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Notice of Availability and Opportunity to Comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Included Within Staff Assessment) for the Proposed Soda Mountain Solar Project (24-OPT-03)

You are receiving this notice as you have been identified as either (1) a property owner or occupant adjacent to the project site or a property owner within 1,000 feet of the project site or 500 feet of linear project components or (2) a responsible, trustee or other interested agency, or (3) an interested party who has requested to be included on the project mailing list.

Pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 20, section 1879 as implemented under current law, the California Energy Commission (CEC) has prepared a Staff Assessment (SA) which includes a draft environmental impact report (EIR) for the proposed Soda Mountain Solar Project (SMSP or project), in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Chapter 6.5 (commencing with Section 21178) of Division 13, including Sections 21183 and 21183.6, of the Public Resources Code. CEQA is found at Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq. and also includes the CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15000 et seq.).

The applicant is seeking a certification from the CEC to construct and operate the SMSP. The proposed project is a utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) electrical generating and battery energy storage facility. The project is proposed on approximately 2,670 acres of land administered by the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), California Desert District, within the jurisdiction of the Barstow Field Office in San Bernardino County. The project would disturb approximately 2,059 acres overall.

The SA describes the proposed project and evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with its construction and operation, and the project's consistency with applicable plans, policies, and regulations. The SA analyzes project alternatives in addition to a "no project" alternative. Pursuant to CEQA, the SA includes sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project.

The SA, which includes a Draft EIR, was released for public review on December 29, 2025. The SA will be available on the CEC's webpage for the project, as listed below in this

notice. Comments on the SA will be received for a period commencing on December 29, 2025, and ending at 5:00 P.M. on February 27, 2026.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

Division 15, Chapter 6.2 of the Public Resources Code (sections 25545 - 25545.13) gives the CEC authority to permit certain clean and renewable energy facilities, including solar photovoltaic, onshore wind, and energy storage systems, and facilities that produce or assemble clean energy technologies or their components, in a timely and efficient manner. The Opt-In Certification Program, as it is known, is an optional permitting process through which developers can submit project applications through June 30, 2030. The CEC permit is in lieu of any permit that would normally be required by the local land use authority and most, but not all, state permits.

The major project components include:

1. 300 megawatt (MW) solar PV facility (solar facility)
2. 300 MW/1,200 MW-hours (MWh) battery energy storage system (BESS)
3. 140,000-square-foot high-voltage project substation (34.5 to 500 kilovolt [kV])
4. 500 kV generation-intertie line (gen-tie)
5. 234,300-square-foot utility switchyard
6. 500 kV transmission loop-in lines

The power produced by the project would be conveyed to the regional electrical grid through an interconnection with the existing 500 kV Marketplace-Adelanto transmission segment of the greater Mead-Adelanto 500 kV transmission line operated by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP).

To interconnect the SMSP and the new utility switchyard to the California Independent System Operator (California ISO) managed electric grid, two 500 kV loop-in transmission line segments and six new steel towers would be constructed by the applicant, then along with the utility switchyard, would be operated and maintained by LADWP. The operation of these project components is under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles Board of Water and Power Commissioners.

The California ISO identified that LADWP would need to make upgrades to the protection settings at the Marketplace (Boulder City, Nevada) and Adelanto (Victorville, California) substations to accommodate power generation from the SMSP.

The project is proposed entirely on federally owned land managed by the BLM. The 2,670-acre project site is located approximately 7 miles southwest of the community of Baker in unincorporated San Bernardino County, California, approximately 50 miles northeast of Barstow. The project site is in portions of Sections 1 and 11–14, Township 12 North, Range 7 East; Sections 25, Township 13 North, Range 7 East; Sections 6, 7, and 18,

Township 12 North, Range 8 East; Sections 17 – 21, 29-32, Township 13 North, Range 8 East, San Bernardino Meridian, California.

