

5.8 SOCIOECONOMICS

The socioeconomics section describes the potential social and economic effects that would be associated with construction and operation of the Genesis Solar Energy Project (the Project). The following discussion considers Project-related effects to population, housing, public services (fire protection, emergency response services, law enforcement, schools, and medical services), utilities, and county tax revenue, and also evaluates the economic impacts that would arise from the Project. This section also evaluates the cumulative effects of the Project, and discusses proposed mitigation measures, the Laws, Ordinances, Regulations, and Standards (LORS) relevant to socioeconomics, relevant agencies and agency contacts, and the permits required for the Project.

5.8.1 Affected Environment

The Project site is located on Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-administered land in east Riverside County, approximately 25 miles west of Blythe, California and 27 miles east of the unincorporated community of Desert Center. Riverside County, the fourth most populated county in California, accounts for five percent of the land in California and about six percent of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a). The county is long and narrow, extending 180 miles east to west and 40 miles north to south. The portion of Riverside County located east of the Coachella Valley, which includes the Project site, is sparsely populated and generally characterized by expansive, largely undeveloped desert and mountainous areas (Riverside County, 2003).

Riverside County is part of the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. A MSA contains a core urban area with a population of 50,000 or more and consists of one or more counties, including the county containing the “core urban area, as well as any adjacent counties that have a high degree of social and economic integration (as measured by commuting to work) with the urban core” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009b). The Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA consists of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. San Bernardino County borders Riverside County to the north. This area (Riverside and San Bernardino Counties) is also known as the Inland Empire region.

5.8.1.1 Population

The population of Riverside County increased by an estimated 562,266 people or 36 percent between 2000 and 2009, compared to a state-wide average increase of 13 percent (Table 5.8-1). Average annual growth rates over this period were 3.5 percent in Riverside County and 1.4 percent in California. There are 26 incorporated communities in Riverside County, which together accounted for about 78 percent of the total estimated county population in 2009. All of the incorporated communities, with the exception of Blythe, are located in the western part of the county.

The eastern two-fifths of the county, which includes approximately 2,800 square miles or 39 percent of the county area, accounted for just 1.4 percent of the total county population in 2007, and Blythe accounted for about 80 percent of this share (Riverside County, 2008a). The population of Blythe has grown at a much slower rate than the county as a whole since 2000, with the total number of residents increasing by just four percent between 2000 and 2009 (Table 5.8-1).

From 2008 to 2009, population in Riverside County and California increased by 1.4 percent and 1.1 percent, respectively. Population increased over this period in all the incorporated communities in Riverside County, with the exception of Blythe, where the population decreased by 1.4 percent (California Department of Finance, 2009a).

Table 5.8-1. Population 1990, 2000, and 2009

Geographic Area	1990	2000	2009	1990 to 2000		2000 to 2009	
				Absolute Change	Percent Change	Absolute Change	Percent Change
Blythe	8,448	20,465	21,329	12,017	142%	864	4%
Riverside County	1,170,413	1,545,387	2,107,653	374,974	32%	562,266	36%
California	29,758,213	33,873,086	38,292,687	4,114,873	14%	4,419,601	13%

Sources: California Department of Finance, 2007a, 2009a

Blythe, the closest incorporated community to the Project site, includes two separate parts, located approximately 16 miles apart. The main community is located about 25 miles east of the Project site. The second, smaller part of the community, consists of two state prisons, Ironwood State Prison and Chuckwalla Valley State Prison, which jointly occupy 1,702 acres of State land located about nine miles southeast of the Project site. The prisoners at these facilities are included in the population data presented for Blythe in Table 5.8-1, and the opening of Ironwood State Prison in 1994 likely accounted for part of the population increase between 1990 and 2000. Chuckwalla Valley State Prison opened in 1988. In the 2008/2009 Fiscal Year, the two facilities together employed 2,175 members of staff and had a combined total of 7,490 inmates, almost twice as many as the facilities are designed to hold (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2009a, 2009b).

Population estimates prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau indicate net in-migration accounted for more than three-quarters (77 percent) of the population growth in Riverside County between 2000 and 2008, compared to just 15 percent state-wide (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009c). Annual in-migration to Riverside County peaked in 2003 with about 66,000 domestic migrants moving to the county from elsewhere in California and other U.S. states (Riverside County, 2008a).

Population projections developed for 2010 to 2020 by the California Department of Finance (2007b) anticipate the population of Riverside County will continue to increase at a faster rate than the state average, with respective projected increases of 30 percent and 13 percent (average annual growth rates of 2.6 percent and 1.2 percent). Population is also projected to continue to increase in the following decade (2020 to 2030) in both Riverside County and California, but at slower rates, with respective average annual growth rates of 1.9 percent and 1.1 percent (California Department of Finance, 2007b).

Minority racial and ethnic populations comprised more than half the population in California in 2000 (Table 5.8-2). State-wide, people of Hispanic or Latino origin were the largest single minority group in 2000, accounting for 32 percent of the total state population (Table 5.8-2). The minority population was slightly lower than the state average in Riverside County in 2000, with white persons accounting for 51 percent of the population. People of Hispanic or Latino origin were also the largest single minority group in Riverside County.

Table 5.8-2. Race and Ethnicity, 2000

Geographic Area ¹	Total Population	Percent of Total Population				
		White ²	Hispanic or Latino ²	Black or African American ²	Other Race ^{2,3}	Two or More Races ²
Blythe ⁴	12,155	42	46	8	2	2
Riverside County	1,545,387	51	36	6	5	2
California	33,871,648	47	32	6	12	3
Block Group 3, Census Tract 458 ⁴	8,308	20	49	26	4	1
Block Group 6, Census Tract 458	1,453	43	52	3	1	1

Notes:

¹ A census block group is a subdivision of a census tract and consists of a group of census blocks.

² Non-Hispanic only. The Federal Government considers race and Hispanic/Latino origin (ethnicity) to be two separate and distinct concepts. People identifying as Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race. The data summarized in this table present Hispanic/Latino as a separate category.

³ The "Other Race" category presented here includes census respondents identifying as American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or Some Other Race. The relative high percentage of California's statewide population in this category (12 percent) reflects the Asian population, which comprised 11 percent of the state population in 2000.

⁴ The total population for Blythe for 2000 was subsequently revised by the Census Bureau and increased to 20,463, an increase of 8,308. The original data presented here represents the main part of the community only. The missing 8,308 (included here as Block Group 3, Census Tract 458) represents the prison population from the smaller, geographically separate part of the community.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a

Data are also presented in Table 5.8-2 for the city of Blythe and the two census block groups within six miles of the Project site. The census data compiled for the city of Blythe in 2000 (shown in Table 5.8-2) were subsequently revised by the Census Bureau and the total population estimate was increased to 20,463, an increase of 8,308. Review of these data indicate the Census neglected to include the western portion of the city (the two state prisons) in its initial tabulations. The data for this part of the city are shown in Table 5.8-2 as Block Group 3, Census Tract 458. This block group includes a much larger area, extending west from the western part of Blythe and south of I-10, but the State prisons are the only population within the area. The race and ethnicity data for this block group are for the prison population only and reflect the demographics of that population, rather than the surrounding area.

