Section 4.14
Public Services
4.14.1 Introduction

This section of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses potential impacts of the proposed project on public services, which include fire protection, law enforcement services, schools, parks, scenic trails, medical services, and other public facilities. This section also describes the environmental and regulatory settings and discusses mitigation measures to reduce impacts, where applicable. The project would potentially increase demand on public services and it is the purpose of this section to ascertain if the potential increase in demand would exceed the capacity of existing public services, result in the need for additional personnel, or require construction of new facilities.

4.14.2 Environmental Setting

Fire Protection

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) established the Kern County Fire Department’s (KCFD) Wildland Fire Management Plan (WFMP) in 2004, which is the adopted plan for fire protection and prevention within Kern County (CAL FIRE, 2010). According to CAL FIRE, the proposed project site is located on a checkerboard of parcels designated as State Responsibility Areas (SRA) (CAL FIRE 2007). Although the project site is within the State’s jurisdiction, the KCFD provides fire suppression and emergency medical services throughout Kern County. As such, the WFMP designates the proposed project site within the jurisdiction of Battalion 1 of the KCFD. The California Aqueduct, running north and south, establishes the eastern edge of the SRA, and the western boundary is defined by the southeastern edge of the San Joaquin Valley (KFCD, 2004).

The KCFD operates 46 full-time fire stations, one seasonal station, and is divided into seven battalions for operational management (KCFD, 2010a). Battalion 1 consists of seven fire stations whose area is bounded by the Central Valley to the west, the Tehachapi Mountains in the center, and the Mojave Desert to the east (MHMP, 2005). The following three stations are within 30 miles of the project:

Station 12: Tehachapi Station. This station is located to the north off of State Route (SR) 58 (800 South Curry Street) and is 24.1 miles southwest of the project site entrance. Station 12 covers a response area of 220 square miles (KCFD, 2010b).

Station 14: Mojave Station. This station is located to the west off of SR-58 (1953 State Highway 58), east of SR-14, and is 22.4 miles south of the project site entrance. Station 14 covers a response area of 431 square miles, and would be the primary response unit for fire protection (KCFD, 2010b).

Station 78: Piute Station. This station is to the north off of Walker Basin Road (16001 Walker Basin Road) and 15.5 miles west of the project site entrance. Station 78 covers response area of 289 square miles (KCFD, 2010b).

The response area for all of these stations encompasses high desert watershed, highway, and rural communities. Although Station 78 (Piute) is geographically closer, Station 14 (Mojave) would be
the primary responder to a fire event at the project area because it has a shorter route to the site. However, in the event of a major fire, resources from any of the surrounding stations, including the Piute and Tehachapi Stations, would be called on to respond, as necessary.

**Police Protection**

**California Highway Patrol**

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) provides traffic regulation enforcement; oversees response to emergency incidents on California’s highways or assists other public agencies responding to emergency incidents; and promotes the safe and efficient movement of people and goods on California highways to minimize loss of life, injuries, and property damage. The CHP officers patrol State highways and implement the CHP’s other law enforcement activities (e.g., drug interception, vehicle theft investigation and prevention, vehicle inspections, accident investigations, and public awareness campaigns), with the support of the non-uniformed personnel assigned to area and division offices.

The CHP has eight divisions that provide services throughout California. Kern County is located in both the Central and Inland Division service areas (CHP, 2010a). However, the project site would be within the jurisdiction of the Inland Division, which includes 11 area offices, nine resident posts, one transportation management center, 602 uniformed officers, and 196 non-uniformed personnel (CHP, 2010b). The Mojave area office within the Inland Division would be the primary CHP responders in the event of an emergency, which is located eighteen miles east of the project site.

**Kern County Sheriff’s Department**

The Kern County Sheriff’s Department (KCSD) provides police protection services to the unincorporated portions of the County. The KCSD’s headquarters is located in the City of Bakersfield and consists of 14 substations that provide patrol services to remote areas of Kern County, such as the desert and mountainous regions, as well as to other areas that need focused services.

The Tehachapi and Mojave Substations would be the primary responders for police protection services for the proposed project and surrounding area. The Tehachapi Substation is located 17.3 miles southeast of the project site, and the Mojave Substation is located 16.1 miles south of the project site.

