

<b>DOCKETED</b>	
<b>Docket Number:</b>	24-OPT-03
<b>Project Title:</b>	Soda Mountain Solar
<b>TN #:</b>	265240
<b>Document Title:</b>	Tribal Notification and Distribution List for the Soda Mountain Solar Project
<b>Description:</b>	Mailed July 31, 2025
<b>Filer:</b>	Lisa Worrall
<b>Organization:</b>	California Energy Commission
<b>Submitter Role:</b>	Commission Staff
<b>Submission Date:</b>	8/5/2025 2:16:06 PM
<b>Docketed Date:</b>	8/5/2025



July 30, 2025

[REDACTED]  
San Manuel Band of Mission Indians  
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]:

The California Energy Commission (CEC) is responsible for preparing a staff assessment (including an environmental impact report) and other findings for the Soda Mountain Solar Project and invites San Manuel Band of Mission Indians to consult regarding this project. The CEC will conduct tribal consultation in accordance with Public Resources Code, sections 21080.3.1 and 25545.7.4, as well as California Code of Regulations, title 20, section 1878.5. This consultation would focus on environmental impact and mitigation measures and is an opportunity for your input to inform the CEC's staff assessment of the proposed project. The CEC staff received a positive result from a Sacred Lands File search from the California Native American Heritage Commission and would like to consult with you to better understand the concerns of California Native American tribes regarding this project.

### **Background**

Soda Mountain Solar LLC (applicant) filed an Opt-In application on July 22, 2024, for the Soda Mountain Solar Project, a utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) electrical generating storage facility proposed in unincorporated San Bernardino County, California. On September 3, 2024, the CEC deemed the application incomplete and docketed letters detailing the information deficiencies. The CEC staff has received complete information for the cultural and tribal cultural resources analysis, and is initiating consultation early, as permitted by the California Code of Regulations, title 20, section 1878.5(b). As of this writing, the application remains incomplete in other topic areas and additional data are necessary before staff can determine the application to be complete.

### **Project Location**

The project is located entirely on federally owned land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (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 and 36, Township 13 North, Range 7 East; Sections 6, 7, 8, and 18, Township 13 North, Range 8 East, San Bernardino Meridian, California.

## **Project Description**

The project proposes to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission a 300-MW PV solar facility located on approximately 2,670 acres. The approximate disturbance acreage for the project would be 2,081 acres. The project components are as follows:

1. The solar plant site (i.e., all facilities that create a footprint in and around the field of solar panels, including the solar field consisting of solar power arrays identified as the East Array and South Arrays 1, 2, and 3), operation and maintenance buildings and structures, stormwater infrastructure, and related infrastructure and improvements.
2. A substation and switchyard for interconnection to the existing transmission system.
3. Approximately 300 MW/1,200 MWh of battery energy storage system (BESS) across 18 acres.

The project would operate 24 hours per day year-round and would generate electricity during daylight hours when the sun is shining. The project would generate and deliver solar-generated power to the regional electrical grid through an interconnection with the existing Mead-Adelanto 500-kV transmission line operated by LADWP.

## **CEC Opt-In Process**

On June 30, 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill (AB) 205, which authorized the CEC to establish a new certification program for eligible non-fossil-fueled power plants and related facilities to optionally seek certification ("Opt-In" Certification) from the CEC. Requirements for the Opt-In Certification program are in Chapter 6.2, Division 15, of the Public Resources Code, sections 25545–25545.13. Regulations to implement the program can be found in California Code of Regulations, title 20, sections 1875–1882. The Opt-In Certification program is in effect through June 30, 2029.

Under this new Opt-In Certification process, the types of facilities that can be certified by the CEC now includes solar photovoltaic and terrestrial wind energy power plants of 50 MW or more, energy storage facilities of 200 MWh or more, the electric transmission lines from these facilities to the first point of interconnection with the existing transmission grid, and facilities that manufacture or assemble clean energy or storage technologies or their components with a capital investment of at least \$250 million. In addition, thermal power plants of 50 MW or more that do not use fossil or nuclear fuels may choose the Opt-In Certification process rather than the CEC's Application for Certification process.

