transmission lines) could range from about 250 to 3,300 depending on the
39 technology being employed, with solar PV facilities at the low end and solar trough facilities at
40 the high end. The total number of jobs created in the area could range from approximately
41 350 (solar PV) to as high as 4,600 (solar trough). Cumulative socioeconomic effects in the ROI
42 from construction of solar facilities would occur to the extent that multiple construction projects
43 of any type were ongoing at the same time. It is a reasonable expectation that this condition
44 would occur within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the SEZ occasionally over the 20-year or more
45 solar development period.
46

1 Annual impacts during the operation of solar facilities would be less, but of 20- to
2 30-year duration, and could combine with those from other new projects in the area, including
3 from the fast-track Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project, which would be located 3 mi (5km)
4 east of the proposed SEZ. The number of workers needed at the solar facilities in the SEZ would
5 be in the range of 30 to 600 with approximately 40 to 800 total jobs created in the region,
6 assuming full build-out of the SEZ (Section 11.7.19.2.2). Population increases would contribute
7 to general upward trends in the region in recent years. The socioeconomic impacts overall would
8 be positive, through the creation of additional jobs and income. The negative impacts, including
9 some short-term disruption of rural community quality of life, would not likely be considered
10 large enough to require specific mitigation measures.
11
12

13 ***11.7.22.4.19 Environmental Justice*** 14

15 Any impacts from solar development could have cumulative impacts on minority and
16 low-income populations within 50 mi (80 km) of the proposed SEZ in combination with other
17 development in the area. Such impacts could be both positive, such as from increased economic
18 activity, and negative, such as from visual impacts, noise, and exposure to fugitive dust. Actual
19 impacts would depend on where low-income populations are located relative to solar and other
20 proposed facilities and on the geographic range of effects. Overall, effects from facilities within
21 the SEZ are expected to be small, while other foreseeable and potential actions would not likely
22 combine with effects from the SEZ on minority and low-income populations. However, no
23 minority or low-income populations have been identified within the 50-mi (80-km) region of
24 interest around the SEZ (Section 11.7.20.2). Thus, it is not expected that the proposed Millers
25 SEZ would contribute to cumulative impacts on minority and low-income populations.
26
27

28 ***11.7.22.4.20 Transportation*** 29

30 U.S. 95/U.S. 6 runs along the southern border of the proposed Millers SEZ. The nearest
31 public airport is the Tonopah Airport, about 23 mi (37 km) east of the SEZ, and the closest
32 railroad access is the UP Railroad stop at Thorne, 90 mi (145 km) northwest of the SEZ.
33 During construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities, there could be up to 1,000 workers
34 commuting to the construction site at the SEZ, which could increase the AADT on these roads
35 by 2,000 vehicle trips for each facility under construction. With as many as two facilities
36 assumed under construction at the same time, traffic on U.S. 95/U.S. 6 could experience
37 slowdowns in the area of the SEZ (Section 11.7.21.2). This increase in highway traffic from
38 construction workers could likewise have moderate cumulative impacts in combination with
39 existing traffic levels and increases from additional future projects in the area, including from
40 construction of the fast-track Crescent Dunes Solar Energy 3 mi (5 km) east of the SEZ, should
41 construction schedules overlap. Local road improvements may be necessary on portions of
42 U.S. 95/U.S. 6 near the SEZ. Any impacts during construction activities would be temporary.
43 The impacts can also be mitigated to some degree by staggered work schedules and ride-sharing
44 programs. Traffic increases during operation would be relatively small because of the low
45 number of workers needed to operate the solar facilities and would have little contribution to
46 cumulative impacts.
47

11.7.23 References

Note to Reader: This list of references identifies Web pages and associated URLs where reference data were obtained for the analyses presented in this PEIS. It is likely that at the time of publication of this PEIS, some of these Web pages may no longer be available or their URL addresses may have changed. The original information has been retained and is available through the Public Information Docket for this PEIS.

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