The Kern County Sheriff's Department created the Off-Highway Vehicle Enforcement Team that is based out of the Ridgecrest Substation, and can be deployed anywhere in Kern County, as needed. The Off-Highway Vehicle Enforcement Team’s mission is to provide a law enforcement presence and patrol those remote areas of Kern County that are not readily accessible by normal means. The Kern County Desert area is host to hundreds of thousands of visitors during the off-highway vehicle season. Although the exact numbers are not available, it is estimated that more than 500,000 visitors in the East Kern area alone participate in outdoor activities policed by the Off-Highway Vehicle Enforcement Team. Off-highway vehicle activities occur on the project site and in the Willow Springs and Rosamond areas, as well as in the surrounding areas including the community of Mojave and the city of Tehachapi (KCSD, 2010a).
Schools

The project is located in the Southern Kern Unified School District, which operates two elementary schools, one middle school, an alternative education school and one comprehensive high school (SKUSD, 2010). According to California’s Ed-Data website, there is also a continuation school, and total district enrollment for the 2008-09 school year was 3,435 K-12 students, with an average schoolwide class size of 23.3 students, and a pupil-teacher ratio of 21.2 students to one teacher (Ed-Data, 2010a). In comparison, according to the California State profile, the average class size for the State is 25.4 students and the average pupil-teacher ratio is 20.9 students to every teacher (Ed-Data, 2010b).

In addition to Kern County’s K-12 school districts, the County includes a number of private schools and home or independent study programs. Adult Colleges in Kern County include Bakersfield College; California State University, Bakersfield; Taft College; and Cerro Coso Community College. Southeast of the proposed project site is Antelope Valley College which is located in the City of Lancaster.

Parks

The California State Parks Service owns, maintains, and operates one State park (Red Rock Canyon), two State historic parks (Fort Tejon and Tomo-Kahni), and one State reserve (Tule Elk) in Kern County. All of these parks are over 10 miles away. The closest is Tomo-Kahni State Historic Park, 10.4 miles southwest of the project area.

The Kern County Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) administers eight regional parks and 40 neighborhood parks (PRD, 2010a). The closest County-regulated park is Tehachapi Mountain Park located 20 miles southwest of the project site. The park is located eight miles southwest of the City of Tehachapi, and consists of 5,000 acres of open space and recreational facilities for hiking, camping, and equestrian trail riding (PRD, 2009b). Additionally, Lake Isabella is located 21 miles northwest of the project site (PRD, 2010b). No local parks operated by the PRD are located in the vicinity of the project site.

A north-northwest trending segment of the PCT is located west of the proposed project. 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. The distance between the PCT and the nearest WTG within the project site would be 1.9 miles. The PCT spans 2,650 miles from Mexico to Canada through California, Oregon and Washington. The proposed project is located within the Southern California Segment of the PCT (PCT, 2010). Refer to Section 4.15, Recreation, for impacts related to the PCT.

Other Public Facilities

The Kern County Emergency Medical Services Division (EMS) is the lead agency for the EMS system in Kern County. EMS is responsible for coordinating all system participants which includes the public, emergency service providers, and hospitals throughout the County. The department provides various training programs for EMS such as certification and recertification for local EMS personnel (EMS, 2010). The closest hospital with an emergency department is the Tehachapi Valley Healthcare District located 16 miles southeast of the project site in the City of Tehachapi. The Tehachapi Valley Healthcare District is comprised of the 24-bed Tehachapi Hospital and three rural health clinics located in the City of California City, City of Tehachapi, and community of Mojave,
serving an approximate population of 33,077 in the Tehachapi subarea of Kern County (TVHD, 2011; Kern County, 2008).

Other public services include federal post offices and City and County libraries. The City of California City, City of Tehachapi, and community of Mojave each has a post office and library.

4.14.3 Regulatory Setting

Federal

There are no applicable federal plans or policies for this issue area.

State

Under Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) has the primary responsibility for implementing wildfire planning and protection for the SRA. The CDF develops fire safe regulations and issues fire safe clearances for land within a fire district of the SRA. More than 31 million acres of California's privately owned wildlands are under the jurisdiction of the CDF.

In addition to wildland fires, the CDF’s planning efforts involve responding to other types of emergencies that may occur on a daily basis, including residential or commercial structure fires, automobile accidents, heart attacks, drowning victims, lost hikers, hazardous material spills on highways, train wrecks, floods, and earthquakes. Through contracts with local government, the CDF provides emergency services in 36 of California’s 58 counties.

