CHAPTER 3.0 – ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

3.1 EXISTING LAND USE

The Project's plant and facilities will be located at 477 West McDonald Road, Calipatria, California (Project site) which is approximately 3.8 miles southwest of the community of Niland. The Project site is located on three parcels privately owned by HR1 LLC in the County: APNs 020-100-025, 020-100-044, and 020-100-046. Currently, the HR1 power plant exists within the northeast corner of the 65.12-acre parcel, APN 020-100-044. The Project's plant facilities would be built on an approximately 37-acre area that would be subdivided out of the existing 65.12 acres. An additional 15 acres of the Project site located on the northwestern parcel APN 020-100-025 and approximately 40 acres of the Project site located on the southeast parcel APN 020-100-046 will be added to the 37 acres through a subdivision map application to form the new parcel for the Project.

All parcels that make up the Project site are zoned medium industrial (M-2) and are located within the geothermal overlay zone (G) and pre-existing allowed/restricted overlay zone (PE). The M-2 zone is used to designate areas for wholesale commercial, storage, trucking, assembly-type manufacturing, general manufacturing, research and development, medium intensity fabrication, and other similar medium-intensity processing facilities. Land in the PE overlay zone is also classified in another "base" zone and is intended to allow an existing base zoned use to continue with its current use even though, following the strict interpretation of the County General Plan and Zoning Ordinances, such use is a pre-existing, nonconforming use. Additionally, the geothermal overlay zone designates area for geothermal energy extraction and associated activities. The Project is located entirely within the Salton Sea Geothermal Overlay Zone.

Two primary entry driveways that serve as the access to the Project site will be constructed from McDonald Road. A secondary access entrance to the Project site will serve as an emergency-only access point and will be constructed off Davis Road. Primary highway access to the Proposed Project site will be via Highway 111. The Applicant will obtain encroachment permits from the County Department of Public Works for the driveway access. The unpaved portion of McDonald Road between Highway 111 and English Road will be paved.

3.1.1 Existing Site Uses

Currently, the location of the Proposed Project is partially on the existing HR1 site, which was previously permitted for the geothermal plant. In addition to the actual power plant, the rest of the land has been used for laydown areas, storage areas, and stormwater management. The additional land that will be included is an approximately 15-acre parcel, APN 020-100-025, located at the southeast corner of Davis Road and McDonald Road. This 15-acre site has been vacant for several decades and was previously used for geothermal testing. Also added to the Project site is an approximate 40-acre portion of APN 020-100-046, directly south of the HR1 plant site.

The western portion of the Project site is located within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) "Zone A" flood zone, in which there is a 1-percent annual chance of flooding. However, to comply with FEMA regulations, during the construction of HR1, a berm was installed along the exterior boundary to eliminate the possibility of flooding.

3.1.2 Surrounding Land Uses

Zoning designations of the surrounding properties include M2G-PE to the north, east, and south and Open Space/Recreational (S-1) to the west. The properties bordering the Project site are designated for Agricultural land use in the County's General Plan (County 2007, 2015). The land surrounding the Project site is mainly undeveloped agricultural or vacant land. To the west of the Project site (on the west side of Davis Road) is generally IID-owned vacant marsh land adjoining the Salton Sea. To the north of the Project site is vacant land that now is mostly used for duck hunting clubs and the location of the production and injection wells for HR1. To the south is vacant land that has never been in any production and is also the site of numerous "mud-pots." The closest development in the vicinity is Synthetic Genomics Inc., a biotechnology company with an algae farm approximately 0.5 mile southeast of the Project site. The closest residence to the Project site is approximately 1.0 mile north on Pound Road. The topography of the area is generally flat.

Fire protection and emergency medical services in the Project area are provided by the Imperial County Fire District. The closest fire station to the Project site is the Niland Station, approximately 4 miles northeast, or an approximately nine-minute drive. Police protection services in the area are provided by the Imperial County Sheriff's Department. The closest police station to the Project site is the Imperial County Sheriff's office in Niland, approximately 4 miles northeast, or an approximately 10-minute drive.