Data for 2000 indicate minorities comprised a larger share of the population in the main portion of Blythe than in Riverside County and California as a whole, accounting for 58 percent of the total versus 49 percent and 53 percent, respectively (Table 5.8-2). Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin made up almost half (46 percent) of the population in Blythe in 2000. Minority populations also comprised more than half of the total population in Census Tract 458, Block Group 6, which includes the Project site and a total area of approximately 1,040 square miles, with persons of Hispanic or Latino origin accounting for 52 percent of the total population (Table 5.8-2).

Data for 2005 to 2007 are published for selected geographic areas with populations of 20,000 or greater and represent the average characteristics over that 3-year period of time. These data indicate the minority share of the population has increased in both California and San Bernardino County, with 43 percent and 44 percent of the respective populations in these areas estimated to be White alone in 2005 to 2007 (Table 5.8-3). These data also suggest the minority population has increased in Blythe, but the large changes shown between Table 5.8-2 and Table 5.8-3 reflect the inclusion of the inmate populations from the Ironwood and Chuckwalla Valley State Prisons, which are based on 2000 data (Table 5.8-2) and likely comprise about 40 percent of the total city population.

Table 5.8-3. Race and Ethnicity, 2005 to 2007¹

Geographic Area	Total Population	Percent of Total Population				
		White ²	Hispanic or Latino ²	Black or African American ²	Other Race ^{2,3}	Two or More Races ²
Blythe	21,125	32	48	17	3	1
Riverside County	2,002,663	44	42	6	7	2
California	36,264,467	43	36	6	13	2

Notes:

¹ Data for 2005 to 2007 are published for selected geographic areas with populations of 20,000 or greater and represent the average characteristics over the 3-year period of time.

² Table 5.8-2, note 2.

³ The "Other Race" category presented here includes census respondents identifying as American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or Some Other Race. The relative high percentage of the California population in this category (13 percent) reflects the Asian population, which comprised 12 percent of the State population in 2005 to 2007.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009d

5.8.1.2 Housing

Housing estimates compiled by the California Department of Finance (2009b) for 2009 are presented for the city of Blythe and Riverside County in Table 5.8-4. These data indicate the percent of housing that is vacant in the city of Blythe is more than twice the State average (16.1 percent versus 5.9 percent). The vacancy rate is also more than twice the State average in Riverside County as a whole (Table 5.8-4).

These data identify the total percentage of the housing stock that is vacant, but do not specify what share of those vacant units are available for rent. Vacant housing units may also be for sale only, rented or sold, but not yet occupied, or for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Data compiled as part of the 2000 Census indicated 16.1 percent of the housing units in Blythe were vacant, with 37 percent of these (six percent of the total housing stock) available for rent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b). Applying this ratio to the 2009 data suggests that approximately 326 housing units are available for rent in Blythe. Using the same approach, approximately 79 housing units are for sale in Blythe.

Table 5.8-4. Housing Estimates, 2009

Geographic Area	Total Units	Type of Housing Unit			Percent of Total Vacant	Vacant Units	Estimated Units Available	
		Single-Family	Multi-Family	Mobile Homes			For Rent ¹	For Sale ²
Blythe	5,468	3,196	1,377	895	16.1	881	326	79
Riverside County	780,112	564,836	128,592	86,684	13.1	102,530	16,405	12,304

Note:

¹ The 2009 data identify the total percentage of the housing stock that is vacant, but do not specify what share of those vacant units are available for rent. The units available for rent were estimated here using ratios of vacant housing for rent to all vacant housing units from the 2000 Census.

² The units for sale were estimated using the same approach.

Sources: California Department of Finance, 2009b, U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b

The most recent data for the Census block group that surrounds the Project site (Block Group 6, Census Tract 458) is from the 2000 Census. The 2000 Census identified 687 housing units in this block group, with a total of 208 or 30 percent identified as vacant, 25 units available for rent, and 23 units for sale (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b). More than half (53 percent) of the vacant housing units in this block group were classified for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Data compiled by Smith Travel Research for hotels, motels, and bed and breakfast inns (B&Bs) with 15 or more rooms identified 19 hotels with a total of 878 rooms within one hour's driving distance of the Project site in 2008 (Table 5.8-5). These hotels were all located in Blythe, which is the only community with hotels or motels with 15 or more rooms within one hour's driving distance. The average annual occupancy rate for hotels in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties in 2007 was 70.8 percent (PK Consulting, 2008). Applying this ratio (70.8 percent) to the total number of hotel rooms identified within one hour of the Project site suggests that, on average, a total of 256 unoccupied rooms were available for rent in Blythe in 2008 (Table 5.8-5).

Fifty-seven hotels with a total of 8,285 rooms were identified in communities located from 1 to 1.5 hours drive from the Project site. These communities include Indio, Palm Desert, Indian Wells, and Rancho Mirage. Applying the 2008 average occupancy ratio (70.8 percent) suggests that, on average, 2,419 unoccupied rooms are available for rent within 1 to 1.5 hours drive of the Project site (Table 5.8-5). A total of 129 hotels with 7,541 rooms were identified in communities within 1.5 to 2 hours drive from the Project site. These communities include Desert Hot Springs, Palm Springs, and Needles. Assuming an annual average occupancy rate of 70.8 percent, 2,202 unoccupied motel and hotel rooms were available for rent within 1.5 to 2 hours drive from the Project site (Table 5.8-5).

These estimates likely underestimate the total number of rooms available for rent in the area because they do not include hotels, motels, and B&Bs with less than 15 rooms. In addition, these data are only for California. Additional hotel rooms are located in Arizona within two hours drive of the Project site.

There are at least 10 Recreational Vehicle (RV) parks located in the vicinity of Blythe, with a combined total of about 800 spaces (rv-parks.getrv.com, 2009). RV parks in Blythe tend to be located along the Colorado River and receive higher levels of use during the summer. Contact with a small sample of these

RV parks suggests that while they have a large number of spaces, many of these are occupied by year-round residents or privately owned, and would not be available for use by construction workers (Loreta, 2009; Tomeoni, 2009). Additional RV parks are located in Ehrenberg, Arizona, and Quartzsite, Arizona, approximately 4 miles and 20 miles east of Blythe, respectively. The town of Quartzsite web site states there are more than 70 RV parks in the vicinity of the community that are typically occupied between October and March, with visitors attracted to the gem, mineral, and swap meet shows which are popular tourist attractions in the area (Town of Quartzsite, 2009).

BLM operates two primitive campgrounds in the general vicinity of the Project site: Wiley's Well Campground and Coon Hollow Campground, both located south of I-10 on Wiley's Well Road. Except for "special areas" with specific camping regulations, vehicle camping is allowed anywhere on BLM-administered land within 300 feet of any posted Open Route. There are, however, no facilities in these locations and there is a 14-day limit for camping in any one location. After 14 days, campers wishing to stay in the area longer are required to move 25 miles from their original camp site (Westermeyer, 2009). Long-term camping is available by permit in Long-Term Visitor Areas (LTVAs) on BLM lands. There are two LTVAs located in the vicinity of Blythe and the Project site: Mule Mountain, which includes the Wiley's Well and Coon Hollow campgrounds, and Midland, located north of the city of Blythe. LTVAs are for recreation use only and workers would not be permitted to use these areas (Westermeyer, 2009).