Local

Kern County General Plan (KCGP), Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element, Adopted March 2007

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

1.4 Public Facilities and Services

Policies

- **Policy 1.** New discretionary development will be required to pay its proportional share of the local costs of infrastructure improvements required to service such development.

- **Policy 6.** The County will ensure adequate fire protection to all Kern County residents.

- **Policy 7.** The County will ensure adequate police protection to all Kern County residents.

Implementation Measures

- **Implementation Measure L.** Prior to the approval of development projects, the County shall determine the need for fire protection services. New development in the County shall not be approved unless adequate fire protection facilities and resources can be provided.
1.10 General Provisions

Goals

- **Goal 1.** Ensure that the County can accommodate anticipated future growth and development while maintaining a safe and healthful environment and a prosperous economy by preserving viable natural resources, guiding development away from hazardous areas, and assuring the provision of adequate public services.

1.10.1 Public Services and Facilities (General Provisions Element)

Policies

- **Policy 9.** New development should pay its pro rata share of the local cost of expansions in services, facilities, and infrastructure that it generates and upon which it is dependent.

- **Policy 15.** Prior to approval of any discretionary permit, the County shall make the finding, based on information provided by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents, staff analysis, and the applicant, that adequate public or private services and resources are available to serve the proposed development.

- **Policy 16.** The developer shall assume full responsibility for costs incurred in service extension or improvements that are required to ensure the project. Cost sharing or other forms of recovery shall be available when the service extensions or improvements have a specific quantifiable regional significance.

Chapter 4. Safety Element

4.6 Wildland and Urban Fire

Policies

- **Policy 1.** Require discretionary projects to assess impacts on emergency services and facilities.

- **Policy 3.** The County will encourage the promotion of fire prevention methods to reduce service protection costs and costs to taxpayers.

- **Policy 4.** Ensure that new development of properties have sufficient access for emergency vehicles and for the evacuation of residents.

- **Policy 6.** All discretionary projects shall comply with the adopted Fire Code and the requirements of the Fire Department.

Implementation Measures

- **Implementation Measure A.** Require that all development comply with the requirements of the Kern County Fire Department or other appropriate agency regarding access, fire flows, and fire protection facilities.

Kern County Wildland Fire Management Plan, Adopted January 2004

The WFMP documents the assessment of the wildland fire situation throughout the SRA within the County. It includes stakeholder contributions and priorities, and identifies strategic targets for pre-fire solutions as defined by the people who live and work with the local fire problem. The goal of the Plan is to reduce costs and losses from wildfire by protecting assets at risk through focused pre-fire management prescriptions and increasing initial attack success. Based on this assessment, preventive measures are implemented, including the creation of wildfire protection zones. The
WFMP is referenced in this analysis; however, the goals set forth by this plan are not applicable to development of the proposed project.

**Kern County Zoning Ordinance**

The Wind Energy (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 WTGs. None of the provisions of Chapter 19.64 apply to public services issues related to the proposed project.

### 4.14.4 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

**Methodology**

Public service systems were evaluated by reviewing the most current data available from State and Kern County department websites, the KCGP, the Kern County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, the KCFD WFMP, and personal communication via telephone calls.

**Thresholds of Significance**

The Kern County CEQA Implementation Document and Kern County Environmental Checklist state that a project would have a significant impact on public services if it would:

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

**Project Impacts**

**Impact 4.14-1: Increased Need for or Alter, Fire Protection Services**

The CAL FIRE Fire and Resource Assessment Program provides a map depicting fire threat to SRAs in Kern County. Much of the southeast areas within the County range mostly from “Moderate” to “Very High” fire threat rating, and the project site, similarly, is located in an area ranging from “Moderate” to “Very High” fire threat ratings (CAL FIRE, 2007). Onsite vegetation consists primarily of juniper woodland and Mojave Creosote scrub interspersed with introduced annual grasses. During the construction phase, heavy equipment and passenger vehicles driving on vegetated areas before clearing and grading could increase the danger of fire. Heated mufflers could ignite surrounding vegetation. In addition, during operation, lightning strikes on WTGs could create power surges and start a fire. As a result, construction and operation of the project would have a significant potential to cause wildfires. As discussed in Section 4.8, “Hazards and Hazardous Materials,” of this EIR, implementation of Mitigation Measure (MM) 4.8-10 would reduce the potential for construction and maintenance activities to result in severe fires by requiring fire-safe construction and maintenance practices. MM 4.8-11 would further reduce the severity of this impact.
by restricting work during severe fire weather. MM 4.8-12 would require WTGs to be equipped with automatic fire detection and extinguishing systems. MM 4.8-13 would require vegetation management during construction to reduce fire risk.

