County of San Bernardino

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT EIR AND SCOPING MEETING

DATE: September 30, 2022

TO: Responsible Agencies and Interested Parties

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meeting

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the County of San Bernardino (County) must conduct a review of the environmental impacts of the Desert Breeze Solar Project (Project). Implementation of the Project will require discretionary approvals from State and local agencies, and therefore, the Project is subject to the environmental review requirements of CEQA. As the Lead Agency under CEQA, and due to the potential for significant environmental impacts, the County is therefore issuing this Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Project.

PROJECT TITLE: Desert Breeze Solar Project

PROJECT APPLICANT: Desert Breeze Solar, LLC

ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBERS: 0490-223-33 and 0490-101-56

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Desert Breeze Solar Project (Project) includes development of a utility scale solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generation and energy storage facility that would produce up to 130 megawatts (MW) of solar power and include up to 2 gigawatt hours (GWh) of energy storage capacity in a battery energy storage system (BESS) on an approximately 923-acre Project Site comprised of an 813-acre solar array development area and a 110-acre Shared Facilities Area (SFA). The Project will be processed under two separate Conditional Use Permits (CUPs), described below. The Project is bordered on the south by the approved Lockhart Solar PV II Project (Lockhart II; PROJ-2021-00029), approved by the County Board of Supervisors on June 28, 2022, and the Lockhart Solar PV Facility (Lockhart I; PROJ-2019-00125), approved by the County Board of Supervisors on January 7, 2020. The Lockhart I project area is comprised of the former Solar Energy Generating System (SEGS) VIII Solar Thermal Plant site [now decommissioned] and the existing SEGS IX Solar Thermal Plant. The remainder of the Project Site is bordered by vacant land.

Existing operations and maintenance (O&M) buildings, warehouse, employee building, and water and septic systems located within the SFA would be shared by operations staff supporting the Lockhart I and II Facilities, as well as the Project. In addition, the Lockhart I collector substation (currently under construction) and the existing switchyard located within the SFA would be upgraded, as necessary, to connect the Project to the existing 13.8-mile transmission line which runs from the SFA to the Southern California Edison (SCE)-owned Kramer Junction substation

located approximately 11.36 miles to the southwest. The SFA also includes the County-permitted, but not yet constructed, BESS for Lockhart Solar I and II Facilities, and would include the BESS for the Project.

Project Objectives

The Project would provide the County and the State of California with additional renewable energy resources adjacent to other renewable solar energy and infrastructure facilities that would assist the State in complying with the Renewables Portfolio Standard under Senate Bill 100, which requires that by December 31, 2030, sixty (60) percent of all electricity sold in the state shall be generated from renewable energy sources.

The following are the Project objectives:

- Site photovoltaic (PV) solar power-generating facilities and energy storage near existing utility infrastructure, thereby achieving economies of scale to maximize shared operation and maintenance facilities with existing solar operations.
- Establish solar PV power-generating facilities and energy storage of sufficient size and configuration to produce and deliver reliable electricity in an economically feasible and commercially financeable manner that can be marketed to different power, utility and other off-take companies.
- Use proven and established solar PV and energy storage technology that is efficient and requires low maintenance.
- Assist California in meeting greenhouse gas emission reduction goals by 2030 as required by the California Global Warming Solutions Act (Assembly Bill 32), as amended by Senate Bill 32 in 2016 to address the effects of climate change on the environment and the economy.
- Promote the County's Renewable Energy and Conservation Element (RECE) policies and be sited in an area identified as suitable for utility oriented renewable energy generation projects and be consistent with County land use regulations.
- Develop a solar PV power generation and energy storage facility in San Bernardino County, which would support the economy by investing in the local community, creating local construction jobs, and increasing tax and fee revenue to the County.

Project Site

The Project Site is located in an unincorporated area of the County in the community of Hinkley, CA, approximately 7 miles northwest of the intersection of Harper Lake Road and Mojave-Barstow Highway 58. The Project Site consists of an area within two parcels: County Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 0490-223-33, which is currently vacant and recently approved under a Parcel Merger; and APN 0490-101-56, which contains existing shared infrastructure and support facilities for the adjacent solar facilities. The Project Site is bordered on the south by existing and approved solar facilities; Harper Lake Road to the east; Hoffman Road to the south, Hoffman Road to the west; and Maltice Drive to the north. Vehicular access is provided via existing access gates off Hoffman Road to the south of the SFA and through an existing gate off of an unnamed road located south of the existing SEGS IX facility.