Utility services that serve the existing area are as follows:

- Water: Imperial Irrigation District
- Sewer: Hudson Ranch Power I Geothermal Plant
- Electricity: Imperial Irrigation District
- Gas: None
- Telephone/Internet: AT&T and Beamspeed

3.1.3 Adopted Plans

General Plan

The City's General Plan was adopted in 1993. The General Plan outlines the goals, policies, and development regulations within the County. The 10 elements discussed in the General Plan are:

- Agricultural Element
- Circulation and Scenic Highways Element
- Conservation and Open Space Element
- Housing Element
- Land Use Element
- Noise Element
- Parks Element
- Renewable Energy and Transmission Element
- Seismic and Public Safety Element
- Water Element

All sections of the General Plan have been comprehensively updated since 1993. The Seismic and Public Safety Element and Water Element were updated in 1997; the Circulation and Scenic Highways Element

and Parks Element in 2008; the Housing Element in 2013; the Agricultural Element, Land Use Element, Noise Element, and Renewable Energy and Transmission Element in 2015; and the Conservation and Open Space Element in 2016. In addition, the City's Zoning Map was updated in 2007, and the Zoning Code was updated in 2019. The Project land use category is Agriculture, according to the General Plan Land Use Element; however, a nonagricultural land use may be permitted within General Plan-designated agricultural land if the use does not conflict with agricultural operations and will not result in the premature elimination of agricultural operations (County 2015).

3.2 RELATED PROJECTS

CEQA requires that an EIR contain an assessment of the cumulative impacts that could result from a project and other related projects. As defined in the CEQA Guidelines, "[c]umulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts." Although project-related impacts may be individually minor, the cumulative effects of these impacts, in combination with the impacts of other projects, could be significant under CEQA and must be addressed. Through the evaluation of cumulative impacts, CEQA attempts to ensure that large-scale environmental impacts will not be ignored.

The analysis of cumulative effects "need not provide as great detail as is provided for the effects attributable to the project alone," but the discussion "shall reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence." Where a Lead Agency concludes that the cumulative effects of a project, taken together with the impacts of past, present, and probable future projects, are significant, the Lead Agency then must determine whether the project's incremental contribution to such significant cumulative impact is "cumulatively considerable," and thus significant in and of itself.

The section additionally states, "when the combined cumulative impact associated with the project's incremental effect and the effects of other projects is not significant, the EIR shall briefly indicate why the cumulative impact is not significant and is not discussed in further detail in the EIR. A Lead Agency shall identify facts and analysis supporting the Lead Agency's conclusion that the cumulative impact is less than significant"(State CEQA Guidelines sec 15130[a]).

This Draft EIR considers the effects of the Project in relation to the full development forecasted by General Plan and other related projects either proposed, approved, or under construction in the area. A total of seven related projects within the County, illustrated in Figure 3.0-1, have been identified in relation to the Project based on their proximity to the Project site. Based on the timing of the NOP and in accordance with CEQA, these are projects which are considered reasonably foreseeable to be built in the near future. Table 3.0-1: Related Projects provides information on the land use, location, and size of these related projects. The list of related projects was used to assess cumulative conditions where appropriate.

Table 3.0-1: Related Projects

Project Name	Description	Approximate Distance from Project Site	Status
Chocolate Mountain	320 acres of 49.9 MW Solar Field	7.0 miles north	Approved Not Built
Lindsey	148 acres of 20 MW Solar Field	5.0 miles southeast	Approved Not Built
Midway Solar Farm III	162 acres of 20 MW Solar Field	3.0 miles southeast	Approved Under Construction
Midway Solar Farm IV	150 acres of 20 MW Solar Field	3.5 miles southeast	Approved Not Built
Nider	320 acres of 100 MW Solar Field	6.0 miles southeast	Pending Approval
Ormat Wister Solar	640 acres of 40 MW Solar Field	5.75 miles northeast	Pending Approval
Wilkinson	302 acres of 30 MW Solar Field	5.5 miles southeast	Approved Not Built