Table 5.8-5. Motels and Hotels, 2008

Geographic Area/Distance¹	Number of Hotels²	Total Number of Rooms²	Average Number of Available Rooms³
Blythe	19	878	256
Total within 1 hour	19	878	256
Indio	19	1,161	339
Palm Desert	14	2,172	634
Indian Wells	5	1,508	440
Rancho Mirage	7	1,598	467
Other Communities	12	1,846	539
Total within 1 to 1.5 hours⁴	57	8,285	2,419
Desert Hot Springs	14	645	188
Palm Springs	74	4,656	1,360
Twentynine Palms	7	389	114
Needles	14	595	174
Other Communities	20	1,256	367
Total within 1.5 to 2 hours⁵	129	7,541	2,202
Grand Total within 2 hours	205	16,704	4,878

Notes:

¹ Travel times are from Google Maps.

² Data compiled by Smith Travel are for the Riverside-San Bernardino market for 2008 and include hotels, motels, and B&Bs with 15 or more rooms.

³ The average numbers of unoccupied available rooms were estimated based on the annual average occupancy rate for hotels in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties in 2007 (PKF Consulting, 2008).

⁴ Other communities with hotels within 1 to 1.5 hours include Bermuda Dunes, Cathedral City, La Quinta, and Thousand Palms.

⁵ Other communities with hotels within 1.5 to 2 hours include Banning, Beaumont, Cabazon, and Yucca Valley.

Source: Smith Travel Research, 2008

5.8.1.3 Economy and Employment

The Project site is located in eastern Riverside County, approximately 25 miles west of Blythe, California. The city of Blythe had a total estimated employed civilian population of 5,572 in 2007, with about four percent of this total (237 workers) employed in the construction sector (City of Blythe, 2008). The two state prisons are the largest employers in the area, together employing 2,175 workers in the 2008/2009 Fiscal Year (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2009a, 2009b). Other major employers in Blythe include the Palo Verde Unified School District and the Morgan Corporation (City of Blythe, 2008).

Total employment increased substantially in Riverside County between 2001 and 2007, with a net gain of approximately 202,000 jobs or 29.3 percent (Table 5.8-6). Viewed in percentage terms, this gain was almost four times as large as the statewide increase in jobs in California over the same period, 29.3 percent versus 7.8 percent (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2009). Sectors in Riverside County with large absolute increases in job numbers included producer services, consumer services, and retail trade (Table 5.8-6). There was also a large growth in the construction sector over this period, with the addition of 23,867 construction jobs between 2001 and 2007.

Table 5.8-6. Employment by Industry in Riverside County, 2001 and 2007

Economic Sector	2001		2007		2001 to 2007	
	Number of Jobs	Percent of Total	Number of Jobs	Percent of Total	Absolute Change	Percent Change
Farm Employment	12,254	1.8	8,836	1.0	-3,418	-27.9
Mining, Forestry, and Other	12,764	1.9	10,272	1.2	-2,492	-19.5
Utilities	1,484	0.2	2,122	0.2	638	43.0
Construction	70,480	10.2	94,347	10.6	23,867	33.9
Manufacturing	55,345	8.0	58,921	6.6	3,576	6.5
Wholesale Trade	18,976	2.8	27,190	3.1	8,214	43.3
Retail trade	83,261	12.1	111,459	12.5	28,198	33.9
Transportation and Warehousing	16,548	2.4	24,698	2.8	8,150	49.3
Real Estate	32,901	4.8	52,476	5.9	19,575	59.5
Consumer Services	113,152	16.4	142,705	16.0	29,553	26.1
Producer Services	106,540	15.5	149,571	16.8	43,031	40.4
Social Services	62,398	9.1	79,915	9.0	17,517	28.1
Government	102,732	14.9	128,078	14.4	25,346	24.7
Total Employment	688,835	100.0	890,590	100.0	201,755	29.3

Note:

¹ Full- and part-time employment includes self-employed individuals. Employment data are by place of work, not place of residence, and, therefore, include people who work in the area but do not live there. Employment is measured as the average annual number of jobs, both full- and part-time, with each job that a person holds counted at full weight.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2009

Unemployment rates for Riverside County and the city of Blythe were higher than the state average in May 2009 (the most recent data available), 15.6 percent and 13.1 percent, respectively, versus 11.2 percent (Table 5.8-7). In all cases, these rates are noticeably higher than they were in May 2008, reflecting the current downturn in the economy. In Blythe, for example, the unemployment rate was 6.5 percent higher in May 2009 than it was in May 2008 (15.6 percent versus 9.1 percent). In Riverside County, the May 2009 rate was 5.6 percent higher than the May 2008 rate (13.1 percent versus 7.5 percent).

Table 5.8-7. Employment Overview, May 2009

Geographic Area	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployed Labor Force	Unemployment Rate (Percent)¹
Blythe	7,100	6,000	1,100	15.6
Riverside County	914,600	794,400	120,200	13.1
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA ²	1,789,700	1,557,200	232,500	13.0
California	18,441,400	16,374,500	2,066,900	11.2

Note:

¹ Not seasonally adjusted.

² Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA consists of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

Source: California EDD, 2009a, 2009b

The California Economic Development Department (EDD) does not project future unemployment rates. However, a review of recent monthly unemployment rates indicates these rates have been trending upward in all the potentially affected areas since the beginning of 2008 (California EDD, 2009c).

Median household income in Riverside County was 90 percent of the state median in 1999 (the most recent data available for the sub-county areas near the Project site) (Table 5.8-8). The percent of the county's population below the poverty level in 1999 was the same as the State average (14 percent). Median household income and the percent of the population below the poverty line in Blythe in 1999 was substantially lower and higher, respectively, than the corresponding numbers for Riverside County. Median household income in the census block group that encompasses the Project site (Census Tract 458, Block Group 6) is close to half the state median, and the percent of the population below the poverty line in 1999 was twice the average in Riverside County and California (Table 5.8-8). The population identified in Census Tract 458, Block Group 3 in Table 5.8-2 consists entirely of inmates at the Chuckwalla Valley and Ironwood state prisons and household income and poverty data are not available for this population (Table 5.8-8).

Data for 2005 to 2007 are published for selected geographic areas with populations of 20,000 or greater and represent the average characteristics over the 3-year period of time. These data indicate the median household income in the city of Blythe declined as a share of the State average between 1999 and 2005 to 2007, decreasing from 74 percent of the State average in 1999 to 63 percent in 2005 to 2007. The percent of the population below the poverty line was twice the state average in Blythe in 2005 to 2007, 26 percent versus 13 percent (Table 5.8-9).

Table 5.8-8. Income and Poverty, 1999

Geographic Area¹	Median Household Income (\$) ^{2,3}	Percent of State Average	Percent of Population Below the Poverty Level³
Blythe	35,324	74	21
Block Group 3, Census Tract 458	0	0	0
Block Group 6, Census Tract 458	27,404	58	28
Riverside County	42,887	90	14
California	47,493	100	14

Note:

¹ A census block group is a subdivision of a census tract and consists of a group of census blocks.

² Median incomes are presented in 1999 dollars unadjusted for inflation.

³ These data compiled as part of the 2000 Census are the most recent available data for the two identified block groups. Note the population in Block Group 3, Census Tract 458 consists entirely of prison inmates and income and poverty data are not available for this population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000c

Table 5.8-9. Income and Poverty, 2005 to 2007¹

Geographic Area	Median Household Income (\$) ²	Percent of State Average	Percent of Population Below the Poverty Level
Blythe	36,883	63	26
Riverside County	55,881	96	12
California	58,361	100	13

Note:

¹ Data for 2005 to 2007 are published for selected geographic areas with populations of 20,000 or greater and represent the average characteristics over the 3-year period of time.