The Project Site is designated as RLM (Resource Land Management) in the Countywide Plan/Policy Plan. The existing zoning for the Project Site is RL (Rural Living). The Project is located within an area that is scheduled to be largely re-zoned from RL to RC (Resource

Conservation) through a County-initiated update to the Countywide zoning ordinance to be consistent with the Countywide Plan/Policy Plan Land Use Element. This zoning update is currently in the process of review and is anticipated to be considered by the Board in 2022. Because the Countywide zoning update might not be approved before the County considers approval of this Project, the Project includes a request for a Project-specific zone change from RL to RC. If the County-initiated zone change is approved before the County acts on this Project, the Applicant will withdraw the Project-specific zone change request.

Project Overview and Design

The Project is subject to CUP approval in the RC zone. In anticipation that power from the Project may be sold to different off-taker utility providers and/or may be financed by separate entities, the Applicant is requesting two CUPs be approved.[1] This will better allow multiple off-takers to receive power from the Project Site, as well as enable multiple investors and/or lenders to finance the Project.

The Project consists of the following components:

- **Zoning Amendment:** The Project includes a zoning amendment to change the zoning designation from RL to RC for a portion of the proposed PV solar facility property in order to be in compliance with the Countywide Plan/Policy Plan adopted October 27, 2020, and the Renewable Energy Conservation Element adopted August 8, 2017 (amended February 28, 2019) [unless the County-initiated zone change is approved before the County acts on this Project, in which case this Project-specific zone change request will not be required].

- **CUP 1: Solar PV Generating Facilities and Solar Modules:** CUP 1 area covers an approximately 813-acre area (within APN 0490-223-33) and includes installation of solar facilities capable of generating up to 130 MW of renewable electrical energy. The energy is generated via PV modules made of thin film, polycrystalline silicon or mono Perc material covered by glass, mounted on a single-axis tracking system and connected to inverters and to the Project BESS. Depending on the type of modules used, panels would measure between approximately 4 and 7 feet in length, and the total height of the panel system measured from the ground surface would be approximately 7 to 12 feet. Spacing between each solar panel row would be between 10 to 24 feet. The development and location of the proposed solar facility will be designed consistent with the minimum development standards as required by the underlying zoning requirements. Single-axis systems would employ a motor mechanism that would allow the PV panel arrays to track the path of the sun throughout the day. In the morning, the panels would face the east. Throughout the day, the panels would slowly move to the upright position at noon and on to the west at sundown. The panels would reset to the east in the evening or early morning to receive sunlight at sunrise.

- **CUP 2: Shared Facilities Area (SFA):** As shown in Figure 3, CUP 2 is located within the approximately 110-acre SFA (within APN 0490-101-56) and includes a BESS and associated equipment area capable of providing the ability to store up to 2 GWh of energy storage capacity for the electric grid. The BESS system will be designed to receive and store energy generated from the Project's PV panels from CUP-1 area as well as energy

[1] Refer to Figure 3: Conditional Use Permit Areas for the location of each requested CUP area.

delivered via the grid. The Applicant proposes to install the BESS components in phases over the life of this CUP, for a total installed capacity of up to 2 GWh of energy storage capacity. Dimensions for BESS enclosures and ancillary structures are based on battery technologies currently under consideration; however, a vendor has not yet been selected and component details may vary between vendors and technologies. The battery modules would be installed in racks and housed within purpose-built outdoor enclosures. For maintenance, the battery modules and BESS system components are accessed from the outdoors via the enclosures' cabinet doors. Dimensions of BESS enclosures vary by manufacturer, but common BESS enclosure dimensions are approximately 51 feet in length, 14 feet in width and 22 feet in height, including additional height needed for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. The ultimate height of the BESS enclosures shall not exceed structure height limits as established in the RC zone of 35 feet. The associated inverters, transformers, and switchgear would be located immediately adjacent to the individual containers on concrete pads or on pier mounted skids.

