Rezoning would allow for construction of the WTGs, ancillary facilities, and supporting infrastructure. The purpose of the WE Combining District is to promote the use of an alternative to fossil fuel-generated electrical power in areas of the County that are identified to have suitable wind resources for production of commercial quantities of wind-generated electrical power. The WE Combining District contains specific development standards that apply to the siting and construction of WTGs and accessory facilities in the WE zone, obviating further discretionary review.

Construction of the proposed project would also require approval of a CUP to allow the use of five temporary, mobile concrete batch plants to provide concrete and materials for turbine, substation, and building foundations. The batch plants would be located onsite during construction only. In addition, due to military air traffic restrictions, the WTGs would need to conform to the height requirements for the proposed project area as defined by Section 19.64 and Figure 19.08.160 of the Kern County Zoning Ordinance unless the military authority responsible for operations in that flight area first provides the planning director with written concurrence that the height of the proposed structure or building would create no significant military mission impacts. The project site is located across several of the military review zones in Figure 19.08.106, including green (no review requirement), yellow (all structures over 500 feet), and red (wind turbines and communications towers over 80 feet and all other structures over 100 feet). Without military review, those structures falling within the yellow zone would be limited to 500 feet above ground elevation; those structures falling within the red zone, which includes the eastern portion of the site (10.1 percent of the site with 1,337 acres), would be limited to 80 feet above ground elevation for wind turbines and communications towers and 100 feet for all other structures. Figure 3-4 shows military review requirements for the proposed project site.

### 1.3 Purpose and Use of the Draft EIR

An EIR is a public informational document used for planning and decision-making purposes. The Kern County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors will consider the information in the EIR, including the public comments and staff response to those comments, during the public hearing process. As a legislative action, the final decision is made by the Board of Supervisors, who may approve, conditionally approve, or deny the project. The purpose of an EIR is to identify:

- The significant potential impacts of the proposed project on the environment and indicate the manner in which those significant impacts can be avoided or mitigated;
- Any unavoidable adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated; and
- Reasonable and feasible alternatives to the project that would eliminate any significant adverse environmental impacts or reduce the impacts to a less-than-significant level.

An EIR also discloses growth-inducing impacts; impacts found not to be significant; and significant cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects. The CEQA requires an EIR be prepared that reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency regarding the impacts, the level of significance of the impacts both before and after mitigation, and mitigation measures proposed to reduce the impacts. A draft EIR is circulated to responsible agencies, trustee agencies with resources affected by the project, and interested agencies and individuals. The purposes of public and agency review of a draft EIR include sharing expertise, disclosing agency analyses, checking for accuracy, detecting omissions, discovering public concerns, and soliciting counterproposals. Reviewers of a draft EIR are requested to focus on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts on the environment and ways in which
the significant effects of the project might be avoided or mitigated. Comments are most helpful when they suggest additional specific alternatives or mitigation measures that would provide better ways to avoid or mitigate significant environmental effects.

This Draft EIR is being distributed directly to agencies, organizations, and interested groups and persons for comment during a 45-day formal review period in accordance with Section 15087 of the State CEQA Guidelines. The EIR process, including means by which members of the public can comment on the EIR, is discussed further in Section 2.0, Introduction.

1.4 Project Overview

This section describes the local and regional setting, surrounding land uses, project objectives, and proposed project characteristics. The proposed project is described in further detail in Section 3.0, Project Description.

1.4.1 Local and Regional Setting

The proposed project is located in northeastern Kern County 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 (Figure 1-1). The project area has been heavily impacted by authorized and unauthorized off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and livestock grazing. The BLM’s Jawbone OHV Area is located off Jawbone Canyon Road, to the east of the site. Existing development in the area includes rural access roads, producing and non-producing water wells, cattle ranching and maintenance facilities, and existing meteorological towers (met towers). Water sources include Cottonwood Creek and Butterbredt Springs. 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. The distance from the PCT to the nearest proposed WTG within the project site is 1.7 miles.

Major transportation corridors in the region include State Route (SR) 14 (north–south) and SR 58 (east–west), which intersect about 20 miles south of the project area in the community of Mojave. Population centers within 20 miles of the proposed project site include:

- Community of Lake Isabella (20 miles northwest of the proposed project site);
- City of California City (12 miles southeast of the proposed project site);
- City of Tehachapi (12 miles southwest of the proposed project site);
- Community of Mojave (12 miles south of the proposed project site; and
- Community of Twin Oaks (10 miles west of the proposed project site).

The proposed project site is located entirely within the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-Minute Series, Cross Mountain Topographic Quadrangle and the Emerald Mountain Topographic Quadrangle. The proposed project is located within Sections 35 and 36 of Township 29 South, Range 35 East; Section 31 of Township 29 South, Range 36 East; Sections 1, 2, 3, 10-16, 21-23, 25, 27, 28, and 33 of Township 30 South, Range 35 East; Sections 6, 7, and 9 of Township 30 South, Range 36 East.

Elevations range between 2,680 and 5,600 feet above mean sea level. Based on database searches and site reconnaissance efforts conducted during February 2011, the proposed project site consists