

4.7 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

This section provides an overview of existing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions within the project area and identifies applicable federal, state, and local policies related to global climate change. The impact assessment provides an evaluation of potential adverse effects with regards to GHG emissions based on criteria derived from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines in conjunction with actions proposed in Chapter 3, Project Description. OB-1 Air Analyses prepared an Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Report in April 2014 for the Iris Cluster Solar project, which includes the FSF, RSF, ISF, and LSF. The report is included in Appendix D of this EIR.

4.7.1 Environmental Setting

Global Climate Change (GCC) refers to changes in average climatic conditions on Earth as a whole, including temperature, wind patterns, precipitation and storms. Global temperatures are moderated by naturally occurring atmospheric gases, including water vapor, carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O), which are known GHGs. These gases allow solar radiation (sunlight) into the Earth's atmosphere, but prevent radiative heat from escaping, thus warming the Earth's atmosphere. Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere are often called GHGs, analogous to a greenhouse. GHGs are emitted by both natural processes and human activities. The accumulation of GHGs in the atmosphere regulates the Earth's temperature. Emissions from human activities, such as burning fossil fuels for electricity production and vehicle use, have elevated the concentration of these gases in the atmosphere.

The State of California has been at the forefront of developing solutions to address GCC. GCC refers to any significant change in measures of climate, such as average temperature, precipitation, or wind patterns over a period of time. GCC may result from natural factors, natural processes, and/or human activities that change the composition of the atmosphere and alter the surface and features of land.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) constructed several emission trajectories of GHGs needed to stabilize global temperatures and climate change impacts. The IPCC concluded that a stabilization of GHGs at 400 to 450 ppm CO₂ equivalent concentration is required to keep global mean warming below 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit (° Fahrenheit) (2° Celsius), which is assumed to be necessary to avoid dangerous climate change (Association of Environmental Professionals 2007).

State law defines GHGs as any of the following compounds CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆) (California Health and Safety, Code Section 38505(g)).

The State of California GHG Inventory performed by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), compiled statewide anthropogenic GHG emissions and sinks. It includes estimates for CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, SF₆, HFCs, and PFCs. The current inventory covers the years 2000 to 2011, and is summarized in Table 4.7-1. Data sources used to calculate this GHG inventory include California and Federal agencies, international organizations, and industry associations. The calculation methodologies are consistent with guidance from the IPCC. The 2000 emissions level is the sum total of sources from all sectors and categories in the inventory. The inventory is divided into seven broad sectors and categories in the inventory. These sectors include: agriculture, commercial and residential, electric power, industrial, transportation, recycling and waste, and high global warming potential (GWP) gases.

When accounting for GHGs, all types of GHG emissions are expressed in terms of CO₂ equivalents (CO₂e) and are typically quantified in metric tons (MT) or millions of metric tons (MMT).

TABLE 4.7-1. CALIFORNIA GHG EMISSIONS INVENTORY 2000-2011

Sector	Total 2000 Emissions (MMTCO ₂ e) ¹	Total 2011 Emissions (MMTCO ₂ e)
Agriculture	29.04	32.24
Commercial and Residential	43.64	45.47
Electric Power	104.86	86.57
Industrial	95.81	93.24
Transportation	176.29	168.42
Recycling and Waste	6.14	7.00
High GWP Gases	7.11	15.17

Source: CARB 2013.

Note: MMTCO₂e = million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent.

GHGs have varying GWP. The GWP is the potential of a gas or aerosol to trap heat in the atmosphere; it is the cumulative radiative forcing effect of a gas over a specified time horizon resulting from the emission of a unit mass of gas relative to a reference gas. The reference gas for GWP is CO₂; therefore, CO₂ has a GWP of 1. The other main GHGs that have been attributed to human activity include CH₄, which has a GWP of 21, and N₂O, which has a GWP of 310.