Each BESS enclosure is equipped with integrated operational management systems, fire and safety systems (climate control systems, ventilation, gas, heat and smoke detection and alarms, and fire suppression systems), all of which will be designed, constructed and operated pursuant to the version of the California Fire Code in effect at the time of building permit issuance. Power to the climate control, lighting, and other systems would be provided via a connection to the Lockhart I collector substation within the SFA with connection lines installed above ground and/or below ground. The BESS would be operated primarily via remote control with periodic on-site inspections and maintenance performed, as necessary. The BESS component manufacturer has not been determined at this time but could include any commercially available and approved large-scale battery technology, including but not limited to lithium ion, sodium sulfur, and sodium or nickel hydride. Power stored by the BESS would be gathered into 34.5 kilovolt (kV) circuits and would be stepped-up to 220 kV at the collector substation.

- **Expansion of Shared Lockhart I Collector Substation and Upgrade of Switchyard:** Project includes expansion of the collector substation (permitted and currently under construction as part of the Lockhart I Facility), as needed, to serve the Project. The existing switchyard located in the SFA may also be upgraded, as necessary, to serve the Project. The existing switchyard located at the southwest corner of the SFA currently serves the SEGS IX Solar Thermal Facility and will also serve the Lockhart I and II Facilities. The purpose of sharing of the facilities would lessen the overall environmental impacts of this development and would reduce redundancy.

- **Electrical Collector System and Inverters:** Overhead and underground collection systems will be built throughout the Project Site. Collection systems would be aggregated at multiple circuit breakers or medium-voltage switchgear positions, leading to the shared Lockhart I collector substation located in the SFA.

- **Shared Gen-Tie Power Line and Interconnection with the Statewide Grid:** A 220 kV on-site transmission line will connect the power generated from this Project to the existing switchyard located at the southern edge of the SFA. From there, an existing 13.8-mile gen-

tie transmission line will be used to transmit the power generated from the Project to the existing SCE-owned substation at Kramer Junction.

- **Telecommunication Facilities:** Telecommunication equipment, including underground and overhead fiber optics, microwave, meteorological data collection systems, and supervisory control and data acquisition would be installed on the Project Site to connect the Project to remote monitoring locations and ultimately to the SCE substation at Kramer Junction via the existing gen-tie.

- **Site Access, Perimeter Fencing, and Lighting:** Security fencing, electronic gates, and installed nighttime directional lighting would provide site security. A new 7-foot-tall chain link fence, with incorporated desert tortoise exclusionary fencing will be placed on the north, west and eastern boundary of the Project development footprint. There is existing fencing along the shared boundary between the Project Site and the adjacent solar facilities to the south. The perimeter fence would be maintained over the life of the Project.

  Subject to further engineering design, vehicular access to the Project Site would be provided via the following existing and potential new access points (see Figure 3):

  1) New access gate/driveway off of Hoffman Road at the southwestern corner of the Project Site
  2) Existing access gates off of Hoffman Road at the southern end of the SFA
  3) Existing access gate off of the existing unnamed paved road along the southern property boundary of the SEGS IX facility site, traveling along the existing SEGS IX interior perimeter access road to a new gate at the southeastern corner of the Project Site.

  Interior access roads would be located throughout the Project Site. All perimeter and interior road networks would be designed to comply with fire access roadway widths as required by County Fire Code and County Code requirements. A 26-foot-wide interior perimeter access road would be constructed along the Project fence line. All interior roads would consist of compacted native material capable of providing the required bearing pressures per San Bernardino County Fire Department requirements. Any new driveway off County-maintained roads would be designed to comply with County Code requirements. The Applicant would process all required permits for any potential encroachment into County-maintained roads.

- **Parking**: The Project will utilize the existing parking spaces located within the southern portion of the SFA next to the existing control building, which provide the Code-required eleven (11) spaces including one (1) ADA accessible space for a commercial building. No additional parking is proposed as part of the Project.

- **Landscaping**: No landscaping is proposed as part of the Project.

Construction

Schedule and Workforce

Project construction is anticipated to be completed over a period of approximately 18 months. Project construction activities generally fall into three main categories: (1) site preparation and demolition; (2) grading; and (3) construction/installation.

The on-site construction workforce is estimated to peak at approximately 250 individuals; however, the average daily workforce on-site is expected to be between approximately 180 and 200 construction, supervisory, support, and construction management personnel. Construction would primarily occur during daylight hours, Monday through Saturday, between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., as required to meet the construction schedule. Any construction work performed outside of the normal work schedule would be subject to pre-approval by County.