² Median incomes are adjusted for inflation and presented in 2007 dollars.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000c

5.8.1.4 Fiscal Resources

Riverside County's proposed (recommended) budget for 2009 to 2010 included total projected expenditures of \$3,612 million, an 18 percent increase from the county's projected 2008 to 2009 budget. Proposed expenditures would exceed revenues by approximately \$323 million. Tax revenues, including property taxes, comprise about \$378 million or 11 percent of proposed revenues for 2009 to 2010 (Table 5.8-10).

Riverside County has a sales and use tax rate of 8.75 percent, which consists of the 8.25 percent combined statewide rate (effective April 1, 2009) and 0.5 percent for the Riverside County Transportation Authority. This rate applies to the entire county (California State Board of Equalization, 2009).

Table 5.8-10. Riverside County Expenditures and Revenues

	Actual 2007 to 2008		Projected 2008 to 2009		Recommended 2009 to 2010	
	(\$ million)	Percent of Total	(\$ million)	Percent of Total	(\$ million)	Percent of Total
Total Expenditures/Function¹	2,999.6	100	3,063.7	100	3,612.2	100
General Government	549.0	18	388.5	13	862.4	24
Public Protection	1,104.5	37	1,168.0	38	1,089.6	30
Public Ways and Facilities	132.1	4	191.3	6	222.2	6
Health and Sanitation	374.8	12	423.5	14	401.6	11
Public Assistance	766.5	26	822.7	27	949.9	26
Education	18.7	1	24.3	1	24.1	1
Recreation and Cultural Services	0.4	0	0.3	0	0.3	0
Debt Service	39.7	1	45.0	1	62.1	2
Total Revenues	3,219.0	100	3,022.5	100	3,289.2	100
Taxes	421.2	13	375.8	12	377.7	11
Licenses and Permits	24.6	1	22.6	1	23.2	1
Fines, Forfeitures and Penalties	41.3	1	25.8	1	55.8	2
Use of Assets	86.6	3	42.5	1	40.3	1
Intergovernmental	1,469.4	46	1,572.0	52	1,642.6	50
Charges for Services	568.7	18	715.2	24	875.1	27
Other	607.2	19	268.5	9	274.5	8

Note:

¹ The total expenditures/function figure for 2007 to 2008 includes \$14 million not attributed to identified categories.

Source: Riverside County, 2009.

5.8.1.5 Education

The Project site is located within the boundary of the Palo Verde Unified School District. The Palo Verde Unified School District operates six schools: three elementary schools, one middle school, and two high schools. These schools are all located in Blythe, approximately 25 miles east of the Project site. A total of 3,674 students were enrolled in this district in the 2007/2008 school year, with a student/teacher ratio of 22.3 students per teacher (Table 5.8-11.) The number of students enrolled in the Palo Verde Unified School District declined by 61 students between the 2006 to 2007 and 2007 to 2008 school years. However, viewed over a longer timeline, the number of students has remained relatively stable in recent years (Table 5.8-11). A representative of the Palo Verde Unified School District stated student enrollment is expected to either remain stable or decline slightly over the foreseeable future (Barns, 2009). This potential decline in student enrollment is anticipated as a result of the out-migration of Blythe residents due to the current economic downturn (Barns, 2009).

Table 5.8-11. School Enrollment in the Project Area by Grade

Grade	Enrollment (2004 to 2005)	Enrollment (2005 to 2006)	Enrollment (2006 to 2007)	Enrollment (2007 to 2008)
Kindergarten	311	257	316	307
Grade 1	328	351	286	321
Grade 2	327	304	312	273
Grade 3	326	326	298	301
Grade 4	299	329	323	279
Grade 5	298	309	310	307
Grade 6	273	297	295	301
Grade 7	297	268	280	277
Grade 8	252	270	266	276
Grade 9	267	304	277	260
Grade 10	243	244	285	271
Grade 11	216	245	250	272
Grade 12	232	200	237	229
Total Students	3,669	3,704	3,735	3,674
Student/Teacher Ratio	21.9	21.2	23	22.3

Source: Educational Data Partnership, 2009.

The Palo Verde Unified School District is entitled under the California Education Code Section 17620 to collect a school impact fee for new construction within their district. The current school impact fee is \$0.47 per square foot for new commercial and industrial construction. A representative at the Palo Verde Unified School District indicated that, although the Project is planned for construction entirely on Federal lands, the impact fee would still be required (Schriner, 2009). The total fee would be calculated based on the Project's chargeable covered and enclosed space, which may be generally defined as the space "determined to be within the perimeter of a commercial or industrial structure, not including any storage areas incidental to the principal use of the construction, garage, parking structure, unenclosed walkway, or utility or disposal area" (California Government Code Section 65995 (b) (2)). This determination would be made by the office issuing the building permit, but assuming a total square footage of 39,000 square feet, the Project would be required to pay a total school impact fee of approximately \$18,330 to the Palo Verde Unified School District.

5.8.1.6 Public Services and Facilities

Law Enforcement

The Project site falls under the jurisdiction of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. The closest sheriff's office is located in Blythe, approximately 25 miles east of the Project site. This office is staffed at all times by at least two deputies and one sergeant. In addition, five narcotics officers are in the field at any given time and can be called in to assist with emergencies if needed. Response times from the station to the Project site would be approximately 30 minutes. A deputy patrols the portion of Highway 10 near the Project site at least once a day and response times could be less if a deputy is near the site during a call (Krisell, 2009).

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) is the primary law enforcement agency for State highways and roads. Services include law enforcement, traffic control, accident investigation, and the management of hazardous material spills. The closest CHP office is located in Blythe. There are seven officers on duty in a 24-hour period; three in the morning shift and four in the evening shift. Officers patrol the stretch of I-10 near the Project site throughout the day and response times would likely range from 5 to 10 minutes. In the event of a hazardous spill on the highway, the CHP partners with the County Fire Department and Caltrans for clean up (Kirchhof, 2009).

Fire Protection

The closest fire suppression team to the Project site is located at the Chuckwalla Valley State Prison. The Chuckwalla fire team responds to fires located within the two prison complexes (Chuckwalla Valley and Ironwood) and within a 20-mile radius. The Chuckwalla fire team has two type one engines. One engine is used only to deal with fires located at the prisons; the other can be used to fight fires in the surrounding area (within 20 miles). The fire team is staffed by inmates, as well as one captain employed by the California Department of Corrections, and works in conjunction with the Riverside County Fire Department (Dobrinin, 2009).

The Riverside County Fire Department has four stations that could respond to emergency calls originating from the Project site. Each station has a type one engine, and is staffed with paid fire fighters, 24 hours a day. Staff levels at each station vary by day and time of year. Stations 45 and 49, located in Desert Center and Blythe, respectively, would be the primary stations to respond, with Stations 43 and 44 also available if additional resources were required. Response times to an emergency call at the Project site would likely range from 20 to 30 minutes (Neumann, 2009).

Emergency Response

The Riverside County Fire Department has two hazardous materials (hazmat) teams, each consisting of approximately 10 to 20 trained hazmat personnel. Both teams are Level A response teams capable of handling all types of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear responses. Fire Station 81, located in Palm Desert approximately 100 miles west of the Project site, is the closest hazmat station to the Project site. Response times from this station to the Project site would range from 90 minutes to 2 hours (Bettys, 2009).