If a fire were to occur, it is anticipated that personnel and equipment between KCFD’s Tehachapi, Mojave, and Piute Stations would be sufficient to respond to a fire at the project site and, therefore, in the event of a construction- or operation-related fire, existing fire service capacities would not be exceeded and additional, permanent fire protection services, equipment, facilities, or personnel would not be required.

Mitigation Measures
Implement Mitigation Measures 4.8-10 through 4.8-13, as described in Section 4.8.

Level of Significance after Mitigation
Impacts would be less than significant.

Impact 4.14-2: Increase Need for or Alter, Police Protection Services

The Mojave Substation of the KCSD would be the primary responder to the proposed project and it would take an hour or more to respond to a call. The KCSD does not anticipate the need for additional staffing to handle any increase in activity (e.g., thefts, trespassing complaints, peace disturbances, and emergencies) created by this project (KCSD, 2010b).

The proposed project may attract vandals or other security risks and potentially increase traffic along SR-14 that would increase demand on police protection/law enforcement services in the event of an incident. However, the project site is in a remote location surrounded by vacant land and rural communities and is unlikely to attract attention and make project facilities susceptible to crime. Nevertheless, as a part of the project design, the project proponents would implement security measures for project facilities, including a chain-link security fence around the perimeter of the substations for safety and security purposes, and all other project fencing requirements would be evaluated and the best-fit scenario would be incorporated into the project based upon the final determination by Kern County. In addition, security services would likely be provided during construction and any additional security would be on an as-needed basis. The security personnel would be assigned the responsibility of controlling egress and ingress, safety requirements, and all other policies for the control of the site area during the construction phase. After construction, these duties would fall under the control of the assigned operations and maintenance provider. These measures would minimize the need for police surveillance and response.

Project personnel commuting to the project site via nearby highways (SR-14 and SR-58) could increase services required by the CHP in the event of accident or traffic violations. Project personnel would be required to adhere to all federal and State traffic laws. The additional volume of traffic associated with workers commuting to the site during construction and with permanent personnel during operation is not expected to exceed the CHP’s ability to patrol the highways.

As the project would not induce population growth in the area and security services would be provided during construction and on an as-need basis, implementation of the proposed project is not expected to result in the need to construct new, or to physically alter existing, police protection facilities to maintain acceptable services.
Mitigation Measures

The project would comply with the goals, policies, and implementation measures of the KCGP. No additional measures would be required.

Level of Significance after Mitigation

Impacts would be less than significant.

Impact 4.14-3: Increase Need for or Alter, School Services

Construction of the project would require a peak construction workforce of 180 workers, most of whom are expected to travel to the site from various locations throughout Southern California. The number of workers expected to relocate to the surrounding area is not expected to be substantial. If temporary housing should be necessary, it is expected that accommodations would be available in the nearby cities of Lancaster, Palmdale, Tehachapi, California City, and the community of Mojave. Construction workers who relocate to these areas may enroll their children in local schools. However, because it is expected that most construction workers would not relocate, the addition of children of relocated workers would be minimal and would not affect the capacity of the schools they might attend.

The project would require an estimated 32 full-time/part-time permanent employees to operate the project. It is anticipated that these employees would be local to the project area and would commute to the project, as do current employees at other wind farms in the Tehachapi area. However, in the event that operations staff does relocate to the project area, those with children may enroll their children in local schools. As noted above in Section 4.14.2, the average class size and pupil-teacher ratio are roughly equivalent to State averages. Given the low number of permanent employees expected to relocate to the area, the proposed project would not substantially affect enrollment in local schools.

Mitigation Measures

The project would comply with the goals, policies, and implementation measures of the KCGP. No additional measures would be required.

Level of Significance

Impacts would be less than significant.

