4.5.1 Introduction

This section of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) provides contextual background information on historical resources in the project area, including the area’s prehistoric, ethnographic, and historical settings. This section also summarizes the results of cultural surveys of the project sites, analyzes the project’s potential impacts on cultural resources, and identifies mitigation measures to address adverse impacts.

This section is based on the cultural resource records searches, inventories, and Native American consultation conducted for the project sites. Sapphos Environmental, Inc. prepared the Jawbone Wind Energy Project, Cultural Resources Technical Report (Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2011), while CH2M HILL; provided the Class III Cultural Resources Survey of the North Sky River Wind Energy Project report (CH2M HILL, 2010). The cultural evaluations were conducted in compliance with Section 5024.1 of the California Public Resources Code (PRC) to evaluate impacts to historical resources. Due to the confidential nature of the location of cultural resources, particularly archaeological sites, this report does not include maps or location descriptions. For the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), “historical resources” generally refer to prehistoric and historical archaeological sites and the built environment. Historical resources can also include areas determined to be important to Native Americans. See Section 4.5.3, Regulatory Setting, for a detailed description of CEQA guidelines.

4.5.2 Environmental Setting

The project area is located within the Kelso Valley and surrounding mountains, which is a transition area of the Mojave Desert located between the Tehachapi Mountains and the southern end of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The area is characterized as a series of peaks and ridgelines cut by steep canyons and seasonally intermittent streams in the relatively level areas of the Kelso Valley. The project area extends from lower elevations of nearly 2,500 feet above mean sea level (amsl), close to Highway 14, and reaches elevations of 5,200 feet amsl on the westernmost portions of the project. The project area is represented by several native biotic communities, including the Joshua Tree Woodland, the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland, the Chaparral, the Riparian Woodland, and the southern Oak Woodland communities (CH2M HILL, 2010).

Prehistoric Setting

Archaeological sequences for the Great Basin and Mojave Desert are grouped into Late Pleistocene and Early, Middle, and Late Holocene time frames, with period and phase definitions varying by region. The Class III Cultural Resources Survey of the North Sky River Wind Energy Project prepared by CH2M HILL, 2010, states that cultural developments in southern California have occurred gradually and have shown long-term stability making the synthesis of chronologies and applying them to specific locales problematic. The CH2MHill report discusses two primary regional syntheses that have been commonly used for the southern California deserts The first was advanced by Wallace in 1955 and then refined in 1978, and uses major cultural developments to define four cultural horizons, each with characteristic local variations—Early Period (Early Man Horizon), Milling Stone, Intermediate, and Late Period. The second was advanced by Wallace in 1962 and modified this chronology specifically for the high deserts of southern California by defining five