Hospitals

The Palo Verde Hospital in Blythe is the closest hospital to the Project site. This hospital has a total of 25 beds, including four intensive care beds. The emergency room is staffed at all times by three licensed nurses and one physician. The hospital has two surgeons and seven other doctors and employs approximately 60 licensed medical staff (mostly nurses). Services provided by the hospital include surgery, labor and delivery, radiology, and CT scans (McLain, 2009). Ambulance services are provided by Blythe Ambulance and ambulance response times to the Project site would be approximately 30 minutes (Art, 2009).

The Palo Verde Hospital would be able to treat most injuries that might occur at the Project site, with major traumas, such as head injuries, treated at adjacent trauma centers (McLain, 2009). Patients needing types of care not available at Palo Verde Hospital would be transported to Palm Springs Desert Hospital. An ambulance would take approximately 45 to 50 minutes to drive from the Project site to the Palm Springs Desert Hospital. If paramedics determined a shorter travel time were needed, helicopters operated by Mercy Air or Reach could be used, with a travel time of approximately 30 minutes to the Palm Springs Desert Hospital (Art, 2009). Alternatively, patients transferred from the

Palo Verde Hospital to the Palm Springs Desert Hospital could be flown on a fixed wing airplane, operated by Desert Air. A flight from the Palo Verde Hospital to the Palm Springs Desert Hospital would take from 30 to 45 minutes.

The Palm Springs Desert Hospital is licensed for 394 beds, 31 of which are intensive care beds. The hospital is a Level 2 trauma center capable of treating all levels of trauma except for pediatric intensive care and organ transplants. The hospital has a staff of approximately 1,800, with 700 licensed nurses employed during the height of the tourist season (October through May) and approximately 625 during the off season. Approximately 350 physicians have staffing privileges at this hospital (Hudson, 2009).

5.8.1.7 Utilities

Electrical and Gas

Electricity generated by the Project would be delivered to the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) grid at the proposed Colorado River Substation to the east, using the Blythe Energy Transmission line poles. A small amount of the power generated by the new facility would be used on site for ancillary facilities, such as cooling tower fans, pumps, control systems, general facility loads, ventilation, air conditioning, and plant lighting. Some power would also be converted to direct current to be used for the plant control and emergency backup systems.

A new 8-inch steel, natural gas pipeline would be installed at the site. This pipeline would extend approximately 10 miles and have a capacity of 1,600 cubic feet per minute. This pipeline would connect the Project to the existing Southern California Gas (SCG) pipeline located north of I-10. Approximately six miles of the line would be within the Project site boundary.

Water and Wastewater

Water for the Project would be groundwater supplied from on-site wells. The plant's estimated annual water consumption is 2,000 to 2,500 acre-feet. The cooling tower would consume approximately 85 percent of this volume, with the remainder used by the steam system. Peak water demand would be approximately 300,000 gallons per hour. A raw water storage tank, with a capacity of approximately 2 million gallons, would be installed on site for each 125 MW facility, in order to level well water withdrawals, allow for mechanical interruptions in the well water supply, and provide for fire protection.

Wastewater from cooling towers, processed wastewater from miscellaneous plant equipment, and water from treatment systems would be discharged to evaporation ponds. A total of 50 acres of pond area would likely be needed. Evaporation residue collected from the ponds would be removed, as needed, and disposed in an off-site landfill.

Waste

Solid waste generated at the Project site would be disposed at the Blythe Sanitary Landfill, which is located north of the city of Blythe. This landfill has a total permitted capacity 1.9 million tons and is currently permitted to accept a maximum of 400 tons of waste per day and, on average, collects about 80 tons per day. As of June 2009, a total of 601,000 tons had been deposited in the landfill, leaving approximately two-thirds of the landfill's capacity currently available. Based on the landfill's current capacity and assuming a four percent annual growth rate in waste disposal, the County of Riverside Waste Management Department estimates the Blythe Sanitary Landfill will be in operation until 2045 (Gow, 2009).

5.8.2 Environmental Consequences

5.8.2.1 Significance Criteria

The criteria used to determine the significance of Project-related socioeconomic impacts are based on the criteria identified in the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA Appendix G). Project-related impacts would be considered significant if they would:

- Induce substantial population growth.
- Displace substantial numbers of people or existing housing.
- Induce a substantial increase in demand for public services and utilities.
- Result in substantial adverse environmental impacts associated with the increased provision of public services and utilities.
- Physically divide an existing community.

5.8.2.2 Construction Impacts

Project construction is expected to employ an average of 646 workers a month for the 37-month construction period (see Section 3.0, Facility Description and Location for a detailed description of the Project). This schedule is based on a 22 work-day month. Monthly construction employment would peak at a maximum of 1,085 workers in month 23 of the proposed schedule. Projected employment by construction trade and month is presented for the 37-month construction period in Table 5.8-12.

Every effort would be made to employ qualified subcontractors and construction personnel from the local area. A study prepared for the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) found power plant construction workers will commute as much as two hours to construction sites from their homes, rather than relocate (Gilmore et al., 1982).

Riverside County has a large labor force with approximately 915,000 workers identified in the county in May 2009, including approximately 120,200 workers currently unemployed and looking for work (Table 5.8-13). Data compiled for the towns and cities (including Census Defined Places [CDPs]) in Riverside County by the California EDD indicate at least 20 percent of the labor force in Riverside County (184,000 workers) resides within a two hour commute of the Project site, with approximately 12.6 percent of this total (23,000 workers) currently unemployed and looking for work (Table 5.8-13). Blythe is the main population center (city, town, or CDP) within one hour of the Project site. Desert Center, an unincorporated town with a population of approximately 150, is also within one hour of the site. Other communities located in Riverside County within a one to two hour commute from the Project site include the cities of Coachella, Indio, and Palm Desert.

Riverside County is part of the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA, which also includes San Bernardino County, which borders Riverside County to the north. San Bernardino County had a total labor force of 875,000 in May 2009, with 12.8 percent of that total (112,000 workers) currently unemployed and looking for work (Table 5.8-13). Data compiled for towns and cities (including CDPs) in San Bernardino County by the California EDD indicate about two percent of the labor force in San Bernardino County (20,000 workers) resides within a one to two hour commute from the Project site.