The project is bounded directly to the east by the Mojave National Preserve (administered by the National Park Service) and BLM lands, including the Rasor Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Recreation Area at the southeast corner. Interstate 15 (I-15), the former Arrowhead Trail Highway, runs along the western boundary of the project site. The Rasor Road Services Shell Oil gas station is located off I-15 southwest of the project site, along the access road to the project site. A residence is next to the gas station, roughly 260 feet southwest of the proposed boundary; however, according to San Bernardino County Fire Protection District staff, the residence is vacant. There are no other sensitive receptors within 1,500 feet of the project site. Approximately four storm drain culverts run under I-15 adjacent to the project site. Primary access to the project site would be from the Rasor Road northbound exit off I-15.

HAZARDOUS WASTE SITES

The project site is not listed on the California Hazardous Waste and Substances Sites List (also known as the Cortese List), published under Government Code section 65962.5 or a list of hazardous waste facilities, hazardous waste property, or hazardous waste disposal site.

ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The proposed project has multiple significant and unavoidable impacts on biological resources and visual resources.

The project would have less than significant impacts with mitigation incorporated in the areas of air quality; climate change and greenhouse gas emissions; cultural and tribal cultural resources; geology, paleontology, and minerals; hazards, hazardous materials/waste, and wildfire; land use; noise and vibration; public health; socioeconomics; solid waste management; transmission line safety and nuisance; transportation; and water resources.

Due to the proposed project's multiple significant and unavoidable impacts, CEC staff recommends the CEC certify the Environmentally Superior Alternative, the Big Horn Sheep Buffer and Relocated BESS Alternative #2, as described in **Section 8, Alternatives**, of the Staff Assessment. The Big Horn Sheep Buffer and Relocated BESS Alternative #2 would have less than significant impacts on desert big horn sheep, in comparison with the proposed project. However, visual resources would remain significant and unavoidable. Specifically, staff concludes given the existing physical landscape, the project would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings from all 11 applicant-submitted key observation points as described in **Section 5.15, Visual Resources**, of the SA.

The SA evaluates the potential for the proposed project to result in growth inducing effects and associated secondary environmental impacts. This SA also considers whether

the proposed project would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to existing significant cumulative environmental effects when combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

To approve the project under CEQA, the CEC must find that the specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of the project outweigh its unavoidable environmental impacts. These determinations require specific findings regarding benefits of the project, supported by substantial evidence.

PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

The purpose of this Notice of Availability is to provide public notice of the availability of the Draft EIR, consistent with the Public Resources Code section 21092 and CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15087). The SA, which includes the Draft EIR, is being circulated for review and comment by state agencies via the California State Clearinghouse and via direct mail to federal, regional and local agencies (including the county clerk), as well as organizations and individuals who have requested notification. Consistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15087, this Notice of Availability of a Draft EIR has also been mailed to owners and occupants contiguous to the project site and linear project components. In accordance with Public Resources Code section 25545.7.6(b), the CEC has scheduled a public review period for the SA (which includes a Draft EIR), ending on February 27, 2026.

Access to the SA and other project information/reports will be available electronically through the CEC's project docket website at: https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=24-OPT-03 and at the State Clearinghouse through the CEQANet Database at: https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/.

Persons who cannot access the materials through the link above are encouraged to email Lisa Worrall at the CEC at: STEPsiting@energy.ca.gov with a subject line "Soda Mountain Solar Project" or call (916) 661-8367 to arrange for alternative means of access to project materials.

The preferable method to submit responses is via the CEC's electronic commenting (e-commenting) system. To access this system, go to the CEC's webpage for this proceeding: https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/solar-photovoltaic-pv-battery-energy-storage/soda-mountain-solar-project, click on the "Submit e-comment" link, and follow the instructions in the online form. Please be sure to include the project name in your comments. Once filed, the comments will become part of the proceeding's public record. Alternatively, comments may be submitted to Lisa Worrall at: STEPsiting@energy.ca.gov.

Dated: December 29, 2025
Lisa Worrall
Project Manager, Senior Environmental Planner