4.7.1.1 Regulatory Setting

On a national scale, federal agencies are addressing emissions of GHGs by reductions mandated in federal laws and Executive Orders, most recently, Executive Order 13423 Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management (January 24, 2007) was enacted. Several states have promulgated laws as a means to reduce statewide levels of GHG emissions. In particular, the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 directs the State of California to reduce statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020.

Federal

Recent actions by the U.S. EPA have allowed for the regulation of GHGs. On April 17, 2009, the U.S. EPA issued its proposed endangerment finding for GHG emissions. On December 7, 2009, the U.S. EPA Administrator signed and finalized two distinct findings regarding GHGs under Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act:

Endangerment Finding: The Administrator finds that the current and projected concentrations of the six key well-mixed GHGs: CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, HFCs, PFCs, and SF₆ in the atmosphere threaten the public health and welfare of current and future generations.

Cause or Contribute Finding: The Administrator finds that the combined emissions of these well-mixed GHGs from new motor vehicles and new motor vehicle engines contribute to the GHG pollution which threatens public health and welfare.

These findings do not themselves impose any requirements on industry or other entities. However, this action was a prerequisite to finalizing the U.S. EPA’s proposed GHG emission standards for light-duty vehicles, which were jointly proposed by U.S. EPA and the Department of Transportation’s National Highway Safety Administration on September 15, 2009 and adopted on April 1, 2010. As finalized in April 2010, the emissions standards rule for vehicles will improve average fuel economy standards to 35.5 miles per gallon by 2016. In addition, the rule will require model year 2016 vehicles to meet an estimated combined average emission level of 250 grams of CO₂ per mile.

On March 10, 2009, in response to the Fiscal Year 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act (H.R. 2764; Public Law 110–161), the U.S. EPA proposed a rule that requires mandatory reporting of GHG emissions from large sources in the United States. On September 22, 2009, the Final Mandatory Reporting of Greenhouse Gases Rule was signed, and was published in the Federal Register on October 30, 2009.

The rule became effective on December 29, 2009. The rule will collect accurate and comprehensive emissions data to inform future policy decisions.

The U.S. EPA is requiring suppliers of fossil fuels or industrial GHGs, manufacturers of vehicles and engines, and facilities that emit 25,000 MT or more per year of GHG emissions to submit annual reports to U.S. EPA. The gases covered by the proposed rule are CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, HFC, PFC, SF₆, and other fluorinated gases, including nitrogen trifluoride (NF₃) and hydrofluorinated ethers (HFE).

State

California Code of Regulations Title 24. Although not originally intended to reduce GHG emissions, California Code of Regulations Title 24 Part 6: California's Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings were first established in 1978 in response to a legislative mandate to reduce California's energy consumption. The standards are updated periodically to allow consideration and possible incorporation of new energy efficiency technologies and methods. Energy efficient buildings require less electricity, natural gas, and other fuels. Electricity production from fossil fuels and on-site fuel combustion (typically for water heating) results in GHG emissions. Therefore, increased energy efficiency results in decreased GHG emissions.

California Assemble Bill 1493. California Assembly Bill (AB) 1493 enacted on July 22, 2002, required CARB to develop and adopt regulations that reduce GHGs emitted by passenger vehicles and light duty trucks. Regulations adopted by CARB will apply to 2009 and later model year vehicles. CARB estimates that the regulation will reduce climate change emissions from light duty passenger vehicle fleet by an estimated 18 percent in 2020 and by 27 percent in 2030. The federal Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standard determines the fuel efficiency of certain vehicle classes in the United States. In 2007, as part of the Energy and Security Act of 2007, CAFE standards were increased for new light-duty vehicles to 35 miles per gallon by 2020.

Executive Order S-01-07. Executive Order S-01-07 was enacted by the Governor on January 18, 2007. Essentially, the order mandates the following: (1) that a statewide goal be established to reduce the carbon intensity of California's transportation fuels by at least 10 percent by 2020; and (2) that a Low Carbon Fuel Standard ("LCFS") for transportation fuels be established for California. It is assumed that the effects of the LCFS would be a 10% reduction in GHG emissions from fuel use by 2020.

