Appendix C
Imperial Irrigation District's 230-kV "BN-BS" Transmission Line Project
Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Notice of Intent (NOI)

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: See attached distribution list.

From: Imperial Irrigation District
333 East Barioni Boulevard
P.O. Box 937
Imperial, CA 92251
Phone: (760) 339-9831
Fax: (760) 339-9896
E-mail: mdremington@iid.com

The Imperial Irrigation District will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an environmental impact report/environmental impact statement for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, location, and the probable environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. A copy of the Initial Study (☐ is ☒ is not) attached.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but **not later than 30 days** after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response to Michel D. Remington, Superintendent, Environmental Compliance, Imperial Irrigation District, at the address shown above. We will need the name for a contact person in your agency.

Project Title: Imperial Irrigation District New 230 kV "BN-BS" Transmission Line

Project Applicant: Imperial Irrigation District

Date: April 17, 2001

Signature: Michel D. Remington

Title: Superintendent, Environmental Compliance

NOTICE OF PREPARATION
OF A
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT/
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FOR THE
IMPERIAL IRRIGATION DISTRICT'S
230-kV "BN-BS" TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), are preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) to assess the environmental effects of IID constructing and operating a new 230-kV transmission line adjacent to its existing 161-kV line (the "F" line) between Blythe and the Imperial Valley (see attached figure). The proposed Project will provide increased transmission line capabilities from the proposed Buck Boulevard Substation or the Western Blythe Substation to the Midway Substation.

The IID is the lead agency for the preparation of this EIR/EIS in compliance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et. seq.), and implementing guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Title 14, Section 15000 et. seq.), and IID's Rules and Regulations to Implement CEQA.

The BLM is the lead Federal agency for the preparation of this EIR/EIS in compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulation for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500 – 1508), and the Department of the Interior's manual guidance on NEPA.

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The IID is a community-owned utility providing power to more than 90,000 customers in Imperial County and parts of Riverside and San Diego counties. The IID recently completed an evaluation of its customers' present energy demands and the electrical resources available to meet these growing power demands. A detailed review of near future available power resources for the IID indicate a shortfall in meeting system loads. The IID estimates that demand for electrical power will increase at a rate of 20 to 30 megawatts (MW) annually.

In 1998, the IID requested proposals for approximately 300 MW of additional capacity and associated energy to be provided by May 2002. Responses indicated that several new generation facilities were being developed in the region to the north and east of the IID's system. These include the Griffith Energy Project in Kingman, Arizona (under construction); the South Point Energy Project north of Parker, Arizona (under construction); the future Blythe Energy Project

west of Blythe, California; and/or one of several other existing and proposed power projects in the region.

Transmission access is the main constraint to utilizing these new generation sources to meet the increased demands for electrical power in IID's service area. IID's primary transmission system includes 92-kV, 161-kV, and 230-kV transmission lines with direct interconnections at Mirage, Imperial, Coachella Valley, and Blythe. The District's only direct connection to the northeast transmission grid is via the 161-kV "F-Line" which is connected at the Blythe Substation. The current contract path for delivery of power using the "F-Line" is operating at capacity. The "F-Line" is also an older transmission line that will need to be upgraded within the next 5-10 years as a matter of routine maintenance.

IID determined that expanding the existing 161-kV "F-Line" transmission line from the Blythe Substation (owned by Western Area Power Administration (Western)) would provide an acceptable transmission path to deliver the needed electrical power to the IID and other regional customers.

An amendment to the California Desert Conservation Area CDCA Plan of 1980 (CDCA) is required because the existing 161-kV line and this proposal are not within one of the 16 utility corridors as designated in the CDCA Plan. The CDCA Plan states that new utility needs which do not conform to the adopted corridor system will be processed by means of a Plan Amendment in conjunction with necessary permit hearings as required by other agencies. The proposed plan amendment will consider a range of alternatives including: 1) allowing a one time exemption to the CDCA Plan Utility Corridor element to allow for installation of IID's proposed new 230-kV transmission line, 2) designating a new utility corridor from Niland to Blythe along the same route, and 3) not amending the CDCA Plan. If the CDCA Plan is not amended, then BLM may authorize installation of the 230-kV transmission line within existing utility corridors only, or BLM may deny the project. All of these alternatives will be analyzed within the EIR/EIS.

1.2 Project Description

The IID proposes to increase the transmission capacity along this path by constructing a new double circuit 230-kV line transmission line along the existing "F-Line" right-of-way, from the Blythe Substation or the proposed Buck Boulevard Substation, to the Midway Substation, a distance of approximately 60 miles.

The "F-Line" will remain in-service until such time as it is removed from service or upgraded within the next 5-10 years. Depending upon the timing and operation of other regional transmission system upgrades, the new line may initially operate at 161-kV until area loads or wheeling requirements require the capacity for the line to be operated at 230-kV.