Impact 4.14-4: Increase Need for or Alter, Park Services

During construction, there is the potential that some of the temporary construction workers (ranging from 100 to 200 workers) would come from out of the area and use the local and regional parks for recreation. During operation, the population increase associated with permanent personnel would be minimal (32 full-time/part-time employees), and therefore, would not exceed Kern County’s standard of 2.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents (PRD, 2010c). In addition, Tehachapi Mountain Park and Lake Isabella are the closest regional parks. Since there are no local parks in the vicinity of the project site, it is likely that Tehachapi Mountain Park and Lake Isabella would be the primary regional parks utilized by construction and operation workers. As such, according to the County’s PRD, Tehachapi Mountain Park could accommodate increased use by project personnel and their families given that the current ratio is five acres per 1,000 residents in the area surrounding...
Tehachapi (PRD, 2010c). Given the limited personnel required for the project, the temporary construction period, and the potential accommodation of two regional parks located in the project vicinity, increased use by construction personnel would not exceed the capacity of existing parks.

**Mitigation Measures**

The project would comply with the goals, policies, and implementation measures of the KCGP. No additional measures would be required.

**Level of Significance**

Impacts would be less than significant.

**Impact 4.14-5: Increase Need for or Alter, Medical Services**

During construction, the addition of 100 to 200 temporary constructions workers may temporarily increase the need for EMS should a medical emergency occur. However, because access to the project site would be restricted to properly trained construction workers, the likelihood of accidents and thus the need for emergency medical care would be reduced. In addition, as described in Section 4.8, “Hazards and Hazardous Materials,” in accordance with the California Health and Safety Code and Kern County regulations, the project proponents would prepare a Hazardous Materials Business Plan, which would further reduce the potential for project-related emergency incidents to occur during construction. Nevertheless, some accidents may occur during construction; however, the small number of accidents that may occur is not expected to place undue pressure on existing capacity for medical services. With a peak construction workforce of up to 200 personnel, construction would increase the population served by the Tehachapi Valley Healthcare District by 0.6 percent. Such an increase would not be expected to result in the need for additional capacity for the Tehachapi Valley Healthcare District to provide emergency services for potential project-related incidents, therefore, additional medical and/or emergency personnel or facilities would not be required.

During operation, emergency incidents involving any of the 32 full-time/part-time staff would not be expected to overwhelm current medical services capacity. Therefore, additional medical and/or emergency personnel or facilities would not be required and this impact would be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures**

The project would comply with the goals, policies, and implementation measures of the KCGP. No additional measures would be 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 public services includes closely related past, present, and reasonable
foreseeable probable future projects within 30 miles of the project site. This geographic scope of analysis is appropriate because it reflects the maximum distance to any potential services providers that may be affected by implementation of the proposed project.

**Impact 4.14-6: Contribute to Cumulative Public Service Impacts**

The proposed project is not expected to have a significant impact on fire fighting services, but mitigation measures would be incorporated to ensure that impacts are less than significant. The limited construction and operation personnel associated with the proposed project is not expected to exceed capacity for school enrollment at local schools, adequate capacity of hospitals to provide emergency services, or the capacity of existing parks. Also, the proposed project is not expected to result in the need to construct new, or to physically alter existing, police protection facilities to maintain acceptable services.

With regard to cumulative impacts, the proposed and ongoing projects identified in Tables 3-9 and 3-10 of Section 3.11 (Cumulative Projects) include commercial, residential, natural resource, and wind energy projects within an area that is currently rural and undeveloped. This vast number of projects collectively would stimulate population growth and contribute to development of this region. In particular, population growth in this region would require additional emergency and medical services, would increase enrollment in local schools, and would increase recreational activities in local and regional parks. However, the KCGP contains the provision that new discretionary development pay its proportional share of local costs of infrastructure improvements required to service such development. Therefore, impacts on existing public services caused by future projects would be offset by this requirement, and the developers would be responsible for ensuring that impacts on public services are less than significant. These projects would comply with the goals, policies, and implementation measures of the KCGP and cumulatively significant impacts are not anticipated.

**Mitigation Measures**

Implement Mitigation Measures 4.8-10 through 4.8-13, as described in Section 4.8.

**Level of Significance after Mitigation**

Cumulative impacts would be less than significant.