Site Grading and Earthwork

Site grading and earthwork activities are expected to include mowing, excavation, and pile driving. Grading of the Project Site would be limited to the greatest extent possible to control dust. Minor grading is anticipated in order to maintain pile foundation tolerances and grading would be required for installation of site roads and preparation of equipment foundation pads. Onsite grading would be designed to facilitate the conveyance of existing drainage patterns through the Project Site. Solar panels are attached to driven piles and do not require foundation pads. Site grading preparation and construction would occur in accordance with all federal, State, and County zoning codes and requirements. Noise-generating construction activities would be limited to the construction hours noted above.

All applicable local, State, and federal requirements and best management practices (BMPs) would be incorporated into Project construction activities. The construction contractor would be required to incorporate BMPs consistent with the County zoning ordinance and with guidelines provided in the California Stormwater Quality Association's Construction *Best Management Practice Handbook*, including the preparation and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), a Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan to reduce potential impacts related to storm water runoff during Project construction, and a Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP).

Solar Array Assembly

Erection of the solar arrays would include support structures and associated electrical equipment and cabling. During this work, there would be multiple crews working on the Project Site with various equipment and vehicles, including special vehicles for transporting the PV modules and other equipment. Within the solar fields, the electrical and communication wiring would be installed in underground trenches, although some of the mid-voltage collection runs and communication systems may be installed on overhead lines.

BESS Installation

BESS system installation includes site preparation, installation of foundations/supports, setting battery enclosures, wiring and electrical system installation, and assembly of the accessory components including inverter transformers and generation step-up transformers. The Applicant

proposes to install the BESS components in phases over the life of the CUP, up to an installed capacity of 2 GWh of energy storage.

Construction Water Use

During Project construction, non-potable water would be required for common construction-related purposes, including but not limited to dust suppression, soil compaction, and grading. Construction water usage is anticipated to be approximately 400 acre-feet (AF) during the construction period of approximately 18 months. During construction, the water used is anticipated to be supplied by pumping groundwater from existing wells located within the SFA and off-site on the adjacent SEGS IX facility site.

Solid and Non-Hazardous Waste

The Project would produce a small amount of solid waste from construction activities. This may include paper, wood, glass, plastics from packing material, waste lumber, insulation, scrap metal and concrete, empty nonhazardous containers, and vegetation waste. These wastes would be segregated, where practical, for recycling. Non-recyclable wastes would be placed in covered dumpsters and removed on a regular basis by a certified waste-handling contractor for disposal at a Class III landfill. Vegetation waste generated by site clearing and grubbing would be chipped/mulched and spread on-site or hauled off site to an appropriate green waste facility.

Hazardous Materials

Hazardous materials used during Project construction would be typical of most construction projects of this type. Materials may include small quantities of gasoline, diesel fuel, oils, lubricants, solvents, detergents, degreasers, paints, ethylene glycol, dust palliative, herbicides, and welding materials/supplies. A hazardous materials business plan (HMBP) would be provided to the County Environmental Health Services Division/Hazardous Materials Section that would include a complete list of all materials used on site and information regarding how the materials would be transported and in what form they would be used. This information would be recorded to maintain safety and prevent possible environmental contamination or worker exposure. During Project construction, material safety data sheets (MSDS) for all applicable materials present at the Project Site would be made readily available to on-site personnel.

Hazardous Waste

Small quantities of hazardous waste may be generated during Project construction. These wastes may include waste paint, spent construction solvents, waste cleaners, waste oil, oily rags, waste batteries, and spent welding materials. Workers would be trained to properly identify and handle all hazardous materials. Hazardous waste would be either recycled or disposed of, as allowed by permit, at a permitted and licensed treatment and/or disposal facility.

Operations

Operations and Maintenance Activities

The Project would operate year-round. Typical O&M activities during Project operations include, but are not limited to, facility monitoring; administration and reporting; remote operations of inverters, and other equipment; site security and management; communication protocol; repair and maintenance of solar facilities, electrical transmission lines, and other Project facilities; and periodic solar panel washing.

In addition to regularly scheduled maintenance, and as part of Project operations, augmentation of batteries and battery enclosures will be required during the life of Project. The augmentation of the BESS system includes a combination of the phased installation of new battery modules within existing enclosures, the phased installation of new battery modules within new enclosures, and the replacement of battery modules, all consistent with the CUP, during the life of the Project, in order to ensure that the Project maintains the Project capacity and operational capabilities. As stated above, the County Board of Supervisors approved the Lockhart I and II facilities in 2020 and 2022, respectively; both of which contemplated that existing SEGS operations staff would continue supporting operation of the proposed facilities. Operations staff would also continue to support operations for Project.