Table 5.8-12. Construction Trade Projection

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37			
CRAFT																																								
Carpenters	4	8	8	8	8	13	18	18	23	28	36	36	42	50	50	58	48	43	42	30	35	36	44	44	50	50	50	50	40	30	24	12	12	8	8	8	8	1,080		
Electrician	6	10	10	35	35	40	45	55	80	70	80	80	80	80	80	90	90	80	85	80	105	105	105	104	104	80	80	75	75	60	60	45	45	35	25	24	24	2,362		
Insulators	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8	16	24	24	24	24	12	0	0	0	0	8	8	16	24	24	24	24	12	280		
Ironworkers	3	6	6	6	12	26	26	32	40	40	45	48	55	66	70	80	84	92	87	80	82	71	70	69	67	66	70	74	72	66	61	48	42	31	25	21	12	1,851		
Laborers	14	18	32	36	38	44	48	52	62	60	62	66	68	68	74	107	109	109	108	90	100	96	96	94	96	68	64	64	64	58	58	46	46	36	34	28	28	2,341		
Cement Masons	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	4	6	6	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	8	8	8	6	6	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	128		
Millwrights	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	16	16	16	16	16	16	14	14	14	22	22	22	24	24	16	16	16	16	14	14	14	19	19	19	8	8	440		
Operating Engineers	30	30	42	35	35	38	38	40	40	38	38	39	39	39	54	62	56	66	72	64	60	60	60	61	59	39	39	37	31	31	28	28	22	22	22	22	20	1,536		
Painters	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	8	12	15	15	10	0	0	0	0	0	5	8	12	15	15	10	130			
Pipefitters	0	0	10	20	40	70	100	100	120	130	130	130	130	130	142	162	182	212	242	230	220	220	200	190	150	130	130	130	130	130	130	100	90	70	60	20	4,510			
Teamsters	9	9	18	17	17	17	17	17	15	26	26	26	26	30	30	43	45	45	41	39	39	50	38	37	37	30	30	28	28	28	24	24	24	24	12	11	11	988		
Solar Field Craft ¹	0	0	0	25	45	80	150	200	225	240	250	250	250	250	250	90	110	130	150	200	225	250	305	315	300	250	250	250	250	100	80	50	50	50	50	50	5,770			
Total Craft	66	81	126	182	230	332	446	518	614	641	674	695	710	733	770	712	744	807	857	856	926	952	983	981	913	733	733	728	710	529	491	422	392	351	304	271	203	21,416		
STAFF																																								
Construction Staff	29	39	42	40	40	40	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	60	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	60	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	36	1,906		
CM Staff	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	310
Subcontractors	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	8	8	8	8	8	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	156	
Technical Advisors							2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	6	6	6	6	6	8	6	6	6	6	6	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	132	
Total Staff	45	55	58	56	56	56	58	59	61	60	60	60	60	60	60	76	102	104	104	104	104	100	102	100	80	59	59	59	57	57	57	57	55	53	53	53	45	2,504		
Total Project	111	136	184	238	286	388	504	577	675	701	734	755	770	793	830	788	846	911	961	960	1,030	1,052	1,085	1,081	993	792	792	787	767	586	548	479	447	404	357	324	248	23,920		

Notes:

CM – Construction Management

¹ The Solar field craft workers would be responsible for installing the solar field. There would be an estimated five solar field installation crews. Each crew would include a foreman, equipment operators, laborers, electricians, ironworkers, carpenters, masons, and pipefitter/welders.

Table 5.8-13. Estimated Labor Force within Two Hours Commute of the Project Site, May 2009

Geographic Area	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployed Labor Force	Unemployment Rate ¹
Total by County				
Riverside County	914,600	794,400	120,200	13.1%
San Bernardino County	875,100	762,800	112,300	12.8%
Total	1,789,700	1,557,200	232,500	13.0%
Estimated Within 2 Hours Commute²				
Riverside County	183,800	160,600	23,200	12.6%
San Bernardino County	19,600	17,100	2,600	13.3%
Total Within 2 Hours Commute	203,400	177,700	25,800	12.7%

Notes:

¹ Not seasonally adjusted.

² Based on communities and Census Defined Places located within 2 hours of the Project site. Travel times from Google maps.

Source: California EDD, 2009b.

Other communities in California within approximately two hours drive of the Project site include El Centro and Brawley in Imperial County, which borders Riverside County to the south. These two cities had a combined labor force of 35,000 in May 2009, with 9,400 workers (26.9 percent) currently unemployed and looking for work (California EDD, 2009b). Riverside County is bordered to the east by La Paz County, Arizona. Cities and towns in Arizona within a two hour drive of the Project site had a combined estimated labor force of about 28,000, with 2,500 (9 percent) unemployed and looking for work in May 2009 (Arizona Department of Commerce, 2009).

Riverside County is bordered by major labor markets to the east (Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale MSA), west (Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana MSA), and north (Las Vegas-Paradise MSA). The Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale MSA consists of Maricopa and Pinal Counties, Arizona and had a total labor force of approximately 2.1 million workers in May 2009, with approximately 155,000 (7.3 percent) unemployed and looking for work (Table 5.8-14). The city of Phoenix is approximately 158 miles east of the Project site, a drive of about three hours and 20 minutes.

The Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana MSA, which consists of Los Angeles and Orange Counties, California, had a total labor force of approximately 6.6 million workers in May 2009, with approximately 704,000 (10.7 percent) unemployed and looking for work (Table 5.8-14). Los Angeles is approximately 215 miles and three hours and 15 minutes from the Project site.

The Las Vegas-Paradise MSA consists of Clark County, Nevada and had a total labor force of one million in May 2009, including approximately 112,000 (11.1 percent) unemployed and looking for work (Table 5.8-14). Las Vegas is approximately 215 miles and three hours and 45 minutes from the Project site.

Table 5.8-14. Regional Employment Overview, May 2009

Geographic Area¹	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployed Labor Force	Unemployment Rate²
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario	1,789,700	1,557,200	232,500	13.0%
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale	2,111,255	1,956,526	154,729	7.3%
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana	6,590,100	5,885,700	704,400	10.7%
Las Vegas-Paradise	1,012,085	899,700	112,385	11.1%
Total Regional Labor Market	11,503,140	10,299,126	1,204,014	10.5%

Notes:

¹ Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) contain a core area with a population of 50,000 or more and consist of one or more counties. Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA consists of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, California.

Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale MSA consists of Maricopa and Pinal Counties, Arizona. Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana MSA consists of Los Angeles and Orange Counties, California. Las Vegas-Paradise MSA consists of Clark County, Nevada.

² Not seasonally adjusted.

Source: Arizona Department of Commerce, 2009; California EDD, 2009b; Nevada Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation, 2009.

The number of workers in the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA employed in May 2008 in the construction trades that would be required to build the Project are identified in Table 5.8-15. Peak employment in most construction trades required for construction of the Project would occur in the second year of construction, which under the current construction schedule would be 2012. Employment in the potentially affected construction trades is estimated for 2012 in Table 5.8-15 and peak project-related demand estimates are presented for comparison. This table also identifies the mean annual wages for 2009.

The Project would also employ a monthly average of 241 solar field craft, with monthly employment peaking at 300 workers. This category does not directly correspond with the Federal standard occupational classification system categories, but would likely involve a range of the construction trades identified in Table 5.8-15, including electricians, ironworkers, and laborers.

Large construction projects have occurred in the vicinity of the Project site in the past, including construction of the Chuckwalla and Ironwood state prisons, and the Blythe Power Plant. All three projects involved large labor forces. The two prisons, constructed in the late-1980s and 1990s, respectively, each involved a maximum of 250 to 300 construction workers (Fulton, 2000 cited in California Energy Commission [CEC] and Western Area Power Administration, 2000). Other anecdotal estimates suggest these numbers were higher, with each project employing an average of about 500 workers, with peaks of approximately 600 workers (Perez, 2009). The Blythe Power Plant, built more recently, had an average of about 450 workers, with a peak of approximately 600 (Perez, 2009). The Executive Director of the San Bernardino, Riverside Building Trade Council stated there were no problems finding qualified workers to staff these projects, but noted many of these workers came from outside the immediate area and temporarily relocated to the Blythe area for the duration of their employment on the Project (Perez, 2009). This is also likely to be the case with the workforce

required to build the Project, with additional workers most likely coming from the Coachella Valley, west of the Project site, or Phoenix, Arizona. These workers would likely commute weekly to the Project area for the duration of their work on the Project, returning home on weekends (Perez, 2009). If additional workers are required beyond those available in the Coachella Valley or Phoenix, the Project could draw from neighboring labor markets such as Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

Table 5.8-15. Employment and Wages in the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA by Construction Trade

Occupational Title^{1, 2}	Estimated Employment May 2008	Projected Employment 2012^{3, 4}	Projected Peak Project Labor Demand⁵	2009 Mean Annual Wage
Carpenters	14,180	21,431	58	\$48,967
Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	3,550	4,080	8	\$48,786
Construction Laborers	17,960	24,003	109	\$35,642
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	4,370	4,885	72	\$62,163
Electricians	5,170	6,268	105	\$46,425
Insulation Workers, Floor, Ceiling, and Wall	230	258	24	\$33,899
Painters, Construction and Maintenance	3,550	5,718	15	\$35,056
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	4,350	4,815	242	\$42,637
Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	580	795	92	\$52,295
Millwrights	50	97	24	\$45,915
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	23,750	25,593	45	\$44,213

Notes:

MSA = Metropolitan Statistical Area

¹ These are the Federal Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system categories that correspond with the construction trades required for the Project.