Executive Order S-3-05. Executive Order S-3-05, signed by Governor Schwarzenegger on June 1, 2005, calls for a reduction in GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and for an 80 percent reduction in GHG emissions by 2050. Executive Order S-3-05 also calls for the California EPA (CalEPA) to prepare biennial science reports on the potential impact of continued GCC on certain sectors of the California economy. The first of these reports, "Our Changing Climate: Assessing Risks to California," and its supporting document "Scenarios of Climate Change in California: An Overview" were published by the California Climate Change Center in 2006.

Assembly Bill 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. In September 2006, Governor Schwarzenegger signed California AB 32, the global warming bill, into law. AB 32 directs CARB to do the following:

- Make publicly available a list of discrete early action GHG emission reduction measures that can be implemented prior to the adoption of the statewide GHG limit and the measures required to achieve compliance with the statewide limit.
- Make publicly available a GHG inventory for the year 1990 and determine target levels for 2020.
- On or before January 1, 2010, adopt regulations to implement the early action GHG emission reduction measures.
- On or before January 1, 2011, adopt quantifiable, verifiable, and enforceable emission reduction measures by regulation that will achieve the statewide GHG emissions limit by 2020, to become operative on January 1, 2012, at the latest. The emission reduction measures may include direct

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emission reduction measures, alternative compliance mechanisms, and potential monetary and nonmonetary incentives that reduce GHG emissions from any sources or categories of sources that ARB finds necessary to achieve the statewide GHG emissions limit.

- Monitor compliance with and enforce any emission reduction measure adopted pursuant to AB 32.
- CARB approved a 1990 GHG emissions level of 427 MTCO₂e, on December 6, 2007 in its Staff Report. Therefore, in 2020, emissions in California are required to be at or below 427 MTCO₂e. It was estimated that the 2020 estimated BAU of 596 MTCO₂e would have required a 28 percent reduction to reach the 1990 level of 427 MTCO₂e.

In response to the requirements of AB 32, the CARB released a Scoping Plan in 2008. This Scoping Plan, developed by CARB in coordination with the Climate Action Team (CAT), proposed a comprehensive set of actions designed to reduce overall GHG emissions in California, improve the environment, reduce dependence on oil, diversify our energy sources, save energy, create new jobs, and enhance public health. It was adopted by CARB in December 2008. According to the Scoping Plan, the 2020 target of 427 MTCO₂e requires the reduction of 169 MTCO₂e, or approximately 28.3 percent, from the State's projected 2020 BAU emissions level of 596 MTCO₂e.

In August 2011, the Scoping Plan was re-approved by the Board and includes the Final Supplement to the Scoping Plan Functional Equivalent Document. The 2011 Scoping Plan expands the list of nine Early Action Measures into a list of 39 Recommended Actions.

Senate Bill 97. Senate Bill 97, enacted in 2007, amends the CEQA statute to clearly establish that GHG emissions and the effects of GHG emissions are appropriate subjects for CEQA analysis. It directs Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to develop draft CEQA Guidelines “for the mitigation of GHG emissions or the effects of GHG emissions” by July 1, 2009, and directs the Resources Agency to certify and adopt the CEQA Guidelines by January 1, 2010.

On December 30, 2009, the Natural Resources Agency adopted amendments to the CEQA Guidelines in the California Code of Regulations. The amendments went into effect on March 18, 2010, and are summarized below:

- Climate action plans and other GHG reduction plans can be used to determine whether a project has significant impacts, based upon its compliance with the plan.
- Local governments are encouraged to quantify the GHG emissions of proposed projects, noting that they have the freedom to select the models and methodologies that best meet their needs and circumstances. In addition, consideration of several qualitative factors may be used in the determination of significance, such as the extent to which the given project complies with state, regional, or local GHG reduction plans and policies. The Guidelines do not set or dictate specific thresholds of significance.
- When creating their own thresholds of significance, local governments may consider the thresholds of significance adopted or recommended by other public agencies, or recommended by experts.
- New amendments include guidelines for determining methods to mitigate the effects of GHG emissions in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines.
- The Guidelines are clear to state that “to qualify as mitigation, specific measures from an existing plan must be identified and incorporated into the project; general compliance with a plan, by itself, is not mitigation.”
- The Guidelines promote the advantages of analyzing GHG impacts on an institutional, programmatic level, and therefore approve tiering of environmental analyses and highlights some benefits of such an approach.