1.3 Project Location

IID is proposing to construct a 230-kV electrical transmission line from Blythe to Niland, California to access available electrical power in the Blythe area. The proposed electrical transmission line begins four miles west of the City of Blythe, in Riverside County, California

and traverses south and west to a point located 5.5 miles southeast of the Township of Niland, in Imperial County, California. IID has an existing 161-kVtransmission line right-of-way, #CA-8974, from Blythe to Niland, California. IID is proposing to construct the 230-kV line adjacent to and parallel to their existing 161-kV line, requiring an additional 360-foot wide right-of-way.

1.4 Probable Environmental Effects of the Proposed Project

The EIR/EIS to be prepared for the Project will address the full range of potential environmental impacts that could result from the construction and operation of the proposed Project. The analysis will cover such areas as:

- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Paleontological Resources
- Air Quality
- Water Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Visual Resources
- Land Use
- Recreation
- Socioeconomics
- Noise
- Traffic and Transportation
- Public Health and Safety

The EIR/EIS will also identify mitigation measures that will either avoid or substantially lessen the effects of any potentially significant impacts of the proposed Project.

Specific environmental issues that have been identified and will be addressed in detail, include those listed below. Additional issues identified for analysis in response to this NOP, through public meetings and/or field review, will be addressed in detail.

Biological Resources. *The transmission line would traverse critical desert tortoise habitat as well as several BLM administered areas including the Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Plant and wildlife species that may be affected by project construction and operation also include: glandular ditaxis; Harwood's milkvetch; Colorado River toad; couch's spadefoot; chuckwalla; desert rosy boa; flat-tailed horned lizard; razorback sucker; cheeseweed owlfly; Mojave Desert blister beetle; seven riparian bird species that occupy thickets adjacent to the East Highline Canal; American peregrine falcon; burrowing owl; ferruginous hawk; golden eagle; LeConte's thrasher; merlin; prairie falcon; Colorado Valley woodrat; Nelson's bighorn sheep and nine special- status bat species.*

Cultural and Paleontological Resources. *Investigations will determine whether any cultural resources are present within the Area of Potential Effect, which consists of a 500-foot wide corridor along the proposed 60-mile transmission line route.*

Visual Resources. *Impacts to visual resources may result from disturbance to the landscape by project activities, and also by the addition to the landscape of a new structure. Both short and long-term impacts associated with construction and installation activities can also occur.*

Land Use. *Land use impacts on Wilderness Areas and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern are associated with the expansion of an electrical facility on lands managed for multiple uses. This land use section evaluates the impacts on the recreational use of these Areas, including the Bradshaw Trail National Backcountry Byway, the Mule Mountains Long Term Visitor Area, the Little Chuckwalla Mountains Wilderness Area, and their resources. Conflicts created by the proposed Project with surrounding land uses could include disturbance to residential areas and interference with, and/or loss of, the use of cropland.*

Noise. *Project associated noise impacts along the 60-mile proposed BNBS-Line.*

Traffic and Transportation. *Project related traffic and transportation system impacts could include alterations to existing road conditions.*

Public Health and Safety. *Safety aspects associated with high voltage transmission lines include, aviation safety associated with the use of the Gunnery Range by military aircraft; fire hazards; corona; electric and magnetic fields, and hazardous materials storage.*

NOP Distribution List

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EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency
Federal Register
Environmental Documents

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[Notices]
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[CA-660-1430-ER-CACA-8974]

Proposed California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Imperial Irrigation District's Proposed New 230kV ``BN-BS" Transmission Line Project, California

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Imperial Irrigation District (IID), Interior

ACTION: Notice of Intent to prepare a California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan Amendment and joint EIS/EIR addressing a proposed 230 kV transmission line project.

SUMMARY: In compliance with regulations at 40 CFR 1501.7 and 43 CFR 1610.2, notice is hereby given that the BLM, together with the IID, propose to prepare an amendment to the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan and to direct the preparation of a joint EIS/EIR for the IID's proposed 230 kilovolt (kV) ``BNBS" Transmission Line Project. The BLM is the lead Federal agency for the preparation of this EIS/EIR in compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulation for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), and the Department of the Interior's manual guidance on NEPA; and the IID is the lead State of California agency for the preparation of this EIS/EIR in compliance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq.), and implementing guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Title 14, section 15000 et seq.), and IID's Rules and Regulations to Implement CEQA. This notice initiates the public participation process for planning, initiates public scoping for the EIS and also serves as an invitation for other cooperating agencies. Potential cooperating agencies include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Western Area Power Administration, the Department of

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Defense, the State Historic Preservation Officer, and the California

Department of Fish and Game.

DATES: For scoping meetings and comments: Two public scoping meetings will be held during 2001 on the following dates:

1. March 28, from 7-10 p.m., at the IID Board Room, La Quinta, CA.
2. March 29, from 7-10 p.m., at the Blythe City Council Multipurpose Room, Blythe, CA.