Water Use

During Project O&M, it is anticipated that water would be required for solar panel washing, equipment washing, non-sanitary uses, and other miscellaneous water uses. Solar panel washing is expected to occur one to four times per year. Water consumption for washing panels is expected to be approximately 1 AF of water per year. This amount is in addition to the water necessary for operations staff, fire suppression and site maintenance, estimated to be approximately 0.45 AF per year. Water washing is by deluge/inundation of panels, and no chemicals or other materials would be used.

Groundwater will be used for the periodic panel washing. Groundwater will be processed through mobile demineralizer trailers producing high quality panel wash water with no on-site waste generation or hazardous chemical handling. Produced water will be stored in an existing 66,000-gallon storage tank located at the southeast portion of the SFA.

Decommissioning

At the end of the Project's operational term, the Applicant may determine that the Project should be decommissioned and deconstructed, or it may seek an extension of its CUPs. The Applicant will work with the County to ensure the decommissioning of the Project after its productive lifetime and complies with all applicable local, State, and federal requirements . The Project would include BMPs to ensure the collection and recycling of modules and to avoid the potential for modules to be disposed of as municipal waste.

Equipment would be de-energized prior to removal, salvaged (where possible), placed in appropriate shipping containers, and secured in a truck transport trailer for shipment off site to be recycled or disposed of at an appropriately licensed disposal facility. Site infrastructure would be removed, including fences and concrete pads that may support the inverters, transformers, and related equipment. The exterior fencing and gates would be removed, and materials would be recycled to the extent feasible. Project roads would be restored to their pre-construction condition to the extent feasible unless the landowner elects to retain the improved roads for access throughout the property. A collection and recycling program would be utilized to promote recycling of Project components and minimize disposal in landfills.

EIR SCOPE

As set forth in the California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section et seq., and the CEQA Guidelines, codified in the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq., the County has determined, based on substantial evidence and in light of the whole record before the

Lead Agency, that the Project may have a significant effect on the environment and that an EIR shall be prepared for the Project. (PRC Sections 21080(d) and (e); 21802.2(d); 21083(b); and CEQA Guidelines Sections 15060(d) and 15081).

The County, as the Lead Agency, has initially identified the following environmental considerations as potentially significant effects of the Project:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems

The EIR will assess the effects of the Project on the environment, identify potentially significant impacts, identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate potentially significant environmental impacts, and discuss potentially feasible alternatives to the Project that may accomplish the Project Objectives while lessening or eliminating any potentially significant Project impacts.

RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

A responsible agency means a public agency other than the lead agency, which has permitting authority or approval power over some aspect of the overall project. This Notice provides a description of the Project and solicits comments from responsible agencies, trustee agencies, federal, State, and local agencies, and other interested parties on the scope and content of the environmental document to be prepared to analyze the environmental impacts of the Project.

Comments received in response to this Notice will be reviewed and considered by the Lead Agency in determining the scope of the EIR. Due to time limits, as defined by CEQA, your response should be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than thirty (30) days after publication of this Notice. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to you or to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the Project. Your agency may need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the Project.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

The NOP is available for public review on the County's website at:

http://cms.sbcounty.gov/lus/Planning/Environmental/Desert.aspx

Additionally, a copy of the NOP is available for public review at the following locations:

San Bernardino County
High Desert Government Center
15900 Smoke Tree Street, Suite 1331
Hesperia, CA 92345

San Bernardino County Library
Barstow Branch
304 E. Buena Vista Street
Barstow, CA 92311

San Bernardino County Government Center
385 North Arrowhead Avenue, Second Floor
San Bernardino, CA 92415

We would like to hear what you think. Comments and/or questions should be directed to Jon Braginton, Senior Planner, via U.S. mail or email **by no later than 5:00 p.m. on October 31, 2022**.

County of San Bernardino, Land Use Services Department
Attn.: Jon Braginton, Planner
385 North Arrowhead Avenue, First Floor San Bernardino, CA 92415
Email: jon.braginton@lus.sbcounty.gov

Please include the name, phone number, and address of your agency's contact person in your response.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

The CEQA process encourages comments and questions from the public throughout the planning process. Consistent with Section 21083.9 of the CEQA statute, a Public Scoping Meeting will be held to solicit public comments on the scope and content of the EIR. A virtual scoping meeting will be held for this project. The date and meeting details are as follows:

Date and Time: October 18, 2022 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 pm (Pacific Standard Time)

Place: Via Zoom: https://kimley-horn.zoom.us/j/95780026584

The zoom meeting may also be accessed through the zoom website by using the following

Meeting ID: 957 8002 6584

Dial by your location: 833 548 0276 (U.S. Toll-free)

If you require additional information, please contact Jon Braginton, at 909-387-3067 or 760-776-6144.