- Environmental impact reports (EIRs) must specifically consider a project's energy use and energy efficiency potential, pursuant to Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines.

Senate Bill 375. Senate Bill 375 requires that regions within the State which have a metropolitan planning organization must adopt a sustainable communities strategy as part of their regional transportation plans. The strategy must be designed to achieve certain goals for the reduction of GHG emissions. The bill finds that GHG from autos and light trucks can be substantially reduced by new vehicle technology, but even so, "it will be necessary to achieve significant additional GHG reductions from changed land use patterns and improved transportation. Without improved land use and transportation policy, California will not be able to achieve the goals of AB 32." SB 375 provides that new CEQA provisions be enacted to encourage developers to submit applications and local governments to make land use decisions that will help the State achieve its goals under AB 32," and that "current planning models and analytical techniques used for making transportation infrastructure decisions and for air quality planning should be able to assess the effects of policy choices, such as residential development patterns, expanded transit service and accessibility, the walkability of communities, and the use of economic incentives and disincentives."

Senate Bill 1078, Senate Bill 107, and Executive Order S-14-08. SB 1078 initially set a target of 20 percent of energy to be sold from renewable sources by the year 2017. The schedule for implementation of the Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS) was accelerated in 2006 with the Governor's signing of SB 107, which accelerated the 20 percent RPS goal from 2017 to 2010. On November 17, 2008, the Governor signed Executive Order S-14-08, which requires all retail sellers of electricity to serve 33 percent of their load with renewable energy by 2020.

Executive Order S-21-09. Executive Order S-21-09 was enacted by the Governor on September 15, 2009. Executive Order S-21-09 requires that the CARB, under its AB 32 authority, adopt a regulation by July 31, 2010 that sets a 33 percent renewable energy target as established in Executive Order S-14-08. Under Executive Order S-21-09, the CARB will work with the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and California Energy Commission to encourage the creation and use of renewable energy sources, and will regulate all California utilities. The CARB will also consult with the Independent System Operator and other load balancing authorities on the impacts on reliability, renewable integration requirements, and interactions with wholesale power markets in carrying out the provisions of the Executive Order. The order requires the CARB to establish highest priority for those resources that provide the greatest environmental benefits with the least environmental costs and impacts on public health.

Senate Bill X1-2. Senate Bill X1-2 was signed by Governor Brown, in April 2011. This new RPS preempts CARB's 33 percent Renewable Electricity Standard and applies to all electricity retailers in the state including publicly owned utilities (POUs), investor-owned utilities (IOUs), electricity service providers, and community choice aggregators. All of these entities must adopt the new RPS goals of 20 percent of retail sales from renewables by the end of 2013, 25 percent by the end of 2016, and the 33 percent requirement being met by the end of 2020. Renewable energy sources include wind, geothermal, and solar.

County of Imperial

Pursuant to the requirements of SB 97, the Resources Agency adopted amendments to the State CEQA Guidelines to provide regulatory guidance on the analysis and mitigation of GHG emissions in CEQA documents, while giving lead agencies the discretion to set quantitative or qualitative thresholds for the assessment and mitigation of GHG and GCC impacts. Formal CEQA thresholds for lead agencies must always be established through a public hearing process. Imperial County has not established formal quantitative or qualitative thresholds through a public rulemaking process, but CEQA permits the lead agency to establish a project-specific threshold of significance if backed by substantial evidence, until such time as a formal threshold is approved.