Written comments must be postmarked no later than 30 days from the date of this notice in order to be included in the draft Plan/EIR/EIS. Please submit any comments to the address listed below.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be addressed to Mr. James G. Kenna--Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Palm SpringsSouth Coast Field Office, 690 West Garnet Ave, P.O. Box 581260, North Palm Springs, California 92258-1260. The meeting locations are:

1. Imperial Irrigation District, 81-600 Ave. 58, La Quinta, CA.
2. Blythe City Council Multipurpose Room, 235 N. Broadway, Blythe CA.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Kalish, Bureau of Land Management, Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office, 690 West Garnet Ave, P.O. Box 581260, North Palm Springs, California 92258-1260, (760) 251-4849.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Imperial Irrigation District (IID) is a community owned utility providing power to more than 90,000 customers in Imperial County and parts of Riverside and San Diego Counties, all in California. The IID is experiencing an increase in electrical demand at an estimated rate of 20 to 30 megawatts annually. In an effort to meet electrical power demand, the IID is proposing to construct a 230 kilovolt (kV) electrical transmission line from Niland to Blythe, California to access available electrical power in the Blythe area. The proposed electrical transmission line begins four miles west of the City of Blythe, in Riverside County, California and traverses south and west to a point located 5.5 miles southeast of the City of Niland, in Imperial County, California. IID has an existing 161kV transmission line right-of-way, #CA-8974, from Niland to Blythe, California. IID is proposing to construct the 230 kV line adjacent to and parallel to their existing 161 kV line requiring an additional 360 foot wide right-of-way.

An amendment to the CDCA Plan is required because the existing 161 kV line and this proposal are not within one of the 16 utility corridors as designated in the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan of 1980, as amended. The CDCA Plan states that new utility needs which do not conform to the adopted corridor system will be processed by means of a Plan Amendment in conjunction with necessary permit hearing required by other agencies. The proposed plan amendment will consider a range of alternatives including: (1) Allowing a one time exemption to the CDCA Plan Utility Corridor element to allow for installation of IID's proposed new 230 kV transmission line, (2) designating a new utility corridor from Niland to Blythe along the same route, and (3) not amending the CDCA Plan. If the CDCA Plan is not amended, then BLM may authorize installation of the 230 kV line transmission within existing utility corridors only, or BLM may deny the project. All of these alternatives will be analyzed within the EIS/EIR.

BLM has identified a preliminary list of issues which will need to

be addressed in this analysis. Members of the public are invited to identify additional issues and concerns to be addressed. The preliminary list of issues includes the following: as proposed, this 230 kV line would traverse critical desert tortoise habitat as well as several BLM administered areas including the Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern, the Bradshaw Trail National Backcountry Byway, and the Mule Mountains Long Term Visitor Area. The proposed transmission line is also directly adjacent to the southern boundary of the Little Chuckwalla Mountains Wilderness Area. Of the 60 mile length of the proposed transmission line, approximately 44 miles is on BLM public lands administered by both the El Centro and Palm SpringsSouth Coast Field Offices. These 44 miles include a 17 mile portion that is on the United States Navy Chocolate Mountains Aerial and Gunnery Range.

Planning criteria (43 CFR 1610.4-2) are parameters, generally based on applicable law, which guide development of the plan amendment, to ensure the planning process to tailored to the issues and unnecessary data collection is avoided. The BLM has put together the following preliminary list of planning criteria and invites the public to provide written comments on these criteria. The draft Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert (NECO) Plan and draft EIS shall be considered to ensure that there are no inconsistencies between NECO and the IID proposal. This is critical as the NECO Plan has been prepared to addressed recovery of the Federally listed desert tortoise. The IID proposal itself will be subject to Section 7 consultation in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended to address potential impacts to desert tortoise, including cumulative impacts.

The planning process and environmental review analysis for the CDCA Plan Amendment shall be conducted from an interdisciplinary perspective to ensure all issues are adequately addressed. At minimum, input shall be sought from the following disciplines: biological resources, cultural resources, visual resource management, recreation, wilderness, and lands and realty.

Interested members of the public are invited to participate in this planning/NEPA process, and are requested to help identify issues or concerns, additional planning criteria, and alternatives to be considered related to this proposed CDCA Plan amendment and proposed 230 kV transmission line. When available, the public will be provided a 90-day public review period on the draft plan amendment/EIS/EIR and a 30-day protest period on the proposed plan amendment/ final EIS/EIR. These documents will be made available on the Internet at BLM's website: www.ca.blm.gov and at local public libraries in the cities of Blythe, Niland, La Quinta and Cathedral City, California. Contact the BLM if you would like to be included in the mailing list to receive copies of all public notices relevant to this project. Local notice will be provided a minimum of 15 days prior to the meeting dates.

James G. Kenna,
Field Manager.
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