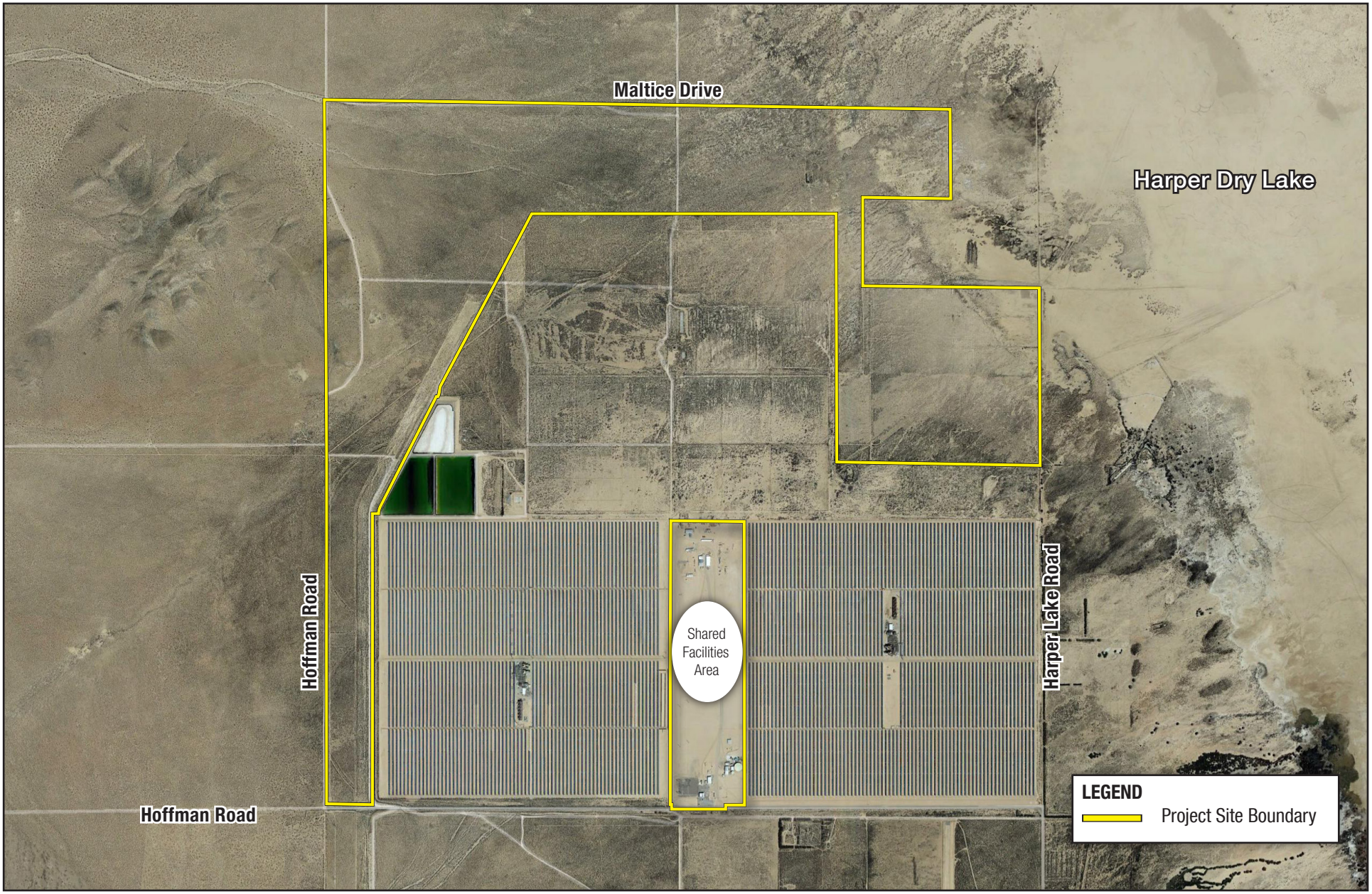
SOURCE: Nearmap, 2022

N.T.S.