4.7.1.2 Existing Conditions

GHGs are gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. These emissions occur from natural processes as well as human activities. The accumulation of GHGs in the atmosphere regulates the earth's temperature. Scientific evidence indicates a trend of increasing global temperature over the past century, which a number of scientists attribute to an increase in GHG emissions from human activities. Recent observed changes due to global warming include shrinking glaciers, thawing permafrost, a lengthened growing season, and shifts in plant and animal ranges (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007). Generally accepted predictions of long-term environmental impacts due to global warming include sea level rise, changing weather patterns with increases in the severity of storms and droughts, changes to local and regional ecosystems including the potential loss of species, and a significant reduction in winter snow pack.

Human-caused sources of CO₂ include combustion of fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas, gasoline and wood). Data from ice cores indicate that CO₂ concentrations remained steady prior to the current period for approximately 10,000 years. Concentrations of CO₂ have increased in the atmosphere since the industrial revolution. CH₄ is the main component of natural gas and also arises naturally from anaerobic decay of organic matter. Human-caused sources of natural gas include landfills, fermentation of manure and cattle farming. Human-caused sources of N₂O include combustion of fossil fuels and industrial processes such as nylon production and production of nitric acid. Other GHGs are present in trace amounts in the atmosphere and are generated from various industrial or other uses. GHGs present in the project study areas primarily include CO₂ and N₂O from farm equipment and local traffic.

The California Climate Change Center (CCCC) used a range of emissions scenarios developed by the IPCC to project a series of potential warming ranges (i.e., temperature increases) that may occur in California during the 21st century. Three warming ranges were identified: Lower warming range (3.0 to 5.5° F); medium warming range (5.5 to 8.0° F); and higher warming range (8.0 to 10.5° F). The CCCC also presents an analysis of the future projected climate changes in California under each warming range scenario (CCCC 2006).

According to CCCC, substantial temperature increases would result in a variety of impacts to the people, economy, and environment of California. These impacts would result from a projected increase in extreme conditions, with the severity of the impacts depending upon actual future emissions of GHGs and associated warming. These impacts are described below.

Public Health. Higher temperatures are expected to increase the frequency, duration, and intensity of conditions conducive to air pollution formation. For example, days with weather conducive to O₃ formation are projected to increase by 25 to 35 percent under the lower warming range and 75 to 85 percent under the medium warming range. In addition, if global background O₃ levels increase as is predicted in some scenarios, it may become impossible to meet local air quality standards. An increase in wildfires could also occur, and the corresponding increase in the release of pollutants including PM_{2.5} could further compromise air quality. The Climate Scenarios report indicates that large wildfires could become up to 55 percent more frequent of GHG emissions are not significantly reduced.

Potential health effects from global climate change may arise from temperature increases, climate-sensitive diseases, extreme events, and air quality. There may be direct temperature effects through increases in average temperature leading to more extreme heat waves and less extreme cold spells. Those living in warmer climates are likely to experience more stress and heat-related problems (e.g., heat rash and heat stroke). In addition, climate sensitive diseases (such as malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever, and encephalitis) may increase, such as those spread by mosquitoes and other disease-carrying insects.

Water Resources. A vast network of reservoirs and aqueducts capture and transport water throughout the State from Northern California rivers and the Colorado River. The current distribution system relies on Sierra Nevada mountain snowpack to supply water during the dry spring and summer months. Rising temperatures, potentially compounded by decreases in precipitation, could severely reduce spring

snowpack, increasing the risk of summer water shortages. In addition, if temperatures continue to rise more precipitation would fall as rain instead of snow, further reducing the Sierra Nevada spring snowpack by as much as 70 to 90 percent. The State's water resources are also at risk from rising sea levels. An influx of seawater would degrade California's estuaries, wetlands, and groundwater aquifers.

Agriculture. Increased GHG and associated increases in temperature are expected to cause widespread changes to the agricultural industry, reducing the quantity and quality of agricultural products statewide. Significant reductions in available water supply to support agriculture would also impact production. Crop growth and development will change as will the intensity and frequency of pests and diseases.

