

Imperial County Planning & Development Services Planning / Building

Jim Minnick DIRECTOR					
TO:	Chairman Vice-Chairman Commissioner Commissioner Commissioner Commissioner Commissioner Commissioner Commissioner Steven Walker Sylvia Chavez				
FROM:	Jim Minnick, Secretary Planning & Development Services Director				
SUBJECT:	Public Hearing for the consideration of the proposed NorthStar 3 Solar Energy and Battery Storage Project (General Plan Amendment #23-0002, Zone Change #23- 0002 and Conditional Use Permits #23-0007 & #23-0008) located at 4580 West Highway 86, Westmorland, CA (APNs 017-350-031-000, 017-350-030-000 & 017-350-027-000; Lattitude 33° 11' 4.5708" N – Longitude -115° 53' 6.4716" W) to determine Consistency with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP). [Gerardo A. Quero, Planner II] (ALUC 09-24)				
DATE OF REPORT:	August 21, 2024				
AGENDA ITEM NO:	2				
HEARING DATE:	August 21, 2024				
HEARING TIME:	6:00 p.m.				
HEARING LOCATION:	County Administration Center Board of Supervisors Chambers 940 Main Street El Centro, CA 92243				

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is Staff's recommendation that the Airport Land Use Commission finds the proposed General Plan Amendment #23-0002, Zone Change #23-0002 and Conditional Use Permit #23-0007 (Solar\Battery) & CUP #23-0008 (Groundwater Well) for the NorthStar 3 Solar Energy Generation and Battery Storage Project be consistent with the 1996 Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

Project Location:

The proposed project is located in the northwest portion of Imperial County, California on an approximately 585-acre project site. The project site consists of three project parcels: Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 017-350-031 (305 acres), APN 017-350-030 (160 acres), and APN 017-350-027 (120 acres). The project site is situated near the western edge of the Salton Sea and is located approximately 9 miles southeast of the town of Salton City. State Route 86, located adjacent to the southwest corner of the project site, provides regional access to the project site. Sandy Beach Road is immediately south of the project site and provides local vehicular access to the project site. The abandoned Naval Auxiliary Air Station – Salton Sea is located approximately 1 mile northeast of the project site.

Project Description:

The applicant, Apex Energy Solutions, LLC, proposes the NorthStar 3 Solar Energy Generation and Battery Storage Project through General Plan Amendment #23-0002, Zone Change #23-0002, and Conditional Use Permits #23-0007 (Solar PV/BESS) and #23-0008 (Groundwater Well), which consists of the construction and operation of a 100-megawatt (MW) solar photovoltaic (PV) energy generation facility with up to a 200-megawatt (MW) battery storage (BESS) component and an on-site transmission line to connect to the Imperial Irrigation District's existing 161kV "L" Line. The proposed project would be located on three privately owned parcels encompassing approximately 585 acres in the northwest portion of the County.

General Plan/ALUCP Analysis:

The proposed project is located within an unincorporated area of the County. The existing General Plan land use designation is "Agriculture." The project site is currently zoned as S-2 (Open Space/Preservation) located outside the Renewable Energy Overlay Zone. The proposed General Plan Amendment and Zone Change propose to include/classify APN(s) 017-350-031-000, 017-350-030-000 & 017-350-027-000 into the Renewable Energy Overlay for the implementation of the proposed Solar and Battery project through approved Conditional Use Permits by the County of Imperial. (i.e., zone change from S-2 to S-2-RE). The underlying "Agriculture" General Plan designation would remain.

"Any request for variance from a local agency's height limitation ordinance; and any other proposed land use action, as determined by the local planning agency, involving a question of compatibility with airport activities" (Section 2.3.3(c)(h), pg. 2-3 & 2-4)"

This project is subject to the Airport Land Use Commission's review for determination of consistency with the 1996 ALUC Plan and policies as stated below:

Per Imperial County's Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, Part I, Chapter 2 – Policies, Subsection (3) - Types of Actions Reviewed, Subsection (1) - General Plan Consistency **Review**, states:

"...The Commission shall review the general plans and specific plans of affected local jurisdictions to determine their consistency with the Commission's policies until such time as (1) the Commission finds that the local general plan is consistent with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan..."