² The Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA consists of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

³ Employment was projected for 2012 based on estimates for 2008 (California EDD, 2009d) and projections for 2016 (California EDD, 2007) assuming a constant annual growth rate.

⁴ Peak labor demand for most occupations would occur in the second year of construction, which is assumed here to be 2012.

⁵ Projected peak demand totals by trade are from Table 5.8-12. These totals do not include the peak monthly demand for 300 solar field craft because this category does not directly correspond with the SOC system categories. Solar field craft workers would likely involve a range of the construction trades identified above.

Sources: California EDD, 2007, 2009d.

Some of the higher skill level positions required for essential trades, such as high voltage line electricians, controls and Information Technology (IT) specialists, and electrical engineers, may also need to be hired from outside the local area, most likely from the Los Angeles or Phoenix areas. These workers would also likely commute weekly to the Project area for the duration of their

employment, returning home on weekends. Given the size of the labor markets in these areas (Table 5.8-14) and the relatively small peak Project demand for these types of skilled workers, the Project is unlikely to affect the regional availability of these skills.

The proportion of workers likely to temporarily relocate to the Project area would vary over the construction period since the mix of labor categories or skills would vary. For the purposes of analysis, the Applicant estimates during peak construction periods 30 percent of the workforce would be local (*i.e.*, normally reside within commuting distance of the job site) and would likely commute to and from their homes to work each day. The remaining 70 percent of the workforce would temporarily relocate to the Project area for the duration of their employment. The majority of those temporarily relocating would likely commute in from their permanent residences on Sunday night and stay in overnight lodging or their own RVs on weekdays, returning home on Fridays.

Construction Impacts on Population

As noted above, a majority of the construction workforce would be expected to come from outside the area and temporarily relocate to the Project area, with most of these workers commuting to the Project site on a weekly basis, staying in temporary accommodation or RVs in the area during the week, and returning home on weekends. Very few, if any, of the workers employed during the construction phase of the Project would be expected to permanently relocate to the area as a result of this Project. The impact of Project construction on regional population levels is, therefore, expected to be minimal. In addition, the Project site is located on BLM-administered land in a relatively remote and largely uninhabited area, and construction and operation of the Project is not expected to displace existing population or physically divide an existing community.

Construction Impacts on Housing

The CEC and Western Area Power Administration found in its evaluation of the then proposed Blythe Power Plant in 2000 that Blythe had experienced large construction projects in the past, including, as noted above, construction of the two state prisons, which opened in 1988 and 1994. There was reportedly no noticeable shortage of housing during construction of these projects, which each involved 250 to 300 workers. Many of the workers reportedly brought RVs with them and camped at the RV parks in the area during construction. Based on anecdotal information, there was also reportedly no noticeable shortage of housing during construction of the Blythe Power Plant, with many workers staying in motels in the area (Shipley, 2009).

For the purposes of analysis, the Applicant estimates approximately 70 percent of the peak construction workforce would temporarily relocate to the Project area during construction. More than 1,000 construction workers are expected to be on-site from month 21 through month 24, with overall construction employment expected to peak at 1,085 in month 23 (Table 5.8-12). Assuming 70 percent of these workers would be drawn from outside the area, approximately 720 to 760 workers would temporarily relocate to the Project area over this four-month period.

Many of these workers would bring their own RVs for temporary housing. There are at least 10 RV parks located in the vicinity of Blythe with a combined total of about 800 spaces. However, contact with a small sample of these RV parks suggests that while they have a large number of spaces, many of these are occupied by year-round residents or privately owned, and would not be available for use by construction workers (Loreta, 2009; Tomeoni, 2009). Workers would also not be permitted to camp in BLM-managed LTVAs in the area (Westermeyer, 2009). Camping is permitted on BLM-administered land within 300 feet of any posted Open Route, but there are no facilities in these locations and there is a 14 day limit for

camping in any one location. After 14 days, campers wishing to stay in the area longer are required to move 25 miles from their original camp site (Westermeyer, 2009). Camping in locations without electricity and other services would likely not be viable during the summer, when temperatures routinely exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

The preceding information suggests workers temporarily relocating to the Project area with RVs may have limited options in terms of RV parks close to the Project site, especially during peak construction. While some workers would likely park their RVs in the Blythe area, others would either need to camp on BLM land with no facilities for periods of up to 14 days or park their vehicles at RV parks further afield and drive longer distances to the Project site. Additional RV parks are located in Ehrenberg, Arizona, and Quartzsite, Arizona, approximately 4 miles and 20 miles east of Blythe, respectively.

Other workers would likely stay in motels and hotels or secure rental accommodations for the duration of their employment. There are at least 19 motels or hotels with an estimated 878 rooms located in Blythe (Table 5.8-5). Average occupancy rates for Riverside and San Bernardino Counties suggest that, on average, 256 of these rooms are vacant and available for rent. At least 57 additional motels or hotels are located between one hour and 90 minutes drive from the Project site, with an estimated total of 8,285 rooms. Average occupancy rates suggest that on average about 2,420 of these rooms are vacant and available for rent. Additional motels and hotels are located from 90 minutes to 2 hours drive from the Project site (Table 5.8-5). In addition, an estimated 881 housing units in Blythe are currently vacant, with approximately 326 of these units available for rent (Table 5.8-4).

The CEC and Western Area Power Administration (2000) noted with respect to the Blythe Power Plant, which had a peak projected workforce of approximately 480 workers, that one possible area of concern for housing is the temporary increase in population in the area that occurs each year during the winter season. The population in the Palo Verde Valley triples during the winter season, with elderly “snowbird” visitors attracted to the area because of its warm climate (CEC and Western Area Power Administration, 2000; City of Blythe, 2004). Many seasonal residents bring their own RVs and stay in the RV parks in the area, while others park their RVs for extended stays at the BLM-administered Midland and Mule Mountain LTVAs (City of Blythe, 2004; Westermeyer, 2009). The CEC and Western Area Power Administration (2000) recommended the Blythe Power Plant project schedule the start of construction so that peak employment would occur during late spring to early fall before the influx of visitors to the area.

The preceding analysis suggests that if a temporary influx of 720 to 760 workers to the area were to occur during peak construction there would likely be a shortage of spaces in RV parks in the Blythe area, as well as a potential shortage of hotel and motel rooms, depending on the number of workers seeking this type of accommodation. The Applicant will work with the Blythe Area Chamber of Commerce and other appropriate officials to develop a housing plan, as needed. Additional RV parks and motels exist within one to two hours drive of the Project site and construction workers may have to stay in these locations and commute longer distances to work at the Project site.