The CEC is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is required to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for any facility that elects to opt-in to the CEC's jurisdiction. With exceptions, the issuance of a certificate by the CEC for an eligible facility is in lieu of any permit, certificate, or similar document required by any state, local, or regional agency, or federal agency to the extent permitted by federal law, and supersedes any applicable statute, ordinance, or regulation of any state, local, or regional agency, or federal agency to the extent permitted by federal law. The CEC's authority under the Opt-In Certification program does not supersede the authorities of the California State Lands Commission, the California Coastal Commission, or the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, if applicable, the State Water Resources Control Board or applicable regional water quality control board, or, in the case of manufacturing facilities, the applicable local air quality management district or the Department of Toxic Substances Control.

The CEC is required to prepare an EIR and make its decision on the application within 270 days of receiving a complete application. The CEC will also conduct public meetings in the project area, including an informational and public scoping meeting during the development of the EIR, and a public workshop during the 60-day comment period on the Draft EIR, which will be included as part of the CEC's Staff Assessment of the application. After the conclusion of the public comment period, the CEC staff will publish an updated Staff Assessment (which will include a Final EIR), and the CEC's Executive Director's recommendation on whether the CEC should certify the EIR and issue a certificate for construction and operation of the proposed project. The updated Staff Assessment and Executive Director's recommendation will be published at least 30 days before the CEC's decision at a public meeting.

The other agencies that retain their permitting authorities must take final action on any additional permits within 90 days of the CEC issuing a certificate.

The timeline for the Opt-In Certification Program process and deadlines is depicted below. These deadlines are subject to any substantial changes made to the project or certain other events occurring after an application is deemed complete.

**Day 0:** File the Determination of Complete Application.

**Day 3:** File and circulate the Notice of Preparation of an EIR.

**Day 5:** Send invitation to request tribal consultations.

**Day 30:** Hold public informational and scoping meeting as close as practicable to the project site.

**Day 150:** File and circulate the Staff Assessment (which includes the draft EIR) and Notice of Availability and public comment period begins.

**Day 180 – 210:** Hold a public meeting on the Staff Assessment (including the draft EIR) at a location as close as possible to the proposed project site.

**Day 210:** Close the public comment period on the Staff Assessment (including draft EIR) (60 days from publication date).

**Day 240:** File Updated Staff Assessment (which includes the final EIR).

**Day 240:** File the CEC's executive director's recommendation.

**Day 270:** Present the updated Staff Assessment (including the final EIR) and staff recommendation at a publicly noticed CEC Business Meeting. The CEC Commissioners can approve or disapprove project or require additional information or analysis.

**Day 360:** State agencies retaining permit authority make permit decisions on application approved by the CEC.

## Participation

In addition to the tribal consultation required under CEQA and the Warren-Alquist Act, the CEC welcomes your participation in the Opt-In review process. Pursuant to the Public Resources Code, section 25545.7.4, we are providing the link to the Soda Mountain Solar Project application, hosted on the CEC website at:  
<https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/solar-photovoltaic-pv/soda-mountain-solar-project>

To stay informed about this project and receive notice of upcoming meetings and workshops, sign up for the project subscription, which can be accessed on the same project webpage. Once enrolled, automatic email notifications are sent when documents and notices are posted to the project webpage.

The CEC staff welcomes your comments and questions which are important to staff's analysis of the proposed project. Please do not hesitate to contact:

California Energy Commission  
ATTN: William Larson  
715 P Street, MS-16  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
[william.larson@energy.ca.gov](mailto:william.larson@energy.ca.gov)  
530-304-9019

Sincerely,

**Gabriel Roark**

Gabriel Roark  
Assistant Tribal Liaison, Siting & Compliance

Attachment:  
Project Location Maps



Figure 2-1. Project site vicinity.