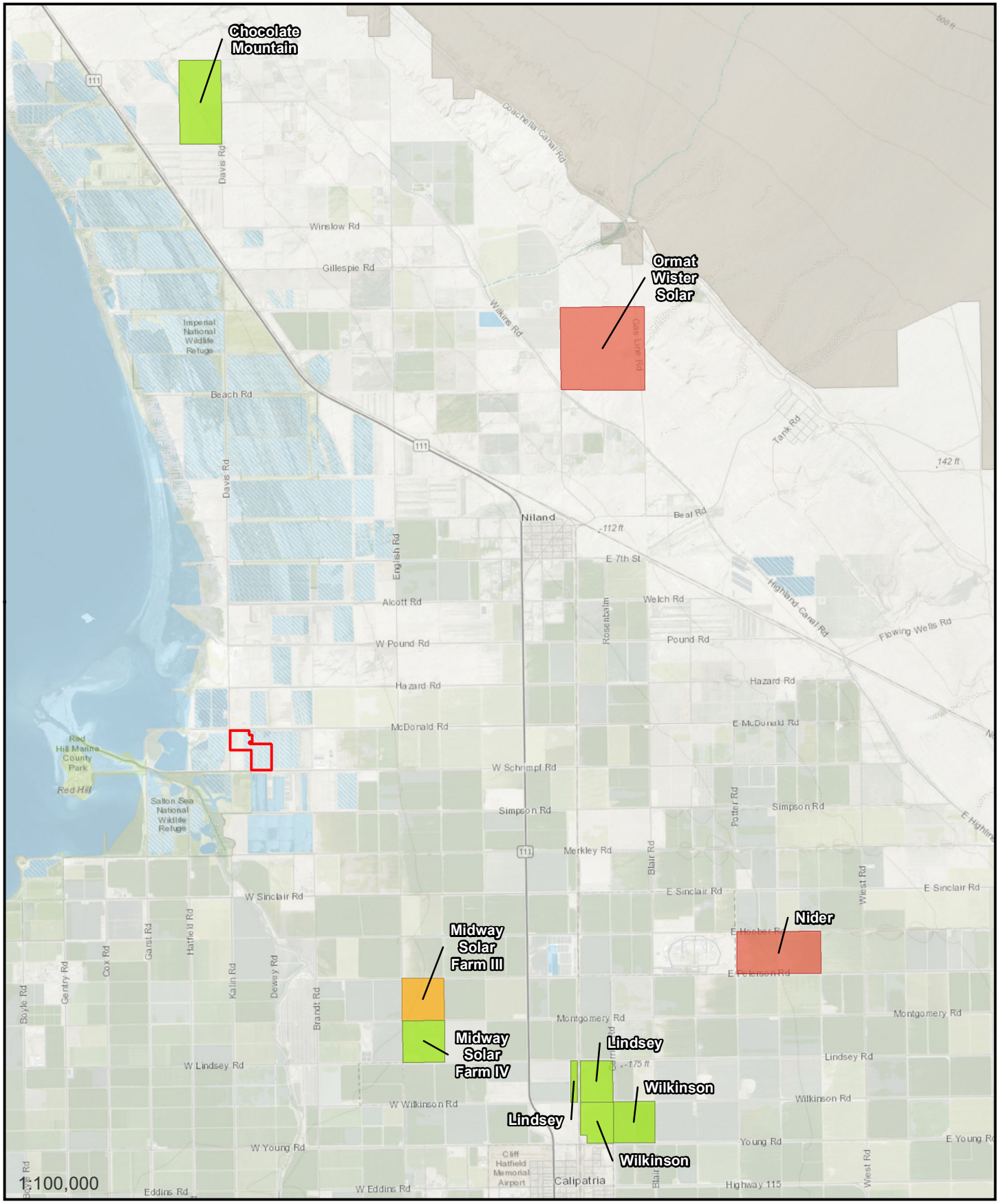
Chocolate Mountain
Ormat Wister Solar
Midway Solar Farm III
Midway Solar Farm IV
Nider
Lindsey
Lindsey
Wilkinson
Wilkinson
Energy Source Mineral
Realted Projects Status
Approved Not Built
Approved Under Construction
Pending Approval
1:100,000
N
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Figure 3-1
Energy Source Mineral
Related Projects
Name: 21268 PLAN Fig 3-1 Related Projects.Mxd
Print Date: 3/2/2021, Author: pcarlos
CHAMBERS GROUP