Ecosystems/Habitats. Continued global warming will likely shift the ranges of existing invasive plants and weeds, thus alternating competition patterns with native plants. Range expansion is expected in many species while range contractions are less likely in rapidly evolving species with significant populations already established. Continued global warming is also likely to increase the populations of and types of pests. Continued global warming would also affect natural ecosystems and biological habitats throughout the State.

Wildland Fires. Global warming is expected to increase the risk of wildfire and alter the distribution and character of natural vegetation. If temperatures rise into the medium warming range, the risk of large wildfires in California could increase by as much as 55 percent, which is almost twice the increase expected if temperatures stay in the lower warming range. However, since wildfire risk is determined by a combination of factors including precipitation, winds, temperature, and landscape and vegetation conditions, future risks will not be uniform throughout the State.

Rising Sea Levels. Rising sea levels, more intense coastal storms, and warmer water temperatures will increasingly threaten the State's coastal regions. Under the high warming scenario, sea level is anticipated to rise 22 to 35 inches by 2100. A sea level risk of this magnitude would inundate coastal areas with salt water, accelerate coastal erosion, threaten levees and inland water systems, and disrupt wetlands and natural habitats.

4.7.2 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section presents the significance criteria used for considering project impacts related to GHGs, the methodology employed for the evaluation, an impact evaluation, and mitigation requirements, if necessary.

4.7.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

Based on CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, project impacts related to GHGs are considered significant if any of the following occur:

- Generate GHG emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment; or
- Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHGs.

As discussed in Section 15064.4 of the CEQA Guidelines, the determination of the significance of GHG emissions calls for a careful judgment by the lead agency consistent with the provisions in Section 15064. A lead agency should make a good-faith effort, based to the extent possible on scientific and factual data, to describe, calculate or estimate the amount of GHG emissions resulting from a project. A lead agency shall have discretion to determine, in the context of a particular project, whether to:

- 1) Use a model or methodology to quantify GHG emissions resulting from a project, and which model or methodology to use. The lead agency has discretion to select the model or methodology it considers most appropriate provided it supports its decision with substantial evidence. The lead

agency should explain the limitations of the particular model or methodology selected for use; and/or

- 2) Rely on a qualitative analysis or performance based standards.

A lead agency should consider the following factors, among others, when assessing the significance of impacts from GHG emissions on the environment:

- 1) The extent to which the project may increase or reduce GHG emissions as compared to the existing environmental setting;
- 2) Whether the project emissions exceed a threshold of significance that the lead agency determines applies to the project; and
- 3) The extent to which the project complies with regulations or requirements adopted to implement a statewide, regional, or local plan for the reduction or mitigation of GHG emissions. Such requirements must be adopted by the relevant public agency through a public review process and must reduce or mitigate the project's incremental contribution of GHG emissions. If there is substantial evidence that the possible effects of a particular project are still cumulatively considerable notwithstanding compliance with the adopted regulations or requirements, an EIR must be prepared for the project.

Different agencies and studies estimate different goals for reduction of emissions to achieve 1990 levels by the year 2020, as set forth in AB 32. Some agencies have estimated a reduction of 28 to 29 percent, based on the ARB's analysis that statewide 2020 business as usual GHG emissions would be 596 MMT CO₂e, with 1990 emissions of 427 MMTCO₂e, for a reduction of 28.35 percent (ARB 2010).

The Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Report prepared by OB-1 Air Analyses (Appendix D of this EIR) proposes the use of the "Tier 3" quantitative thresholds for residential and commercial projects as recommended by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). The SCAQMD proposes that if a project generates GHG emissions below 3,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents (tCO₂e), it could be concluded that the project's GHG contribution is not cumulatively considerable and is therefore considered less than significant under CEQA. If the project generates GHG emissions above the threshold, the analysis must identify mitigation measures to reduce GHG emissions.

