

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF DRAFT EIR FOR VEGA SES 6 SOLAR AND BATTERY STORAGE PROJECT AND
NOTICE OF PUBLIC EIR SCOPING MEETING**

The Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project as described below. Additionally, a public scoping meeting for the proposed EIR will be by the Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department on **July 28, 2022 at 6:00 P.M.** This scoping meeting will be at the Planning & Development Services building located at 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243. Public comments regarding the scope of the EIR are welcomed at this meeting.

SUBJECT: VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project EIR

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CONSIDERATION: To Be Determined.

PROJECT LOCATION: The solar energy facility site is located on approximately 320 acres of privately owned vacant land on a single parcel (Assessor Parcel No. [APN] 034-160-002) in the unincorporated area of Imperial County, CA. The site is located approximately 6 miles south of the southern-most edge of the Salton Sea; 10 miles west of the City of Brawley; and approximately 5 miles southwest of the community of Westmorland. The solar energy facility site is located directly south of Andre Road and 0.50 mile west of the Westside Main Canal. The solar energy facility site is bound by undeveloped, Open Space/Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land to the west and south, and active agricultural land to the north and east. The Westside Main Canal travels southeast to northwest and is located northeast and east of the solar energy facility site.

The proposed project includes an approximately 4-mile electrical generator intertie (gen-tie) transmission line that would connect to the Imperial Irrigation District's (IID) existing 161 kilovolt (kV) "L" Line. The entire gen-tie route would be on federal lands managed by the BLM within the California Desert Conservation Area planning area. The gen-tie route begins at the northwest corner of the solar facility site, heads west approximately 0.5 miles on BLM land, then north for approximately 1 mile, and then west for 2.5 miles along Garvey Road where it would connect to IID's 161 kV "L" Line.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The project applicant, Apex Energy Solutions, LLC, proposes to construct and operate an 80-megawatt (MW) photovoltaic (PV) solar facility with an integrated 160 MW battery energy storage system (BESS) on approximately 320 acres of privately owned land. The proposed project would be comprised of solar PV arrays panels, an on-site substation, BESS, gen-tie line, inverters, transformers, underground electrical cables, and access roads.

The County Land Use Ordinance, Division 17, includes the Renewable Energy (RE) Overlay Zone, which authorizes the development and operation of renewable energy projects with an approved conditional use permit (CUP). CUP applications proposed for specific renewable energy projects not located in the RE Overlay Zone would not be allowed without an amendment to the RE Overlay Zone. The entire project site (APN 034-160-002) is located outside of the RE Overlay Zone.

Implementation of the project requires an amendment to the County's General Plan Renewable Energy and Transmission Element, Zone Change, and approval of a CUP, as described below:

- **General Plan Amendment:** The applicant is requesting a General Plan Amendment to include/classify the project parcel (APN 034-160-002) into the RE Overlay Zone. No change in the underlying General Plan land use (Agriculture) is proposed.
- **Zone Change:** The project site is currently zoned Open Space/Preservation (S-2). The applicant is requesting a Zone Change to classify the project parcel (APN 034-160-002) into the RE Overlay Zone to allow for solar and battery storage development.
- **Conditional Use Permit:** Implementation of the project would require the approval of a CUP by the County to allow for the construction and operation of the proposed solar energy facility with an integrated battery storage system on land zoned S-2.
- **Water Supply Assessment:** Implementation of the project would require the approval of the Water Supply Assessment.

As previously mentioned above, the proposed gen-tie line would be located entirely on BLM land. The project applicant has filed a right-of-way (ROW) grant application with the BLM for a permit to construct, operate, and maintain the gen-tie line. The proposed ROW would be 60-foot-wide. Construction of the gen-tie line would result in approximately 24.5 acres of disturbed area.

PROJECT APPLICANT: Apex Energy Solutions, LLC

URBAN AREA PLAN: None, located in unincorporated area of County of Imperial

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DISTRICT: District 3, Supervisor Michael W. Kelley

ANTICIPATED SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS: The EIR will analyze potential impacts associated with the following: Aesthetics; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; Geology/Soils; Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology/Water Quality; Land Use/Planning; Noise and Vibration; Public Services; Transportation/Circulation; Tribal Cultural Resources; Utilities and Service Systems including water supply; Cumulative Impacts; and, Growth-Inducing Impacts.

COMMENTS REQUESTED: The Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department would like to know your ideas about the potential effects this project might have on the environment and your suggestions as to mitigation or ways the project may be revised to reduce or avoid any potentially significant environmental impacts. Your comments will guide the scope and content of potential environmental issues to be examined in the EIR. Your comments may be submitted in writing to David Black, Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department, 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243. Available project information may be reviewed at this location.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP) REVIEW PERIOD: July 11, 2022 through August 15, 2022