The proposed Solar Energy and Battery Storage project has been submitted for the Airport Land Use Commission's review and determination of consistency with the 1996 Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) due to the nature of the applications.

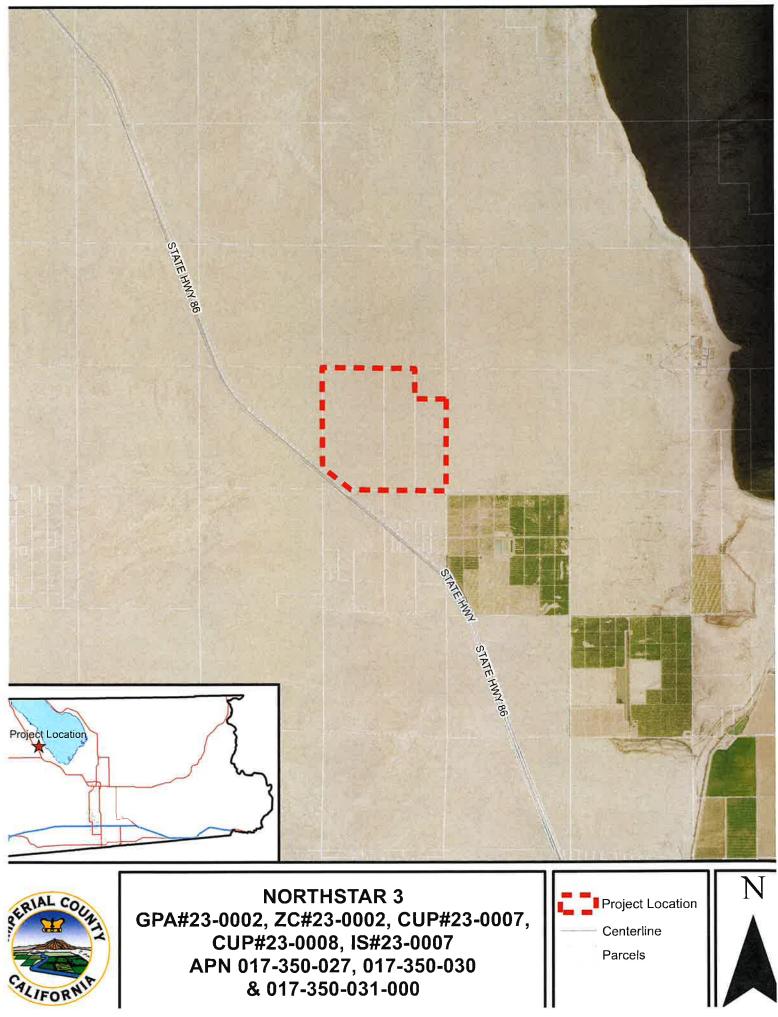
ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Vicinity Map B. ALUC Map C. Site Plan(s) D. Applications and Project Description E. ALUCP Policies Chapter 2