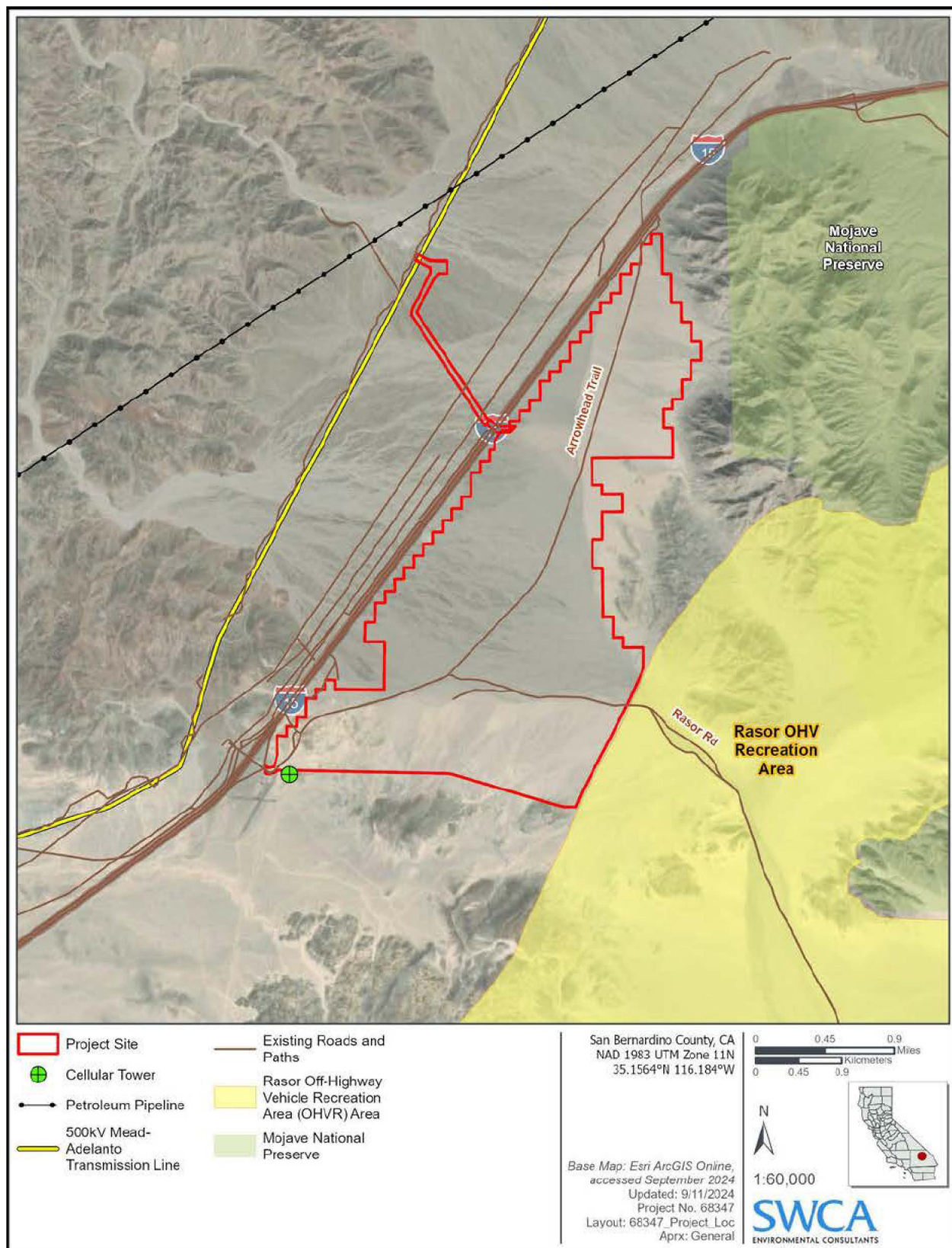


Figure 2-4. Project site location and existing conditions.

## List of Tribes Contacted for the Soda Mountain Solar Project

Kern Valley Indian Community

Morongo Band of Mission Indians

Quechan Tribe of the Fort Yuma Reservation

San Manuel Band of Mission Indians

Serrano Nation of Mission Indians

Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians