

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-CA-D070-2011-0036-EA
Case File CACA-51625-01

Finding of No Significant Impact

Proposed Geotechnical Field Work for the SDG&E Ocotillo Sol Project Imperial County, California



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
El Centro Field Office
1661 South 4th Street
El Centro, CA 93342

August 2011

Finding of No Significant Impact
El Centro Field Office
Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-CA-D070-2011-0036-EA
Case File CACA-51625-01

Proposed Action Title/Type:
Geotechnical Field Work

Applicant/Proponent:
San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E)

Location of Proposed Action:
Imperial County, California

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental assessment (DOI-BLM-CA-D070-2011-0036-EA) for proposed geotechnical field work (Proposed Action) to collect subsurface data and information about the soils and geotechnical challenges on the Ocotillo Sol Project site. The geotechnical field work is a fundamental activity of significant importance in developing a photovoltaic (PV) electric generation facility, the Ocotillo Sol Project. SDG&E has submitted a separate right-of-way (ROW) application for a PV facility capable of generating 15-18 megawatts of renewable energy. The geotechnical field work is independent from the ROW application for solar energy development, which will be the subject of a separate environmental analysis. The results of the geotechnical field work will be used to provide information to support the design, engineering, planning, and construction process, and to provide a construction cost estimate for the PV facility.

The proposed Ocotillo Sol site is located four miles south of Interstate 8, 9 miles southwest of El Centro, and 82 miles east of San Diego. The Project site is located south-southwest of the existing Imperial Valley Substation: San Bernardino, Meridian, California, Township 16 ½ South, Range 12 East, Section 3 portion of SW ¼, portion of SE ¼. Access to the Project site would be from Highway 98 along an existing gravel site access road. The existing site access road from Highway 98 is referred to in the CA 5865 BLM ROW Grant associated with the SDG&E South West Power Link (SWPL) Transmission Line (see Figure 1 attached). This permit for the SWPL transmission line corridor refers to "ancillary facilities" which includes this site's access road. The Ocotillo Sol Project area includes 100 acres of undeveloped public land administered by the BLM. Within this area the geotechnical field work will involve a 20 feet by 50 feet work area for each of 7 geotechnical borings and collecting soil samples. In addition, 10 electrical resistivity surveys will be performed (see Figure 2 attached). The environmental assessment (EA) is incorporated by reference to this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Decision Record (DR). The Proposed Action and No Action alternative were analyzed in the EA.

2.0 PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY

The Proposed Action and alternative have been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the following policy, regulation, and BLM Land Use Plan and the associated decision:

Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), 1976
Title 43 under Part 2800 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)
California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan, 1980, as amended

3.0 FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The El Centro Field Office interdisciplinary review and analysis determined that the proposed action would not trigger significant impacts on the environment based on criteria established by regulations, policy and analysis.

Based on the findings discussed herein, I conclude that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action and will result in no significant impacts to the environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in applicable land use plans. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement to further analyze possible impacts is not required pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

This determination is based on the rationale that the significance criteria, as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 CFR 1508.27) have not been met. "Significantly" as used in NEPA requires considerations of both context and intensity. In making this Finding of No Significant Impact, the following criteria have been considered, in accordance with the CEQ, 40 C.F.R. 1508.27.

Context: This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short and long term effects are relevant.

Environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action and the No Action alternative have been assessed by an interdisciplinary team and described in Environmental Assessment # DOI-BLM-CA-D070-2011-0036-EA (incorporated by reference below). The context of the EA analysis was determined to be at a local and regional scale in Imperial County, California. The effects of the action are not applicable on a national scale since no nationally significant values were involved.

Intensity: This refers to the severity of impact. The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1) Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects.

Beneficial Effects: Geotechnical fieldwork would allow for proper engineering of the proposed Ocotillo Sol PV Project. The proposed Ocotillo Sol Project is needed for compliance with California's growing electric power demand, especially for energy from renewable sources. It has the potential to have a beneficial effect on energy production and a positive effect on air quality by reducing the burning of fossil fuels.

Adverse Effects: As vehicles and machinery travel across the Project site, there would be some disturbance of soils, creating some dust or PM₁₀. Testing activity would take three days and generate low levels of emissions associated with use of gasoline and diesel-powered equipment (trucks, vehicles and machinery). Following certain guidelines, the Proposed Action would have negligible effects on air quality.

The Proposed Action could result in potential impacts to sensitive species such as the flat-tailed horned lizard and burrowing owl. Measures to avoid and reduce the potential effects from the Proposed Action have been incorporated in the project description, including Best Management Practices and monitoring, and would result in negligible impacts to biological resources.

The Proposed Action has been designed to avoid cultural resources located on the Project site. Additionally, there will be an archaeologist present to monitor that the Proposed Action does not impact cultural resources.

The Proposed Action would be monitored by a paleontological monitor to examine test borings to identify and recover paleontological resources if encountered. If paleontological resources are detected they would be analyzed and prepared for curation.

Geotechnical field work within the Ocotillo Sol site would be temporary and completed within three days. No noise thresholds would be exceeded. There would be negligible noise effects from the Proposed Action.

2) The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.

The Proposed Action is not anticipated to affect public health and safety as geotechnical boring will take place in a confined area over a short period of time. The geotechnical field work will involve a 20 feet by 50 feet work area for each of 7 geotechnical borings and collecting soil samples.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The Proposed Action would not be situated in proximity to park lands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. The Proposed Action has been sited so as to avoid cultural or historic resources.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

It is not likely that the Proposed Action would result in impacts to the quality of the human environment that would be highly controversial as geotechnical boring will take place in a confined area over a short period of time and restoration will take place immediately following boring to match prior condition of the area.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Effects of the Proposed Action are well understood and would not involve unique or unknown risks as geotechnical boring is a common practice for collecting subsurface data and information about soils and geotechnical challenges.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Proposed Action would not establish precedents for future actions or represent a decision in principle about a future action as geotechnical field work is independent from the ROW application for solar energy development, which will be the subject of a separate environmental analysis.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.

Cumulative impacts of the Proposed Action on the environment would not be significant or related to other actions with significant cumulative impacts as geotechnical field work is independent from the ROW application for solar energy development, which will be the subject of a separate environmental analysis.

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

No significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources would be affected by the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action has been sited so as to avoid scientific, cultural or historic resources.

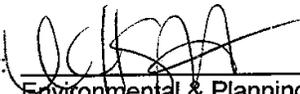
9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM's sensitive species list.

The Flat-tailed horned lizard occurs throughout western Imperial County. The Proposed Action is designed to minimize potential impacts to Flat-tailed horned lizard. Because of these measures, the BLM determined that this Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect Flat-tailed horned lizard. Burrowing owl has been detected in the Proposed Action area. Measures have been incorporated into the Proposed Action that would ensure negligible effects to burrowing owl.

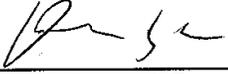
10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.*

There is no indication that the Proposed Action will result in actions that will threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

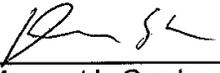
Based on the findings discussed herein, I conclude that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action and will result in no significant impacts to the environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in the California Desert Conservation Area Plan, as amended. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement to further analyze possible impacts is not required pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

Reviewed by: 
Environmental & Planning Coordinator

8/18/11
Date

Reviewed by: 
Daniel Steward, Resource Branch Chief

9/6/11
Date

Approved by: 
for Margaret L. Goodro, Field Manager
El Centro Field Office

9/1/11
Date

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-CA-D070-2011-0036-EA
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Decision Record

Proposed Geotechnical Field Work for the SDG&E Ocotillo Sol Project Imperial County, California



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Geotechnical Field Work

Applicant/Proponent
San Diego Gas & Electric Company

Location of Proposed Action:
Imperial County, California

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has received an application (CACA-51625-01) from San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E) for approval of proposed geotechnical field work (Proposed Action) for the SDG&E Ocotillo Sol Project to collect subsurface data and information about the soils and geotechnical challenges on the site.

The geotechnical field work is a fundamental activity of significant importance in developing a photovoltaic (PV) electric generation facility, the Ocotillo Sol Project. SDG&E has submitted a separate right-of-way (ROW) application for a photovoltaic (PV) facility capable of generating 15-18 megawatts of renewable energy. The geotechnical field work is independent from the ROW application for solar energy development, which will be the subject of a separate environmental analysis. The results of the geotechnical field work will be used to provide information to support the design, engineering, planning, and construction process, and to provide a construction cost estimate for the PV facility.

The proposed Ocotillo Sol site is located four miles south of Interstate 8, 9 miles southwest of El Centro, and 82 miles east of San Diego. The Project site is located south-southwest of the existing Imperial Valley Substation: San Bernardino, Meridian, California, Township 16 ½ South, Range 12 East, Section 3 portion of SW ¼, portion of SE ¼. Access to the Project site would be from Highway 98 along an existing gravel site access road. The existing site access road from Highway 98 is referred to in the CA 5865 BLM ROW Grant associated with the SDG&E South West Power Link (SWPL) Transmission Line (see Figure 1 attached). This permit for the SWPL transmission line corridor refers to "ancillary facilities" which includes this site's access road. The Ocotillo Sol Project area includes 100 acres of undeveloped public land administered by the BLM.

Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-CA-D070-2011-0036-EA was prepared to disclose and analyze the environmental consequences of issuing a ROW grant for the geotechnical investigations as proposed by SDG&E. The EA is a site-specific analysis of potential impacts that could result with the implementation of a proposed action or alternatives to the Proposed Action. These are fully described in the subject EA, which is incorporated by reference in the FONSI/Decision Record (DR).

2.0 DECISION

2.1 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The EA considered two alternatives: the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action, which is the alternative recommended by the BLM.

The No Action Alternative was not selected because it would not provide information necessary for permitting, planning, developing, and preliminary engineering design for the Ocotillo Sol Project. Additionally, BLM would not be able to allow for construction of renewable energy on this site.

Alternative A, the Proposed Action:

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide information that would assist with permitting, planning, developing, and preliminary engineering design for the proposed Ocotillo Sol Project site. Specifically, potential seismic and geologic conditions would be evaluated to assist with designing the structures and foundations, performing the site grading, and completing other design elements. The Proposed Action would consist of drilling seven geotechnical borings, collecting soil samples, completing geologic field mapping, and performing electrical resistivity surveys. The information would be used by engineers to design the solar panel support structures and other elements and to advance efforts to develop, construct, and operate Ocotillo Sol Project. The Proposed Action can be divided into three tasks: performing coordination/mobilization activities and completing a desk study, conducting field investigation activities, and completing an analysis of the samples collected and preparing a report summarizing the results.

Figure 2 shows the location of the Proposed Action.

Alternative B, No Action:

Under the No Action Alternative, a temporary ROW permit would not be issued to SDG&E for the Proposed Action. Therefore, no research would be conducted to determine the applicability of the development of solar energy by use of PV technology on this site.

2.2 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

There were no other alternatives considered.

2.3 DECISION AND RATIONALE

Based on information in the EA and consultation with my staff, I have decided to implement the Proposed Action as described in the EA. The granting of this ROW grant is needed to demonstrate the adequacy of project design to design the solar panel support structures and other elements and to advance efforts to develop, construct, and operate Ocotillo Sol Project. The Proposed Action is not expected to adversely impact any resources.

Alternative A, Proposed Action, is preferred over Alternative B, No Action, for the following reasons:

The Proposed Action is the first step to generate information to support the design, engineering, planning, and construction process, and to develop a construction cost estimate for a renewable energy solar project. The Ocotillo Sol Project is needed for compliance with California's growing electric power demand, especially for energy from renewable resources.

With Applicant Proposed Measures and monitoring, the environmental impacts of Alternative A are not significant and will be only nominally greater than those attributable to Alternative B.

The following measures are designed to reduce the likelihood of impacts to resources by implementing practices and measures:

General Terms and Conditions

1. The Holder shall comply with all stipulations contained in this right-of-way grant unless otherwise approved in writing by the Authorized Officer. Non-compliance with the stipulations by the Holder or any of its agents may at the option of the Authorized Officer result in cancellation or suspension of the right-of-way grant or adverse action against the Holder.
2. The Holder shall construct, operate, maintain and decommission the boreholes within this right-of-way in strict conformity with the project description as described in the plan of development (POD) submitted as part of the application (received January 2011).
3. Upon completion of the geotechnical study, boreholes and all construction related materials shall be removed from each bore site. Any components deemed to be unrecoverable shall be disposed of in approved landfills.
4. The Holder shall comply with applicable Federal and State laws and regulations issued there under, existing or hereafter enacted or promulgated, affecting in any manner construction, operation, maintenance or termination of the right-of-way grant.
5. BLM reserves the right to approve of the post geotechnical restoration activities to ensure acceptable restoration as identified in the Environmental Assessment, Section 2.1.2.
6. The Bureau of Land Management retains the right to occupy and use the right-of-way and to issue or grant rights-of-way or other land uses over, upon, under and through the lands, provided that the occupancy and use will not unreasonably interfere with the rights granted herein.
7. The Holder shall confine all activities within the area specifically defined in the right-of-way. All vehicle travel shall be restricted to existing roads or in the authorized location for those areas that leave existing roadways.

8. The Holder or its agents shall follow only the prescribed route to enter and leave the project location. The biological and archeological monitors will lead the other members in to the site for borehole installation.
9. The Holder or its agents shall define and respect work area limits.
10. In the event of the discovery of human remains on BLM lands, the holder or contractors shall notify BLM authorities immediately. BLM Law Enforcement may be reached at 909-383-5654, if unable to contact BLM dispatch at the number above call Emergency Services at 911.
11. The Holder shall protect all survey monuments found within the right-of-way. Survey monuments include, but are not limited to, General Land Office and BLM Cadastral Survey Corners, reference corners, witness points, U.S. Coastal and Geodetic benchmarks and triangulation stations, military control monuments, and recognizable civil (both public and private) survey monuments. In the event of obliteration or disturbance of any of the above, the Holder shall immediately report the incident, in writing, to the Authorized officer and the respective installing authority if known. Where General Land Office or BLM right-of-way monuments or references are obliterated during operations, the Holder shall secure the services of a registered land surveyor or a BLM cadastral surveyor to restore the disturbed monuments and references using surveying procedures found in the Manual of Surveying Instructions for the Survey of the Public Lands in the United States, latest edition. The Holder shall record such survey in the appropriate county and send a copy to the Authorized Officer. If the BLM cadastral surveyors or other Federal surveyors are used to restore the disturbed survey monument, the holder shall be responsible for the survey cost.
12. In the event that the public land underlying the right-of-way (ROW) encompassed in this grant, or a portion thereof, is conveyed out of Federal ownership and administration of the ROW or the land underlying the ROW is not being reserved to the United States in the patent/deed and/or the ROW is not within a ROW corridor being reserved to the United States in the patent/deed, the United States waives any right it has to administer the right-of-way, or portion thereof, within the conveyed land under Federal laws, statutes, and regulations, including the regulations at 43 CFR Part [2800][2880], including any rights to have the holder apply to BLM for amendments, modifications, or assignments and for BLM to approve or recognize such amendments, modifications, or assignments. At the time of conveyance, the patentee/grantee, and their successors and assigns, shall succeed to the interests of the United States in all matters relating to the right-of-way, or portion thereof, within the conveyed land and shall be subject to applicable State and local government laws, statutes, and ordinances. After conveyance, any disputes concerning compliance with the use and the terms and conditions of the ROW shall be considered a civil matter between the patentee/grantee and the ROW Holder.
13. The permittee/grant Holder, contractor or anyone conducting activities authorized under the grant must have a copy of the grant/terms and conditions on site at the time the activity is being conducted pursuant to the authorization.
14. The permit holder, and its contractors are liable for damages related to its activities and is responsible for incidents on its construction sites, including but not limited to,

hazmat, vandalism, and accidents with recreational visitors. Permit holder will take measures to ensure visitor safety such as signing, flagging, lighting, etc.

Biological Terms and Conditions

- 1) The project proponent shall designate a field contact representative (FCR) who will be responsible for overseeing compliance with protective stipulations for the desert tortoise and for coordination on compliance with the BLM. The FCR must be on-site during all project activities. The FCR shall have the authority to halt all project activities that are in violation of the stipulations. The FCR shall have a copy of all stipulations when work is being conducted on the site. The FCR may be a crew chief or field supervisor, a project manager, any other employee of the project proponent, or a contracted biologist.
- 2) In order not to create an illegal trail, no shrub vegetation shall be cleared/bladed using mechanical or manual methods.
- 3) The Holder or its agents shall preserve existing vegetation. All work performed as the result of project activities shall try to avoid all vegetation within the project area. Precautions shall be taken to avoid damage to vegetation by people or equipment.
- 4) To prevent the introduction of new invasive weedy plant species into the project area, holder shall require the designated contractor to ensure that vehicles and equipment that have been used on sites outside of the project area have been cleaned prior to starting work on the project.
 - a) Maintain a log of the vehicle cleaning schedule for right-of-way grant monitoring.
- 5) Construction is not to be performed in the spring when the annual vegetation is setting seed.
- 6) A post construction biological report is to be submitted within 30 days of the completion of a borehole site installation.
- 7) The Holder or its agents shall be prohibited from collecting plants and wildlife.
- 8) The area of disturbance shall be confined to the smallest practical area. Area boundaries shall be delimited with flagging or other marking to minimize surface disturbance associated with vehicle straying. Special habitat features, such as burrows, identified by the qualified biologist shall be avoided.
- 9) All potential pitfalls to wildlife will be covered when not attended.
- 10) Existing roads shall be used for travel and equipment storage whenever possible.
- 11) No dogs are allowed on the project site.
- 12) All trash and food items shall be promptly contained within closed, raven-proof containers. These shall be regularly removed from the project site to reduce the attractiveness of the area to ravens and other FTHL predators.

Flat-tailed Horned Lizard (FTHL)

- 1) Prior to project initiation, an individual shall be designated as a field contact representative. The field contact representative shall have the authority to ensure compliance with protective measures for the FTHL and will be the primary agency contact dealing with these measures. The field contact representative shall have the authority and responsibility to halt activities that are in violation of these terms and conditions.
- 2) All project work areas shall be clearly flagged or similarly marked at the outer boundaries to define the limit of work activities. All construction and restoration workers shall restrict their activities and vehicles to areas that have been flagged to eliminate adverse impacts to the FTHL and its habitat. All workers shall be instructed that their activities are restricted to flagged and cleared areas.
- 3) Within FTHL habitat, the area of disturbance of vegetation and soils shall be the minimum required for the project. Clearing of vegetation and grading shall be minimized. Wherever possible, rather than clearing vegetation and grading the ROW, equipment and vehicles shall use existing surfaces or previously disturbed areas. Where grading is necessary, surface soils shall be stockpiled and replaced following construction to facilitate habitat restoration. To the extent possible, disturbance of shrubs and surface soils due to stockpiling shall be minimized.
- 4) A biological monitor shall be present in each area of active surface disturbance throughout the work day from initial clearing through habitat restoration, except where the project is completely fenced and cleared of FTHLs by a biologist. The monitor(s) shall perform the following functions:
 - a) Develop and implement a worker education program. Wallet-cards summarizing this information shall be provided to all construction and maintenance personnel. The education program shall include the following aspects at a minimum:
 - i) biology and status of the FTHL,
 - ii) protection measures designed to reduce potential impacts to the species,
 - iii) function of flagging designating authorized work areas,
 - iv) reporting procedures to be used if a FTHL is encountered in the field, and
 - v) importance of exercising care when commuting to and from the project area to reduce mortality of FTHL's on roads.
 - b) Ensure that all project-related activities comply with these measures. The biological monitor shall have the authority and responsibility to halt activities that are in violation of these terms and conditions.
 - c) Examine areas of active surface disturbance periodically (at least hourly when surface temperatures exceed 85°F) for the presence of FTHLs. In addition, all hazardous sites (e.g., open pipeline trenches, holes, or other deep excavations) shall be inspected for the presence of FTHLs prior to backfilling.
 - d) Work with the project supervisor to take steps, as necessary, to avoid disturbance to FTHLs and their habitat. If avoiding disturbance to a FTHL is not possible or if a FTHL is found trapped in an excavation, the affected lizard shall be captured by hand and relocated.

- 5) A designated field contact representative/biological monitor is required for all subsequent borehole site visits. The biological monitor will follow all the aforementioned FTHL avoidance and minimization measures.

Burrowing Owl (BUOW)

- Pre-construction surveys for BUOW shall be conducted no more than 30 days prior to initiation of construction activities. Surveys shall be focused exclusively on detecting BUOW, and shall be conducted from two hours before sunset to one hour after or from one hour before to two hours after sunrise. The survey area shall include the boring locations and approximate route of boring rig, and surrounding 500-foot survey buffer.
- During the BUOW nesting season (February 1 to August 3), the qualified monitor shall establish and mark a 250 foot non-disturbance buffer circle around the burrow. The buffer shall be staked and roped-off prior to initiating any activity onsite including geotechnical boring. No activity shall take place within the avoidance buffer area to ensure that disturbance to nesting birds does not occur to ensure compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Disturbance to nesting BUOW would require prior consultation, approval and mitigation in accordance with California Fish and Game requirements.
- Disturbing nesting BUOW that may cause changes of behavior, plugging the burrow entrance or causing the burrow to collapse could effectively destroy the nest, and as such, require a State permit.

Other Special Status Bird Species

- Worker Education Program: SDG&E would train field personnel. The training shall cover the following: 1) the potential presence of sensitive species and their habitats; 2) the requirements and boundaries of the Proposed Action (e.g., areas delineated by flags or cones); 3) the importance of complying with avoidance measures; 4) environmentally responsible construction practices; and 5) identification of sensitive resources in the field, if present.
- General entry and exit points for geotechnical activities and their work areas would be marked with traffic cones or flagging to avoid additional disturbance.
- All activities must comply with the MBTA. Active nests (i.e., nests with eggs or chicks) are protected year-round by the MBTA. Project related activities that would require disturbance, removal of an active nest, or that caused a breeding bird to leave the nest for prolonged lengths of time are not permitted.
- The drilling rig would have balloon tires. Support vehicles would have standard tires. In wet or soft conditions, off-road work would be limited to the drilling rig, and no tracked vehicles would be used.

Measures to Protect Archaeological Resources

Cultural Resource Terms and Conditions

- 1) All work regarding the installation and removal of the boreholes shall be monitored by a qualified biologist as well as archaeologist who has been issued a BLM Fieldwork Authorization. The archaeological monitor shall ensure cross country trails and installation areas are flagged and that the project personnel stay within the cleared areas. This includes any installation, maintenance and reclamation of borehole sites.
- 2) Prior to project implementation, all non-archaeological project personnel shall be briefed by a trained archaeologist on the importance of, and the legal basis for, the protection of significant archaeological resources. Personnel shall be given a training brochure regarding identification of cultural resources and reporting finds.
- 3) If the construction staff or others observe previously unidentified archaeological resources during construction, they should halt work in the vicinity of the find(s) and immediately notify the project archaeologist and BLM EI Centro Field Office Archaeologist, so that the resource value may be documented and assessed as soon as possible. The finds shall be formally recorded and evaluated. The proponent should protect the cultural resource discovery from further disturbance pending evaluation.
- 4) Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 the holder of this authorization or its contractor must notify the BLM EI Centro Field Office (760-337-4400), by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 the holder must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the Field Office. Protective and/or mitigation measures specified by the Field Office may be required.
- 5) If human remains and/or cultural items defined by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) are inadvertently discovered during construction activities, all work in the vicinity of the find shall cease and the San Diego County Coroner and the BLM EI Centro Field Office Archaeologist shall be contacted immediately pursuant to Section (3)(d)(1) of the Act. If the remains are found to be Native American as defined by NAGPRA, work may be delayed in the vicinity of the find up to 30 days.
- 6) The Holder or its agents shall not disturb, handle, move or collect cultural resources.
 - A qualified archaeological monitor would accompany geotechnical crews and would conduct a pre-activity survey at all locations to be accessed during the Proposed Action prior to beginning work on each location.
 - Where ground disturbing activities are conducted, the archaeological monitor would examine backdirt or drilling spoils for the presence of subsurface cultural resources.

- Existing roads or tracks would be used to the maximum extent possible. New tracks or routes would involve minimal disturbance. If turn-around areas are required for vehicles, the biological and cultural monitors would assist with selecting a location.

Monitors would be present during the Proposed Action to ensure that impacts would be avoided or minimized. Upon completion of drilling activities, disturbed areas (drill sites, seismic resistivity sites and access routes) would be restored to pre-activity conditions by on-site biologists and monitored by the archaeologist. The restoration efforts would be documented in the post-construction report that would be submitted to the BLM.

No impacts to vegetation are expected because the Proposed Action does not include any grading or removal of plant species.

3.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

August 25, 2010 SDG&E met with the BLM El Centro Field Office to discuss the Initial Plan of Development for the Ocotillo Sol Project. At this meeting, the BLM indicated the need for an EA for the Proposed Action. In addition, SDG&E and URS Corporation (URS) consulted with the BLM to determine the scope of cumulative impacts for the Proposed Action. SDG&E and URS consulted with the BLM and U.S. Border Patrol on other projects in the area of the Proposed Action which may cause past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future cumulative impacts as associated with the Proposed Action.

No comments were received.

4.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

SDG&E and the BLM engaged in internal scoping for this EA for the Proposed Action to determine analysis in this EA. Internal scoping refined the purpose and need, cumulative effects analysis, and other features of the Proposed Action. External scoping for EAs is optional in accordance with 40 CFR 1501.7 and was not initiated prior to the EA for the Proposed Action. Additionally, due to the three-day duration and limited scale of the Proposed Action BLM determined that external scoping was not necessary. The EA was available for a formal 30-day public comment period.

No comments were received.

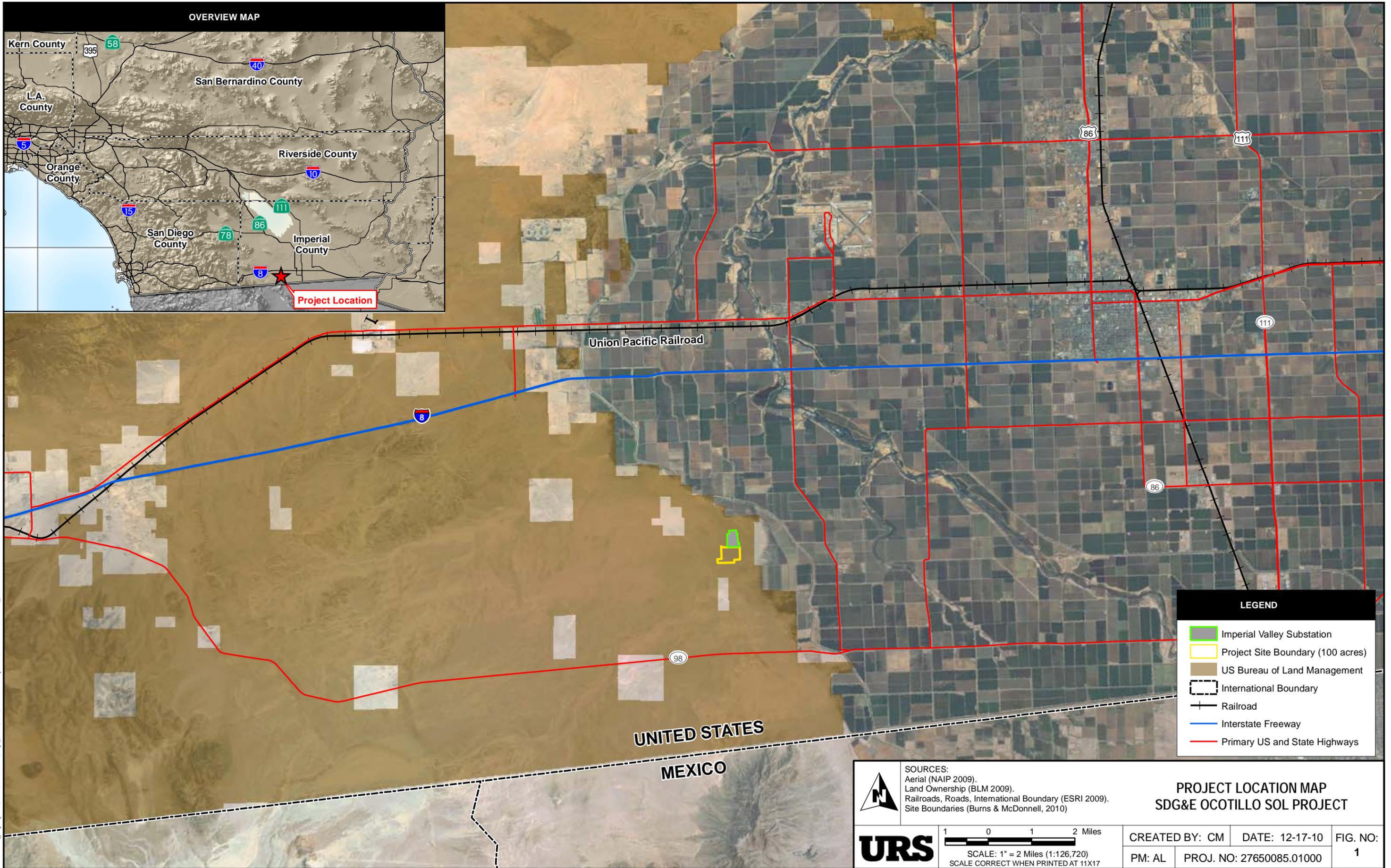
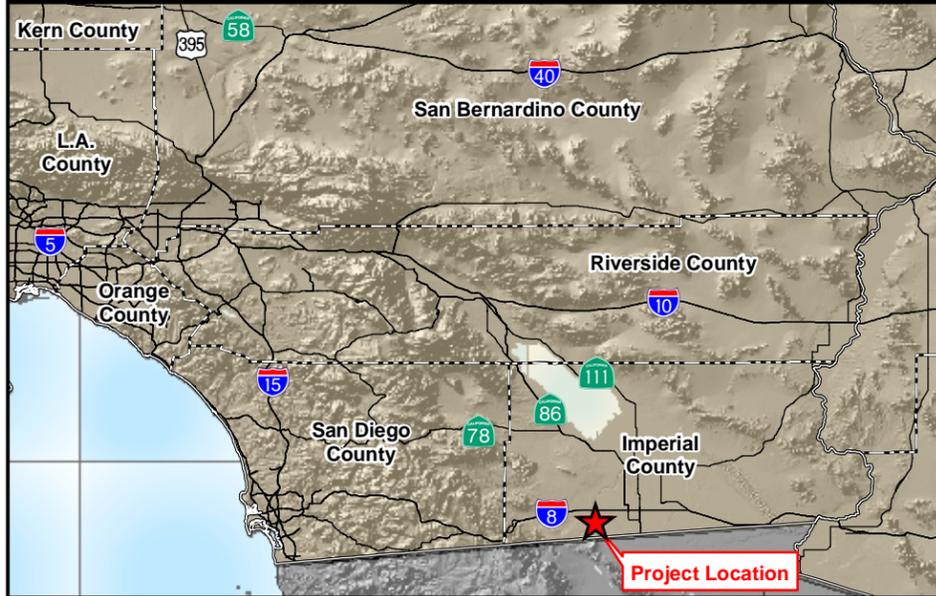
5.0 PLAN CONSISTENCY

Based on information in the EA, the project record, and recommendations from BLM specialists, I conclude that this decision is consistent with the following Land Use Plans.

The Proposed Action is consistent with the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan 1980, as amended. As part of 1976 Federal Policy Management Act (FLPMA), the CDCA Plan was developed to guide land use management of BLM lands within this portion of California. The Project Site is entirely located on BLM-administered public lands in Imperial County, and is managed under the CDCA Plan. Most of the lands administered under the CDCA Plan have been designated as one of four "multiple-use classes": Controlled (C), Limited (L), Moderate (M), or Intensive (I). The class designations govern the type and degree of development or management activities allowed within the boundaries of the classes, and must meet the guidelines given for that class.

The entire Project Site is identified as Multiple Use Class L. Class L land "protects sensitive, natural, scenic, ecological, and cultural resource values," and is "managed to provide for generally lower-intensity, carefully controlled multiple use of resources, while ensuring that sensitive values are not significantly diminished." Most land use activities are allowed in a Class L designation after NEPA requirements are met. The Proposed Action is a temporary use that would conform to the CDCA Plan after NEPA requirements are met.

OVERVIEW MAP



LEGEND

- Imperial Valley Substation
- Project Site Boundary (100 acres)
- US Bureau of Land Management
- International Boundary
- Railroad
- Interstate Freeway
- Primary US and State Highways

SOURCES:
 Aerial (NAIP 2009).
 Land Ownership (BLM 2009).
 Railroads, Roads, International Boundary (ESRI 2009).
 Site Boundaries (Burns & McDonnell, 2010)



1 0 1 2 Miles
 SCALE: 1" = 2 Miles (1:126,720)
 SCALE CORRECT WHEN PRINTED AT 11X17

**PROJECT LOCATION MAP
 SDG&E OCOTILLO SOL PROJECT**

CREATED BY: CM	DATE: 12-17-10	FIG. NO:
PM: AL	PROJ. NO: 27650085.01000	1

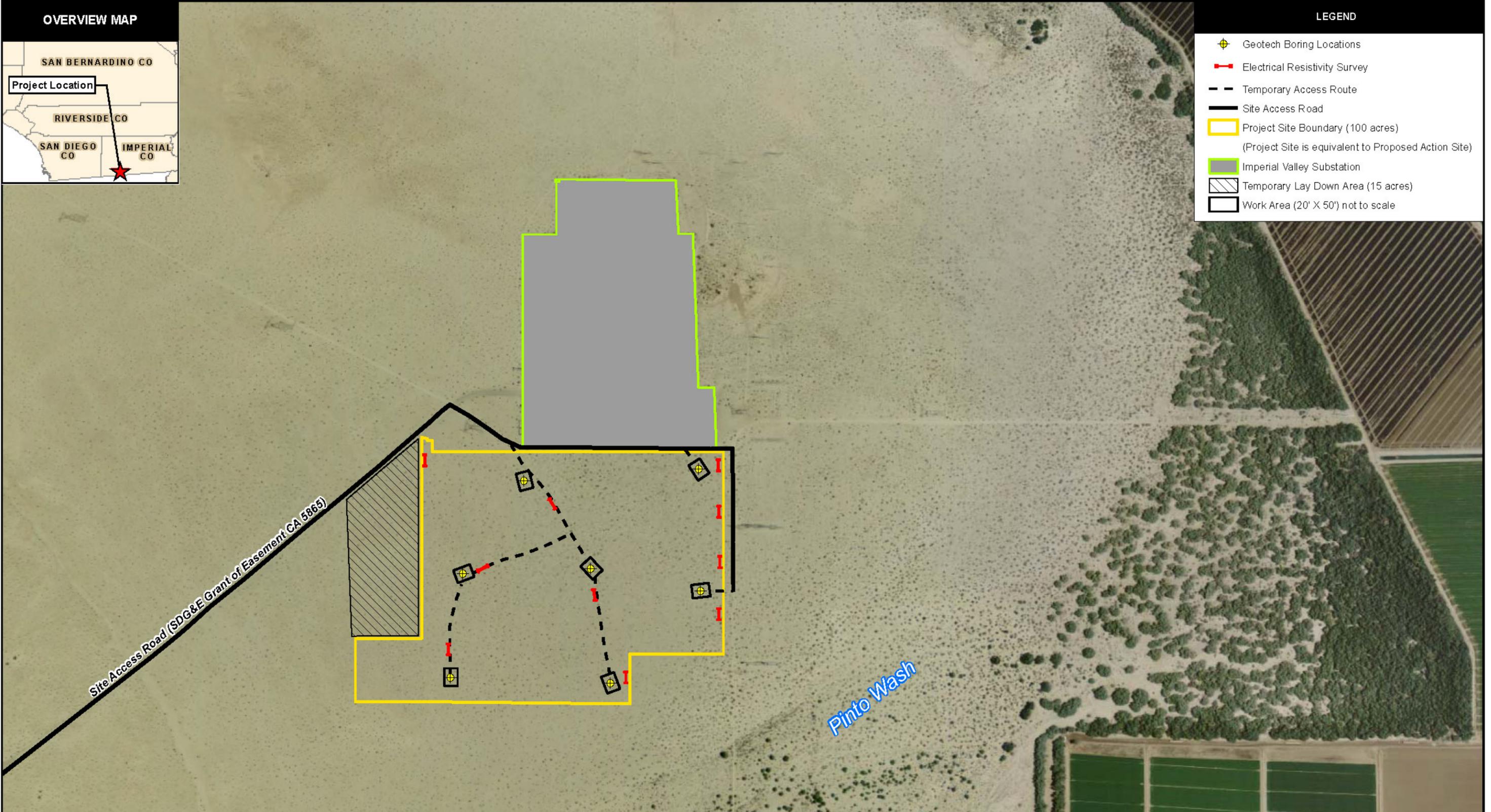
Path: G:\gis\projects\157727650085\map_docs\mxfl\OverviewMap.mxd, 12/17/10, diana_smith

OVERVIEW MAP



LEGEND

- Geotech Boring Locations
- Electrical Resistivity Survey
- Temporary Access Route
- Site Access Road
- Project Site Boundary (100 acres)
(Project Site is equivalent to Proposed Action Site)
- Imperial Valley Substation
- Temporary Lay Down Area (15 acres)
- Work Area (20' X 50') not to scale



Site Access Road (SDG&E Grant of Easement CA 5865)

Pinto Wash

Path: C:\gis\projects\1577027650085\map_docs\mxd\Geotech_Investigation.mxd, 12/17/10, diana_smith

	<p>SOURCES: Aerial (NAIP 2009). POWERmap (Transmission Lines, Substations 2009). Site Boundaries (Burns & McDonnell, 2010). Geotech Activities (URS 2009). BLM Routes (BLM 2009).</p>		<p>GEOTECHNICAL FIELD WORK PLAN SDG&E OCOTILLO SOL PROJECT</p>	
		<p>350 0 350 700 Feet</p> <p>SCALE: 1" = 700' (1:8,400) SCALE CORRECT WHEN PRINTED AT 11X17</p>	<p>CREATED BY: CM</p> <p>PM: AL</p>	<p>DATE: 12-17-10</p> <p>PROJ. NO: 27650085.01000</p>