4.7.2.2 Methodology

Projects that meet the criteria for conducting a climate change analysis are required to conduct a GHG inventory and disclose GHG emissions associated with project implementation and operation under business as usual conditions. Business as usual is defined as the emissions that would have occurred in the absence of reductions mandated under AB 32.

The main source of GHG emissions associated with the projects would be combustion of fossil fuels during construction of the projects. Emissions of GHGs were calculated using the same approach as emissions for overall construction emissions discussed in Chapter 4.3, Air Quality of this EIR. Emission calculations are provided in the Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Report in Appendix D of this EIR. The potential effects of proposed GHG emissions are by nature global, and have cumulative impacts. As individual sources, GHG emissions are not large enough to have an appreciable effect on climate change. Therefore, the impact of proposed GHG emissions to climate change is discussed in the context of cumulative impacts.

4.7.2.3 Impact Analysis

IMPACT 4.7-1 Generate Greenhouse Gas Emissions, either Directly or Indirectly, that may have a Significant Impact on the Environment.

Construction of the projects would result in a temporary increase in GHG emissions.

Iris Cluster (FSF, RSF, ISF, and LSF) and Transmission Line

During construction, GHG emissions would be generated from operation of both on-road and off-road equipment. Using the methods developed by the SCAQMD when comparing to their adopted GHG thresholds, GHGs are quantified as the sum of annual operational GHG emissions and total construction GHG emissions amortized over 30 years. As shown in Table 4.7-2, the amortized construction emissions for the Iris Cluster would be 48 tCO₂e. During operations, GHG emissions would be limited to vehicle trips associated with routine maintenance and monitoring activities at each of the sites. As shown in Table 4.7-2, operational emissions for the Iris Cluster would be 124 tCO₂e per year. The amortized construction plus annual operation for the Iris Cluster would be 172 tCO₂e per year. The proposed projects' CO₂ emissions would not exceed SCAQMD's threshold of 3,000 tCO₂e. Therefore, a **less than significant** impact is identified. A similar scenario would occur during the decommissioning and site restoration stage for each of the projects. GHG emissions would be similar to or less than the emissions presented for construction. Although the proposed projects would not exceed SCAQMD's threshold, consistent with the intent of AB 32, the proposed projects should demonstrate that policies are in place that would assist in providing a statewide reduction in CO₂ emissions. Therefore, GHG offset measures are included as Mitigation Measures 4.7-1a and 4.7-1b to provide additional reduction strategies to further improve air quality and reduce GHG emissions.

The proposed projects would be a renewable source of energy that could displace electricity generated by fossil fuel combustion and provide low-GHG electricity to consumers. Of the potential fossil fuels typically used for power generation, natural gas is one of the cleanest. To provide a conservative estimate, the Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Report prepared for the projects, estimated emissions that would be generated from an equivalent amount of energy by natural gas generators to estimate the reduction in GHG emissions by electricity displacement by assuming that the solar power displaces electricity generated by dispatchable natural-gas fired combined-cycle power plants and that the projects have a capacity factor of 26 percent. Approximately 360 MW generated by the Iris Cluster would displace 306,749 tCO₂e per year.

TABLE 4.7-2. SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATIONAL CO₂ EMISSIONS

Phase	Source	tCO ₂ e per year
Construction	FSF	346
	RSF	405
	ISF	429
	LSF	197
	Iris Cluster Construction Total	1,439
	Amortized over 30 years	48
Operation	FSF	30.9
	RSF	33.1
	ISF	39.7
	LSF	19.9
	Iris Cluster Operational Total	124
Total Annual Emissions		172
Annually Displaced Emissions		(306,749)
Net Project GHG Emissions		(306,557)

Source: OB-1 Air Analyses 2014.

Mitigation Measure(s)

The following mitigation measures are required for the FSF, RSF, ISF, LSF, and transmission line.