FIGURE 1: Regional Vicinity Map

DESERT BREEZE SOLAR PROJECT

Kimley»Horn



SOURCE: Nearmap, 2022

N.T.S.

FIGURE 2: Local Vicinity Map

DESERT BREEZE SOLAR PROJECT

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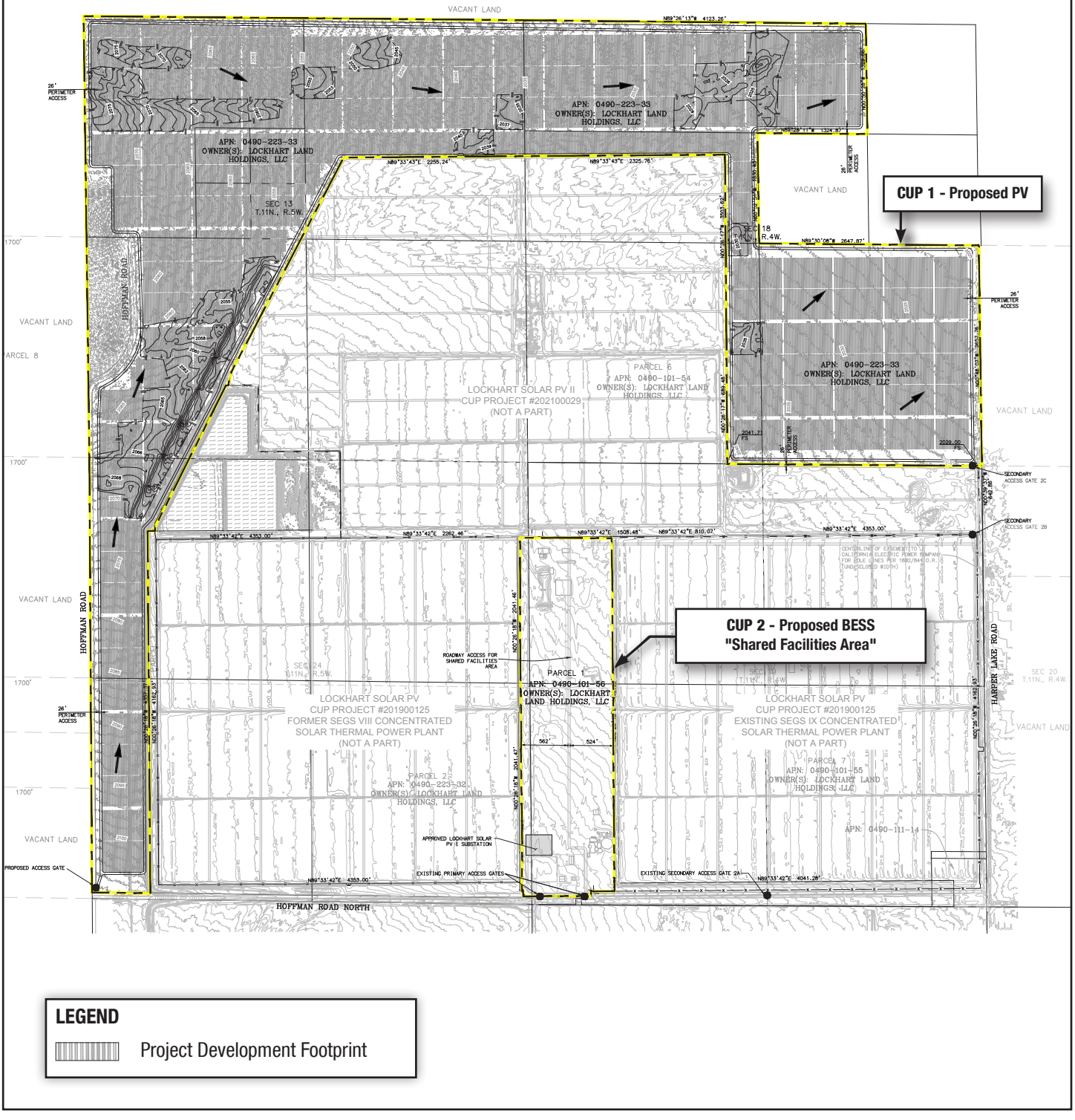

SOURCE: Kimely-Horn Plot Plan 6/15/22

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FIGURE 3: Conditional Use Permit Areas

DESERT BREEZE SOLAR PROJECT

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