Section 4.10
Land Use and Planning

4.10.1 Introduction

This section of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses potential land use impacts that would result from the proposed project. The following discussion addresses existing environmental conditions in the affected environment, evaluates the proposed project’s consistency with applicable goals and policies, identifies and analyzes environmental impacts, and recommends measures to reduce or avoid adverse impacts anticipated from project construction and operation.

In particular, the policy consistency analysis addresses the project proponents request for a change in zone classification to incorporate the Wind Energy (WE) Combining District to the existing A (Exclusive Agriculture) base district for a 1,292 acre-portion of the 13,535 acre project boundary. This rezoning would allow for construction of wind turbine generators (WTGs), ancillary facilities and supporting infrastructure, and would require specific development standards that apply to the associated construction and siting of wind WTGs and accessory facilities in the WE Combining District without further discretionary review. In addition, a three acre portion of the site is within the Zone A (100-year) flood hazard area as delineated on the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRM). Therefore, the project proponents are also requesting incorporation of the Floodplain (FP) overlay zone district. Finally, the project will include a change in zone classification from A-1 MH (Limited Agriculture, Mobilehome Combining) to A for a 636.6-acre portion of the project site in order to bring it into consistency with the underlying General Plan designation. Construction of the proposed project would also require approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow the use of five temporary, mobile concrete batch plants to provide concrete and materials for WTG, substation, and operation and maintenance building foundations. The batch plants would be located onsite during construction only.

4.10.2 Environmental Setting

Project Site

The proposed project site consists of 13,535 acres, consisting of 480 privately owned parcels, located in the southeastern portion of an unincorporated area of Kern County, California. The proposed project is primarily located to the south and east of the intersection of Kelso Valley Road and Jawbone Canyon Road. Land ownership in the vicinity of the project site is comprised of interspersed parcels of private land under the jurisdiction of Kern County, federal land managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and other federal and municipal lands. Proposed project WTGs would be located entirely on private land under Kern County jurisdiction, with some access roads, underground transmission collector lines and an overhead generation-tie (gen-tie) line occurring on BLM-managed land.

The proposed project site is essentially undeveloped, but it is currently and has historically been used as grazing land for cattle. Given the historical use of the proposed project site, there is a relatively extensive system of existing unpaved roads throughout the property. 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