4.7-1a Diesel Equipment (Compression Ignition) Offset Strategies

- a. Use electricity from power poles rather than temporary diesel power generators.
- b. Construction equipment operating on-site should be equipped with two to four degree engine timing retard or precombustion chamber engines.
- c. Construction equipment used for the project should utilize EPA Tier 2 or better engine technology (requirement under Mitigation Measure 4.3-1 as described in Chapter 4.3, Air Quality of this EIR).

4.7-1b Vehicular Trip (Spark Ignition) Offset Strategies

- a. Encourage commute alternatives by informing construction employees and customers about transportation options for reaching your location (i.e., post transit schedules/routes).
- b. Help construction employees “ride share” by posting commuter ride sign-up sheets, employee home, zip code, map, etc.
- c. When possible, arrange for single construction vendor who makes deliveries for several items.
- d. Plan construction delivery routes to eliminate unnecessary trips.
- e. Keep construction vehicles well maintained to prevent leaks and minimize emissions.

Significance After Mitigation

Although the proposed projects would not exceed SCAQMD’s threshold, Mitigation Measures 4.7-1a and 4.7-1b would provide additional reduction strategies to further improve air quality and reduce GHG emissions. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.7-1a would reduce emissions by 40-60 percent. Mitigation Measure 4.7-1b would reduce emissions by 30-70 percent. A **less than significant** impact is identified. Additionally, project construction would adhere to Mitigation Measures 4.3-1a and 4.3-1b outlined in Chapter 4.3, Air Quality of this EIR, further reducing GHG emissions.

IMPACT *Conflict with an Applicable Plan, Policy, or Regulation Adopted for the Purpose of Reducing*
4.7-2 *the Emissions of Greenhouse Gases.*

The projects would generate additional solar power in order to meet the state of California's goals for the Renewable Portfolio Standard, which has been identified by the state as a means of meeting the goals of AB 32 to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. Therefore, the projects would not conflict with applicable plans, policies, or regulations.

Iris Cluster (FSF, RSF, ISF, and LSF) and Transmission Line

As discussed in Impact 4.7-1, the projects would generate a relatively small amount of GHG emissions. One of the critical complementary measures directed at emission sources that are included in the cap-and-trade program is the RPS, which places an obligation on electricity supply companies to produce 33 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020. A key prerequisite to reaching the target would be to provide sufficient electric transmission lines to renewable resource zones and system changes to allow integration of large quantities of intermittent wind and solar generation. The projects would help the State meet this goal by generating up to 360 MW of power to California’s current renewable portfolio. Therefore, the projects would help the state meet its goal under AB 32. The projects

would therefore not conflict with the goals of AB 32 in reducing emissions of GHG. A **less than significant impact** is identified.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

4.7.3 Decommissioning/ Restoration and Residual Impacts

Decommissioning/Restoration

Similar to construction activities, decommissioning and restoration at each of the project sites would result in CO₂e emissions below allowable thresholds. Although the proposed projects would not exceed SCAQMD's threshold, consistent with the intent of AB 32, the proposed projects should demonstrate that policies are in place that would assist in providing a statewide reduction in CO₂ emissions. Mitigation Measures 4.7-1a and 4.7-1b would provide additional reduction strategies to further improve air quality and reduce GHG emissions. Additionally, construction activities during decommissioning and restoration would adhere to Mitigation Measures 4.3-1a and 4.3-1b outlined in Chapter 4.3, Air Quality of this EIR, further reducing GHG emissions. Therefore, impacts are considered **less than significant**.

Residual

Mitigation Measures 4.7-1a, 4.7-1b, 4.3-1a and 4.3-1b would further the assist the proposed projects' consistency with the intent of AB 32. As described in this section, the projects do not result in significant GHG emissions impacts. Mitigation Measures 4.7-1a, 4.7-1b have been added to provide additional reduction strategies to further improve air quality and reduce GHG emissions, even though a significant impact was not identified. Operation of the projects, subject to the provision of a conditional use permit (CUP), would generally be consistent with AB 32. Based on these circumstances, the projects would not result in any residual significant and unavoidable impacts with regards to global climate change.

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