Section 4.11

Mineral Resources

4.11.1 Introduction

This section of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses potential impacts of the proposed project on mineral resources. This section also describes the environmental and regulatory settings in relation to mineral resources. California Department of Conservation and Kern County publications and maps were used in preparation of this section.

4.11.2 Environmental Setting

The State Geologist has classified 2,971 square miles of land in Kern County as Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs) of varying significance. Significant mineral resources located in southeastern Kern County include borates, limestone, gold, and dimension stone. MRZs are classified as follows (Koehler, 1999):

**MRZ-2a:** Areas underlain by mineral deposits where geologic data indicate that significant measured or indicated resources are present. Areas classified MRZ-2a contain discovered mineral deposits that are either measured or indicated reserves. Land included in MRZ-2a is of prime importance because it contains known economic mineral deposits.

**MRZ-2b:** Areas underlain by mineral deposits where geologic information indicates that significant inferred resources are present. Areas classified MRZ-2b contain inferred mineral resources as determined by their lateral extension from proven deposits or their similarity to proven deposits. Further exploration could result in upgrading areas classified MRZ-2b to MRZ-2a.

**MRZ-3a:** Areas containing known mineral occurrences of undetermined economic significance. Further exploration could result in reclassification of all or part of these areas into the MRZ-2a or MRZ-2b categories.

**MRZ-3b:** Areas containing inferred mineral occurrences of undetermined economic significance. Further exploration could result in the reclassification of all or part of these areas into the MRZ-2a or MRZ-2b categories.

Site Characteristics

General geologic conditions in the project area are described in Section 4.6, “Geology and Soils.” The proposed project site is not located in any mining district (Troxel and Morton, 1962), and no MRZs underlie the site. The nearest MRZs to the proposed project site are limestone resources of unknown significance (MRZ-3a) located one mile west of the westernmost site boundary. There are no other mineral resources located in the vicinity of the project site (Koehler, 1999). Neither the proposed gen-tie line routes nor the transmission reinforcement are located in the immediate vicinity of any MRZs.

The proposed project site is not located on or immediately adjacent to lands classified as Mineral and Petroleum areas (Kern County, 2011). The nearest Mineral and Petroleum area, designated by map code 8.4 (Mineral and Petroleum) on the Kern County General Plan (KCGP) map, is located two miles east of the easternmost boundary of the proposed project site. Neither of the gen-tie line routes are located on lands classified as Mineral and Petroleum areas.
Surrounding Land Uses

The proposed project is generally located at the base of the Tehachapi and Piute mountain ranges within the Sierra Nevada, directly west of the Fremont Valley in the Western Mojave Desert. The project vicinity is generally characterized as an undeveloped, rural area. Land usage in and around the proposed project area consists of open space with scattered residences, off-highway vehicle use, and livestock grazing. Existing development in the area includes rural access roads, producing and non-producing water wells, off-highway vehicle use, cattle ranching and maintenance facilities, and planned/existing met towers. The BLM’s Jawbone Off-highway Vehicle Open Area is located off Jawbone Canyon Road; directly east of the project. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) is located west of the proposed project site. The distance between the PCT and the project site boundary varies, ranging from 5.5 miles at the northwest corner of the project to 0.8 mile at the southwest corner of the project.

4.11.3 Regulatory Setting

State

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 State requires the State Geologist to classify land into MRZs according to its known or inferred mineral potential. The primary goal of mineral land classification is to ensure that the mineral potential of land is recognized by local government decision-makers and considered before land-use decisions are made that could preclude mining. MRZs in the vicinity of the proposed project are presented in Section 4.10.2, Environmental Setting.

Kern County

Kern County General Plan

The policies, goals, and implementation measures in the KCGP for mineral resources applicable to the project are provided below.

Chapter 1. Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element

Section 1.9 Resource Goals

- **Goal 1.** To contain new development within an area large enough to meet generous projections of foreseeable need, but in locations that will not impair the economic strength derived from the petroleum, agriculture, rangeland, or mineral resources or diminish the other amenities that exist in the County.

- **Goal 2.** To protect areas of important mineral, petroleum, and agricultural resource potential for future use.

- **Goal 3.** To ensure that the development of resource areas minimizes effects on neighboring resource lands.

- **Goal 4.** Encourage safe and orderly energy development within the County, including research and demonstration projects, and to become actively involved in the decision and actions of other agencies as they affect energy development in Kern County.

- **Goal 6.** Encourage alternative sources of energy, such as solar and wind energy, while protecting the environment.
**Policies**

- **Policy 14.** Emphasize conservation and development of identified mineral deposits.
- **Policy 17.** Lands classified as MRZ-2, as designated by the State of California, should be protected from encroachment of incompatible land uses.
- **Policy 25.** Discourage incompatible land use adjacent to Map Code 8.4 (Mineral and Petroleum) areas.

**Implementation Measures**

- **Implementation Measure H.** Use the California Geological Survey’s latest maps to locate mineral deposits until the regional and statewide importance mineral deposits map has been completed, as required by the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act.
- **Implementation Measure K.** Protect oilfields and mineral extraction areas through the use of appropriate implementing zone districts: A (Exclusive Agriculture), DI (Drilling Island), NR (Natural Resource), or PE (Petroleum Extraction).

**Kern County Zoning Ordinance**

The WE Combining District (Chapter 19.64) contains development standards and conditions (Section 19.64.140) that would be applicable to the siting and operation of wind turbine generators (WTGs). None of the provisions of Chapter 19.64 apply to mineral resources issues related to the proposed project.

### 4.11.4 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

**Methodology**

California Department of Conservation publications, the KCGP map, and aerial photos were compared to identify potential conflicts of the proposed project’s presence and operations with mineral resource extraction.

**Thresholds of Significance**

The Kern County California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Implementation Document and Kern County Environmental Checklist state that a project would normally be considered to have a significant impact if it would:

- Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State; or

- Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan.

As discussed in Appendix A (Notice of Preparation/Initial Study [NOP/IS]), the proposed project was determined to have no impact with regard to the following impact threshold:

- Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State.

This issue is not discussed further in this EIR.
Project Impacts

Impact 4.11-1: Result in the Loss of Availability of a Locally Important Mineral Resource Recovery Site Delineated on a Local General Plan, Specific Plan, or Other Land Use Plan

There are no Mineral and Petroleum areas (Map Code 8.4 in the KCGP) located within 1 mile of the proposed project site. Therefore, development of the proposed project would not impact access to locally important mineral resources.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance

Impacts would be less than significant.

Cumulative Setting Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Cumulative Setting

Cumulative impacts are two or more individual impacts that, when considered together, are considerable or that compound or increase other environmental impacts. The geographic scope for cumulative impacts to mineral resources includes all of Kern County. This geographic scope of analysis is appropriate because the loss of availability of mineral resources anywhere in the County would combine with mineral resource impacts of the proposed project to result in a cumulative impact on County-wide mineral resources.

Impact 4.11-2: Contribute to Cumulative Mineral Resource Impacts

A cumulative impact analysis first identifies whether a cumulatively significant impact exists in the given resource area. If so, it determines whether the project will make a considerable contribution to that impact. Where a cumulative impact is severe, even a small contribution may be considerable (Section 15130(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines).

With regard to the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource, the proposed project would not impact access to any locally designated Mineral and Petroleum areas. Impacts of the proposed project would not have the potential to restrict access to additional Mineral and Petroleum areas. Therefore, impacts of the proposed project would not have the potential to combine with impacts from past, present, or reasonably foreseeable projects to result in a cumulative impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance

Impacts would be less than significant.