

## DOCKETED

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# IMPERIAL COUNTY STATUS REPORT FOR THE RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CONSERVATION PLANNING GRANT (RECPG) PROGRAM FUNDED BY THE CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION FOR THE FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY & TRANSMISSION ELEMENT OF THE IMPERIAL COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

**Project Name:** General Plan Update to 2006 "*Geothermal/Alternative Energy & Transmission Element* and Programmatic Environmental Impact Report

**Project Summary:** **Inventory Baseline Environmental Information**

The County staff in association with the consulting team researched existing documentation and baseline environmental information associated with Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources, Public Safety, Agriculture, Visual Resources, Water Quality, Noise and Air Quality. The sources for the existing data collection will include previous studies completed for the Salton Sea Authority, the General Plan Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR), Salton Sea Anomaly Master EIR, data collected by the Imperial Irrigation District, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U. S. Fish and Wildlife, Regional Water Quality Control Board, the University of Redlands and other sources of technical environmental data. Special attention was focused on the existing NCCP and HCP programs for the region and the Salton Sea area in particular.

**Project Description:** **Identify Renewable Energy Opportunities and Options for Transmission Facilities**

The County Consulting Team and the Imperial Irrigation District as part of the Renewable Energy Initiative explored new technologies not identified within the 2006 *Geothermal/Alternative Energy and Transmission Element* to create new opportunities for renewable energy. These opportunities included a review of existing/future geothermal resources, deep solar ponds, PV solar farms, concentrated solar, hyper-saline brine ponds, algae biofuels and bio/alternative fuels production, and wind farms. This task investigated new and planned opportunities for the IID's Transmission and

Substation Facilities to accommodate greater capacity for future renewable energy projects.

Special attention was focused on future exposed “playa” surrounding the Salton Sea. This analysis included coordination with the Imperial Irrigation District and other energy providers operating in the region to identify areas for renewable energy development and barriers to such development and transmission line improvements.

### ***Renewable Energy and Transmission Element - Goals and Objectives***

The Consulting Team and County staff revised the 2006 *Geothermal/Alternative Energy and Transmission Element, Goals and Objectives*, were based on the issues and options identified under the above tasks. This revision included the required revisions to other General Plan Elements to assure internal consistency.

Key issues included reviewing and eliminating any potential conflicts between various renewable energy technologies. This included impacts to the other General Plan Elements, e.g. Land Use, Agricultural, Conservation/Open Space, Noise, Water, Seismic/Public Safety, and Transportation Elements.

### **Renewable Energy (RE) Ordinance, Division 17, and Renewable Energy Overlay Zone**

The State law permits the preparation of other non-mandatory Elements, e.g. here the RETE. The County’s consulting team with the County staff revised the existing Geothermal Ordinance (Division 17) to include the additional renewable energy technologies and the implementing RE overlay zone.

### **Regulatory Requirements:**

This task included preparation of a new Map #71, entitled the “Renewable Energy Overlay Map #71” that can found on the ICP&DS planning website at [icpds.com](http://icpds.com).

### **Project Status:**

Environmental Impact Report certified and Renewable Energy and Transmission Element Update of General Plan approved by Imperial County Board of Supervisors on September 22, 2015.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION FOR THE CONSERVATION/OPEN SPACE ELEMENT OF THE IMPERIAL COUNTY GENERAL PLAN**

**Project Name:** General Plan Update to the 1993 “*Conservation and Open Space Element*” and CEQA/Negative Declaration

**Project Summary:** The purpose of this revision of the 1993 “*Conservation and Open Space Element*”, and the preparation of the Negative Declaration also included a review of other General Plan Elements to assure internal consistency with the Element’s new and revised goals and objectives.

On July 22, 2014, the County received the Grant Award No. REN-13-505 from the California Energy Commission in the amount of \$400,000.00 to update the 1993 Element and the preparation of a CEQA environmental document. On March 10, 2014, the County selected PMC (now Michael Baker, Inc.), Aspen Environmental, and Mooney Planning Collaborative to prepare the above revisions.

The County’s consultant immediately contacted a stakeholders group of 37 agencies and individuals to assist the County in the Element’s update. The stakeholders provided their input on the update of the Element. Also, the County and its consultants held public meetings in March 2015 at five (5) locations. The purpose was to obtain public input on the existing and the updated document.

The County’s consultants, PMC/Michael Baker Inc., Aspen Environmental and Mooney Planning Collaborative have prepared a draft of the *Conservation & Open Space Element* that analyzed the following environmental resources: Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Soils, Minerals, Energy, Regional Aesthetics, Air Quality and Open Space.

The County is charged with the responsibility of conserving all environmental resources while encouraging economic development and growth. The revised Element is a State-required document serving as the blueprint for conservation activities and focuses on the balanced use, management and maintenance of the above resources with identified goals, policies, objectives and programs to ensure these environmental resources can be used by future generations.

### **Project Description:**

The revision provides a comprehensive update of the existing 1993 *Conservation and Open Space Element* and serves as the primary policy statement by the County Board of Supervisors for implementing its policies in Imperial County.

## **Conservation and Open Space Element - Goals and Objectives**

The *Conservation and Open Space Element's, Goals and Objectives* and Policies, were based on community input, extensive collaboration with key regional stakeholders, identification of environmental issues, and the balancing of various resource interests.

The Goals, Objectives and Policies are the statements that shall provide direction for future government actions and programs. Imperial County's Goals and Objectives are intended to serve as long-term principles and policy statements representing ideals which have been determined by the Board of Supervisors as being desirable and deserving of community time and resources to achieve. These Goals and Objectives are important guidelines for renewable energy projects and related land use decision-making.

It is recognized that other social, economic, environmental, and legal considerations are involved in land use decisions and that these Goals and Objectives, and those of the other General Plan Elements, should be used as guidelines for reviewing individual projects overall conformance.

## **Relationship Of The Proposed Project To Other Elements Of The General Plan**

State law mandates seven “elements” for local government general plans. The COSE is a mandatory Element of the County’s General Plan and must comply with requirements that are requisite to all parts within a general plan. Legislative intent must be fulfilled as set forth in Government Code, Section 65300.5: “...the General Plan and the parts thereof comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency...”

### **Regulatory Requirements:**

The County, through the permit process, regulates the use of land for the conservation of natural and sensitive resources through its zoning and the approval of Conditional Use Permits. The County also acts as “lead agency” in the preparation of environmental documents for proposed projects within its jurisdiction.

### **Land Use Analysis:**

The COSE and Negative Declaration addressed various environmental impacts related to aesthetics, agricultural land conversion, air quality, biological, cultural, geology, greenhouse gas emissions/climate change, hazardous materials/waste, hydrology/water quality, mineral resources, noise,

public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, utilities/services, cumulative impacts and growth-inducing impacts.

The intent of the revision was to balance environmental conservation, land use compatibility and natural resource goals while ensuring continued compliance with applicable Federal, State and County laws, ordinances, regulations and standards (LORS). This included conservation of many important and sensitive natural resource and wildlife habitats, particularly at the Salton Sea for protection of the public from air quality impacts from the Sea's exposed "playa".

The future implementation of the COSE will minimize land use conflicts on adjacent agricultural activities, future military training facilities, reduce impacts to BLM/federal lands and State lands, and the protection of environmental resources and the public's health and safety.

**Project Status:**

Conservation and Open Space General Plan Element Update approved by Imperial County Board of Supervisors on March 8, 2016.

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