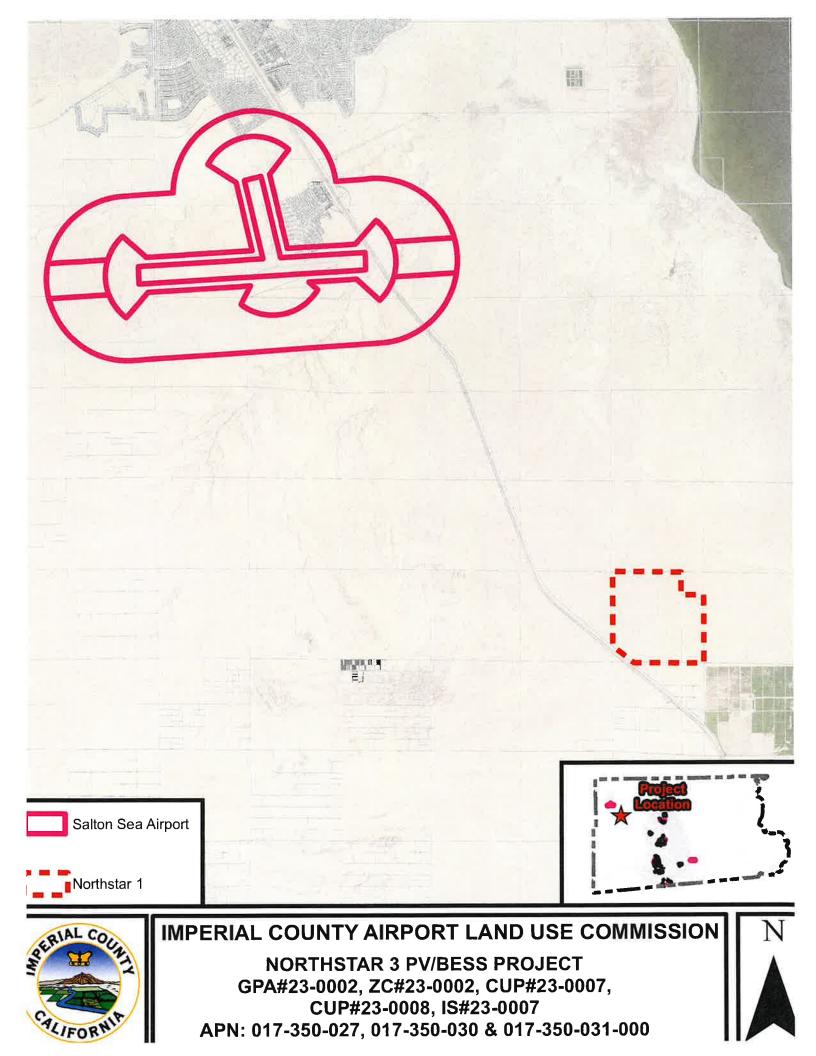
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ATTACHMENT "A" VICINITY MAP

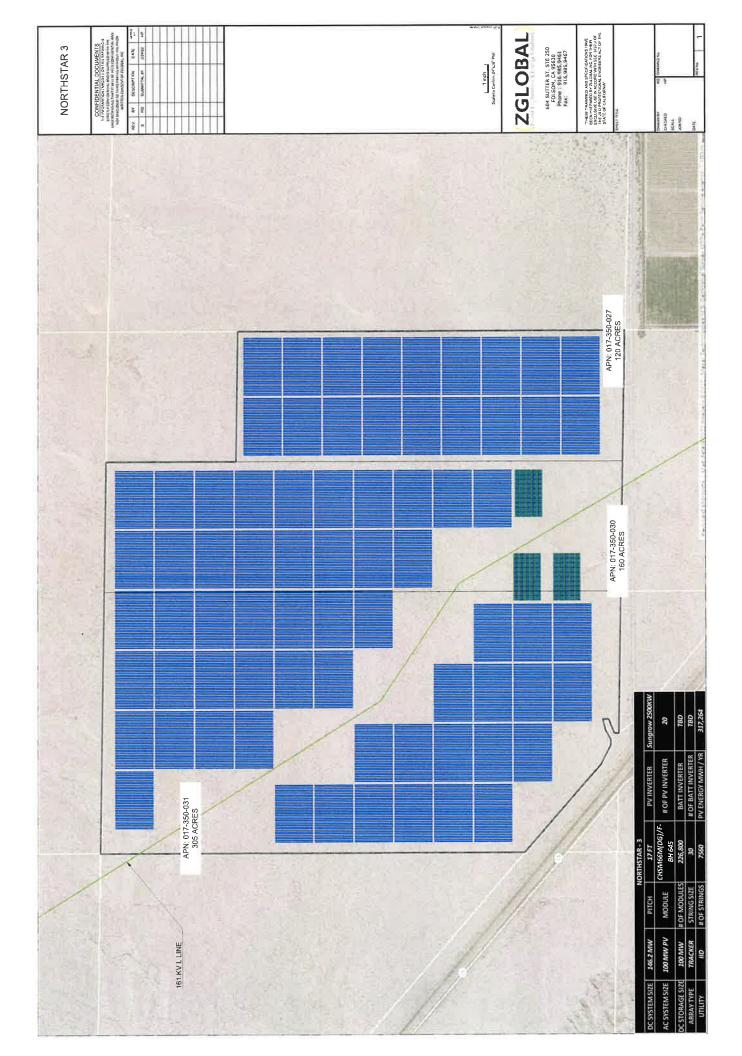
PROJECT LOCATION MAP



ATTACHMENT "B" ALUC MAP



ATTACHMENT "C" SITE PLAN(S)



ATTACHMENT "D" APPLICATIONS & PROJECT DESCRIPTION

CUP for Northstar 3 solar & SES

CONDITIONAL USE PERHIT I.C. PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPT. 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243 (760) 482-4236

- APPLICANT MUST COMPLETE ALL NUMBERED (black) SPACES – Please type or print -

1.	PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME Apex Energy Solutions, LLC	EMAIL ADDRESS c/o Jurgheuberge	r@gmail.com	
2.	MAILING ADDRESS (Street / P O Box, City, State) 604 Sutter St., SUite 250, Folsom, Ca	ZIP CODE 95630	PHONE NUMBER 760-996-0313	
3.	APPLICANT'S NAME Northstar 3 SES (Project Name)	EMAIL ADDRESS		
4.	MAILING ADDRESS (Street / P O Box, City, State) same	ZIP CODE	PHONE NUMBER	
4.	ENGINEER'S NAME CA. LICENSE NO NA	EMAIL ADDRESS		
5.	MAILING ADDRESS (Street / P O Box, City, State) NA	ZIP CODE	PHONE NUMBER	
6.	ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NO. 017-350-031 & 017-350-030 & 017-350-027	SIZE OF PROPERTY (in ac 305 Ac and 160 ac and	res or square foot) I 120 ac	ZONING (existing) S-2
7.	PROPERTY (site) ADDRESS pending			
8.	GENERAL LOCATION (i.e. city, town, cross street) see attached data (along HWY 86 near Salton City)			
9.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION See attached title report			

PLEASE PROVIDE CLEAR & CONCISE INFORMATION (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF NEEDED)

10.	DESCRIBE PROPOSED USE OF develop a solar power project w				atel	y 100 MW a	and 200 MW storage	
11. 12. 13. 14. 15.	develop a solar power project w DESCRIBE CURRENT USE OF P DESCRIBE PROPOSED SEWER DESCRIBE PROPOSED WATER S DESCRIBE PROPOSED FIRE PROPOSED FIRE PROPOSED FIRE PROPOSED FIRE PROPOSED FIRE PROPOSED VSE A BUSINESS	ROPERTY V SYSTEM N SYSTEM N DTECTION SYST	acant NA JA	meet county fi	re si	tandards	OYEES WILL BE AT THIS	S SITE?
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VSigna	Name Name	Date			C. D.	OTHER OTHER		
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	ACTION: APPROVED)	DATE DATE	_		0. E. S.	L—

CUP for Northstar 3 water well

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT I.C. PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPT. 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243 (760) 482-4236

- APPLICANT MUST COMPLETE ALL NUMBERED (black) SPACES – Please type or print -

1.	PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME Apex Energy Solutions, LLC		EMAIL ADDRES	SS Iberger@gmail.com	
2.	MAILING ADDRESS (Street / P O Box, City, State) 604 Sutter St., SUite 250, Folsom, Ca		ZIP CODE 95630	PHONE NUMBER 760-996-0313	R
3.	APPLICANT'S NAME Northstar 3 SES (Project Name)		EMAIL ADDRES		
4.	MAILING ADDRESS (Street / P O Box, City, State) same		ZIP CODE	PHONE NUMBER	3
4.	ENGINEER'S NAME CA. LIC	ENSE NO.	EMAIL ADDRES	s	
5.	MAILING ADDRESS (Street / P O Box, City, State)		ZIP CODE		8
6.	ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NO. 017-350-031 & 017-350-030 & 017-350-027	SI	ZE OF PROPERTY 305 Ac and 160 a	(in acres or square foot)	ZONING (existing)
7.	PROPERTY (site) ADDRESS pending				S-2
8.	GENERAL LOCATION (i.e. city, town, cross street) see attached data (along HWY 86 near Salton City)				-
9.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION See attached title report				
3					

PLEASE PROVIDE CLEAR & CONCISE INFORMATION (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF NEEDED)

DECONTRE PROPOSED USE OF	PROPERTY (list and describe	e in detail) deve	lop a water v	well (1.5 to 5 ac. ft/yr) to	
develop a solar power project w	ith a battery storage syste	m at approximat	ely 100 MW	and 200 MW storage	
11. DESCRIBE CURRENT USE OF PL	ROPERTY vacant				
12. DESCRIBE PROPOSED SEWER S					
13. DESCRIBE PROPOSED WATER S					
14. DESCRIBE PROPOSED FIRE PRO		meet county fire	standards		
15. IS PROPOSED USE A BUSINESS	?			LOYEES WILL BE AT THI 150, operations about 1-2	S SITE?
I / WE THE LEGAL OWNER (S) OF THE CERTIFY THAT THE INFORMATION SHOWN IS TRUE AND CORRECT.	E ABOVE PROPERTY	_		ED SUPPORT DOCU	
Ziad Alaywan		A.	SITE PLA	N	
Print Name /	March 20, 2023 Date	B.	FEE		
Jadahum	Date		-		
Signature		C.	OTHER		
Print Name	Date	D.	OTHER		
Signature					
APPLICATION RECEIVED BY:		DATE		REVIEW / APPROVAL BY	
APPLICATION DEEMED COMPLETE BY:		DATE		OTHER DEPT'S required.	\frown
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FINAL ACTION: APPROVED		DATE		0. E. S.	
		DATE		•	

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Ch of Zone for Northstar 3

CHANGE OF ZONE

I.C. PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPT. 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243 (760) 482-4236

- APPLICANT MUST COMPLETE ALL NUMBERED (black & blue) SPACES - Please type or print -

1	PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME Apex Energy Solutions, LLC		EMAIL ADDRE c/o jurgheub	ss ergei	@gmail.com
2.	MAILING ADDRESS (Street / P O Box, City, State) 604 Sutter St., Suite 250, Folsom, Ca		ZIP CODE 95630		PHONE NUMBER c/o 760-996-0313
3.	ENGINEER'S NAME C	CA. LICENSE NO.	EMAIL ADDRE	SS	
4.	MAILING ADDRESS (Street / P O Box, City, State) NA		ZIP CODE		PHONE NUMBER
5.	017-350-031 & 017-350-030 & 017-350-027	ZONING (existing) S-2		ZON S-2	ING (proposed) RE
6.	PROPERTY (site) ADDRESS pending assignment by ICPDS			SIZE 30	OF PROPERTY (in acres or square foot) 5, 160, & 120
7.	GENERAL LOCATION (i.e. city, town, cross st along HWY 86 near Salton City	reet)			
8.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				
	see attached PTR				
8.	DESCRIBE CURRENT USE ON / OF PROPER	RTY (list and describe	in detail)		
	vacant open space/desert		2		
9.	PLEASE STATE REASON FOR PROPOSED U	USE (be specific)			
	develop a 100 MW solar and 200 MW. B	ess project and none	of the parcels ap	pear t	o be in the RE zone
į					
10.	DESCRIBE SURROUNDING PROPERTY USE	S		_	
23	generally vacant open space	C			
8					

I / WE THE LEGAL OWNER (S) OF THE CERTIFY THAT THE INFORMATION S HEREIN IS TRUE AND CORRECT.	ABOVE PROPERTY HOWN OR STATED	A. SITE PLAN
Ziad Alaywan Brint Name And Callyon Signature	3/24/2023 Date	 B. PRELIMINARY TITLE REPORT (6 months or newer) C. FEE D. OTHER
APPLICATION RECEIVED BY: APPLICATION DEEMED COMPLETE BY: APPLICATION REJECTED BY: TENTATIVE HEARING BY: FINAL ACTION: APPROVED		DATE REVIEW / APPROVAL BY OTHER DEPT'S required. DATE E. H. S. DATE A. P. C. D. DATE O. E. S. DATE DATE

Project Description For the NorthStar3PV/BESS

INTRODUCTION:

The NorthStar 3 Solar Energy Project and Battery Electric Storage System (BESS) (Project), includes the construction of a 100 -megawatt (MW) alternating current solar field and a 150 MW BESS, on approximately 585 acres of vacant land on two parcels in Imperial County, California (017-350-027 @ 120 AC and APN 017-350--31 @ 305 AC and 017-350-030 @ 160 AC).

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

The Project proposes to construct a 100-megawatt (MW) alternating current solar field, consisting of 226800 single axis tracker modules in 7560 strings and associated collector and inverter facilities, and a 75 MW BESS, on approximately 585 acres of vacant land. The Project would connect to the grid offsite through an approximately .75 -mile gen-tie line to the 161 kV L IID transmission line which bisects the property. Operational water supply for the Project would be via a proposed groundwater well. None of the parcels are within the County's Renewable Energy and Transmission (RE) Element therefore, an amendment to the County's General Plan will be needed to include and classify the Project Site within the RE Overlay Zone. Additionally, a CUP to allow construction and operation of the solar energy generation facility with battery storage within the RE Overlay Zone will be required to implement the Project.

PROJECT LOCATION:

The total combined Project Site, consisting of three separate parcels of 585acres in size is located N HWY 86 southeast of Salton City. The Site is currently vacant, undeveloped land, and is surrounded by Open Space on all. Attached is the site plan (EXHIBIT A) and the gentie map (EXHIBIT B).

GENTIE CONNECTION:

To connect this project to the IID (Imperial Irrigation District) grid, a connection will be made to the onsite "L" line.

ACCESS to PROJECT SITE:

The site can be accessed from HWY 86. The project proposes to construct an entrance near the southwest corner of the project site by constructing a commercial grade access entry. The access to the site will be gated and only authorized entities will be allowed access. An encroachment permit from CALTRANS will be required for the project.

BESS:

As noted above a 150 MW battery system is being proposed with this project. The location of the BESS will be along the north east side of project. The type of battery system is yet to be finalized however more than likely it will be the TESLA Megawall or equal type of system. This will not be a battery system within a conventional building.

Project Description For the NorthStar3PV/BESS

SECURITY:

The entire site will be fenced with a 6 ft. high chain linked fence with secured access gate. In addition, this site is entirely remotely operated and will have a full video surveillance security system. Given that these type of projects are self monitored and given that they are secured by the operators there is minimal if no need for police services. At most if an incident occurred at the site the sheriff's office may receive a call for service in which case the project will pay all direct costs for such service.

FIRE PROTECTION:

This is a PV/BESS project that is located in a remote area of the County. The project will meet all County Fire Department requirements. However there will be limited need for actual fire protection in case of a fire insofar as the battery system will be the type that needs to burn to the ground rather than have water applied. These type of battery systems are in open areas and are designed not to be extinguished. In fact attempting to extinguish them creates additional problem with longer burn times and more obnoxious smoke. At most the fire department would need to perform stand by services to prevent the fire from spreading to adjacent property. Given however that adjacent lands are open space desert with no structures at most the fire department would need to minimize brush fires. There will be two 10,000 gallon water storage tanks located on site at location(s) determined by the fire dept. these tanks will be maintained full at all times for fire protection purposes only.

OPERATIONS:

This project once constructed will have no on site personnel nor on site offices. At most there may be a small storage building to house limited supplies. During normal operations there will be routine maintenance which would be performed by one or two individuals going to the site. In addition, there will be rare need for washing the panels. This may occur once each year at most.

WATER SOURCE:

Given that this site is outside of the IID"s irrigated district boundary, water cannot be obtained from any of the IID delivery canals unless IID policies change. In order to provide water for the construction and on going operations a water will need to be provided. A separate CUP application has been submitted for this project to drill and operate a water well.

ATTACHMENT "E" ALUCP POLICIES – CHAPTER 2

2

Policies

1.SCOPE OF REVIEW

1. Geographic Area of Concern

The Imperial County Airport Land Use Commission's planning area encompasses:

1. Airport Vicinity - All lands on which the uses could be negatively affected by present or future aircraft operations at the following airports in the County and lands on which the uses could negatively affect said airports. The specific limits of the planning area for each airport are depicted on the respective *Compatibility Map* for that airport as presented in Chapter 3.

- (a)
- Brawley Municipal Airport.
- (b) Calexico International Airport.
- (c) Calipatria Municipal Airport.
- (d) Holtville Airport.
- (e) Imperial County Airport.
- (f) Salton Sea Airport.
- (g) Naval Air Facility El Centro.

Countywide Impacts on Flight Safety - Those lands, regardless of their location in the County, on which the uses could adversely affect the safety of flight in the County. The specific uses of concern are identified in Paragraph 2.

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New Airports and Heliports - The site and environs of any proposed new airport or heliport anywhere in the County. The Brawley Pioneers Memorial Hospital has a heliport area on-site.

Types of Airport Impacts

The Commission is concerned only with the potential impacts related to aircraft noise, land use safety (with respect both to people on the ground and the occupants of aircraft), airspace protection, and aircraft overflights. Other impacts sometimes created by airports (e.g., air pollution, automobile traffic, etc.) are beyond the scope of this plan. These impacts are within the authority of other local, state, and federal agencies and are addressed within the environmental review procedures for airport development.

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Types of Actions Reviewed

- General Plan Consistency Review Within 180 days of adoption of the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, the Commission shall review the general plans and specific plans of affected local jurisdictions to determine their consistency with the Commission's policies. Until such time as (1) the Commission finds that the local general plan or specific plan is consistent with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, or (2) the local agency has overruled the Commission's determination of inconsistency, the local jurisdiction shall refer all actions, regulations, and permits (as specified in Paragraph 3) involving the airport area of influence to the Commission for review (Section 21676.5 (a)).
- 2. Statutory Requirements -As required by state law, the following types of actions shall be referred to the Airport Land Use Commission for determination of consistency with the Commission's plan *prior to their* approval by the local jurisdiction:

- (a) The adoption or approval of any amendment to a general or specific plan affecting the Commission's geographic area of concern as indicated in Paragraph 1 (Section 21676 (b)).
- (b) The adoption or approval of a zoning ordinance or building regulation which (1) affects the Commission's geographic area of concern as indicated in Paragraph 1 and (2) involves the types of airport impact concerns listed in Paragraph 2 (Section 21676 (b)).
- (c) Adoption or modification of the master plan for an existing publicuse airport (Section 21676 (c)).
- (d) Any proposal for a new airport or heliport whether for public use or private use (Section 21661.5).

3. Other Project Review - State law empowers the Commission to review additional types of land use "actions, regulations, and permits" involving a question of airport/land use compatibility if either: (1) the Commission and the local agency agree that these types of individual projects shall be reviewed by the Commission (Section 21676.5 (b)); or (2) the Commission finds that a local agency has not revised its general plan or specific plan or overruled the Commission and the Commission requires that the individual projects be submitted for review (Section 21676.5 (a)). For the purposes of this plan, the specific types of "actions, regulations, and permits" which the Commission shall review include:

Any proposed expansion of a city's sphere of influence within an airport's planning area.

b) Any proposed residential planned unit development consisting of five or more dwelling units within an airport's planning area.

c) Any request for variance from a local agency's height limitation ordinance.

d) Any proposal for construction or alteration of a structure (including antennas) taller than 150 feet above the ground anywhere within the County.

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e) Any major capital improvements (e.g., water, sewer, or roads) that would promote urban development.

f) Proposed land acquisition by a government entity (especially, acquisition of a school site).

g) Building permit applications for projects having a valuation greater than \$500,000.

Any other proposed land use action, as determined by the local planning agency, involving a question of compatibility with airport activities.

Review Process

Timing of Project Submittal - Proposed actions listed in Paragraph 3.1 must be submitted to the Commission for review prior to approval by the local government entity. All projects shall be referred to the Commission at the earliest reasonable point in time so that the Commission's review can be duly considered by the local jurisdiction prior to formalizing its actions. At the local government's discretion, submittal of a project for Airport Land Use Commission review can be done before, after, or concurrently with review by the local planning commission or other local advisory bodies.

2. Commission Action Choices - When reviewing a land use project proposal, the Airport Land Use Commission has a choice of either of two actions: (1) find the project consistent with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan; or, (2) find the project inconsistent with the Plan. In making a finding of inconsistency, the Commission may note the conditions under which the project would be consistent with the Plan. The Commission cannot, however, find a project consistent with the Plan subject to the inclusion of certain conditions in the project.

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