Construction Impacts on Economy and Employment

Construction of the Project would have positive impacts on the local economy. Benefits associated with construction would be temporary impacts that would last for the duration of the construction phase of the Project, approximately 37 months.

The total economic impacts of construction of the Project were estimated using an input-output model that was developed using IMPLAN modeling software and data (Minnesota IMPLAN Group, 2009). This

analysis estimated the total (direct, indirect, and induced) change in output (sales), employment, and income that would occur as a result of the Project. The *direct* impact component consists of expenditures made specifically for the Project, such as construction labor and materials. These direct impacts generate economic activity elsewhere in the local economy through the multiplier effect, as initial changes in demand “ripple” through the local economy and generate indirect and induced impacts. *Indirect* impacts are generated by the expenditures by suppliers who provide goods and services to the construction project. *Induced* impacts are generated by the spending of households who benefit from the additional wages and business income they earn through the direct or indirect activity.

Annual total economic impacts (direct, indirect, and induced impacts) were estimated for Riverside County based on average monthly employment and annual construction payroll and local expenditures. Average direct employment for the duration of the construction period would be 646 jobs. The total construction payroll, including both craft and staff employees, would be approximately \$165 million spread over the 37-month construction period. Local expenditures for construction materials and supplies are expected to total \$14.5 million during the construction phase of the Project. Construction materials and supplies purchased locally would likely include concrete, rebar, formwork materials, asphalt, fencing, and local purchases in support of field staff.

In addition to the jobs directly related to construction of the Project (Table 5.8-16), construction of the Project would also support an estimated 446 (164 indirect and 282 induced) jobs each year for the duration of the construction period. Annual construction-related indirect and induced income impacts would be approximately \$11.9 million and \$14.9 million, respectively. Construction of the Project would also generate approximately \$38.4 million in indirect (\$15.3 million) and induced (\$23.1 million) output (sales) (Table 5.8-16).

Table 5.8-16. Summary of Annual Total Economic Impacts from Construction

Impact	Employment	Income (\$ million)	Output (\$ million)
Direct	646	53.5	58.2
Indirect	164	11.9	15.3
Induced	282	14.9	23.1
Total	1,092	80.4	96.6

Note:

1 Income and output estimates are in 2009 dollars.

Construction Impacts on Fiscal Resources

Local purchases of materials, supplies, equipment, and services are expected to total approximately \$14.5 million during the construction phase of the Project, which would extend for approximately 37 months. Assuming a Riverside County tax rate of 8.75 percent, the Project would generate approximately \$1.3 million in sales tax (in 2009 dollars) over the life of the construction phase of the Project.

Construction Impacts on Schools

A majority of the projected peak construction workforce, approximately 70 percent, is expected to temporarily relocate to the Project area for the duration of their on-site employment. However, most of these workers are expected to commute to the Project area on a weekly basis, returning home each weekend, and are not expected to relocate to the Project area with their families. As a result, the construction phase of the Project is not expected to have a substantial effect on student enrollment in

the Palo Verde Unified School District. A representative from the Palo Verde Unified School District stated student enrollment would either remain stable or decline during the foreseeable future, and the district would be capable of enrolling any new students resulting from the construction of the Project (Barns, 2009).

Construction Impacts on Public Services

Construction of the Project is not expected to result in a substantial increase in demand for public services. Representatives of the County Sheriff's Department, County Fire Department, and Palo Verde Hospital and Palm Springs Desert Hospital, the local and regional hospitals that would serve the Project site, all stated construction of the Project would be unlikely to have a significant impact on their ability to serve the community (Neumann, 2009; Krisell, 2009; McLain, 2009; Hudson, 2009). The police and fire departments are well staffed (Neumann, 2009; Krisell, 2009), and local and regional medical facilities are capable of handling any injuries that might occur during construction (McLain, 2009; Hudson, 2009). Most injuries would most likely be treated at the Palo Verde Hospital, with major traumas, if they were to occur, treated at the Palm Springs Desert Hospital.

Construction Impacts on Utilities

Construction of the Project would require potable water and electrical utility supplies and would generate wastewater and solid waste. Utility hookups would be available at the site for electrical service. Water would be obtained from on-site wells. Waste generated during construction would be disposed at the Blythe Sanitary Landfill, which currently operates at less than one-quarter of its daily capacity (Gow, 2009). Sanitary wastes generated during construction would be collected in portable, self-contained toilets and hauled to an appropriate disposal site.

5.8.2.3 Operation Impacts

The Project would be operated and maintained by a trained staff of approximately 40 to 50 full-time employees. This staff would consist of a site administrator, senior and junior operators, and maintenance technicians working on 12-hour shifts, as well as administrative personnel working on 8-hour shifts per day. The facility would be staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, but actual operating hours would be between sunrise and sunset. The plant would be maintained by staff personnel and specialized maintenance would be performed by the technology vendor under a long-term Service Agreement.

Total annual operations payroll is estimated to average approximately \$6 million, with approximately \$5.25 million of that paid to permanent employees, and the remaining \$750,000 paid to short-term contract operations employees. Annual payroll for short-term contract employees is expected to range from approximately \$500,000 to \$1 million per year, depending on work requirements for that particular year.

Permanent employees in the energy production sector are generally assumed to be willing to commute for as much as one hour each way to their place of work (Gilmore et al., 1982). Based on historical data from operation of the Blythe Energy Center, which is located near the Project site, approximately 50 percent of the operations labor force would likely be hired locally. The remaining 50 percent, approximately 33 workers, would be recruited from outside the region and would likely relocate with their families to the area (within one hour commuting distance of the Project site).

Operation Impacts on Population

Operation of the Project could result in up to 33 operations workers permanently relocating with their families to the Project area (within a one hour commuting distance of the Project site). Assuming an

average household size of 2.87 persons per household (the average household size in California in 2000 [U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a]), this would result in a potential addition of about 95 people to the Project area, an increase equivalent to approximately 0.4 percent of the population of Blythe in 2009 (see Table 5.8-1). A potential increase of this size would have negligible effects on the local population and operation of the Project is not expected to displace existing population or physically divide an existing community.

Operation Impacts on Housing

The available housing resources within a one hour commute of the Project site include an estimated 880 vacant housing units in Blythe. These vacant housing units include an estimated 326 units available for rent and 79 units for sale (Table 5.8-4). The potential addition of 33 households to the Project area is, therefore, not expected to substantially affect the availability of existing housing resources.

Operation Impacts on Economy and Employment

Operation of the Project would have positive impacts on the local economy through the creation of local employment opportunities and local expenditures for supplies and services. The Project would also help position California to meet the goal of obtaining 20 percent of its energy portfolio from renewable sources.

When completed, the Project is expected to employ approximately 40 to 50 full-time operations employees in Riverside County, with an annual payroll of approximately \$6 million, which would include all salaries, overtime, benefits, and incentives, as well as payments to short-term contract employees. In addition, an annual operations and maintenance budget of about \$500,000 would be spent locally (within Riverside County) on goods and supplies.

The total economic impacts of operation of the Project were estimated using an input-output model that was developed using IMPLAN modeling software and data (Minnesota IMPLAN Group, 2009). In addition to the jobs directly related to operation of the Project (Table 5.8-17), operation of the Project would also support an estimated 125 (43 indirect and 81 induced) jobs each year for the duration of the construction period. Annual operations-related indirect and induced income impacts would be approximately \$1.3 million and \$1.7 million, respectively. Operation of the Project would also generate approximately \$1.9 million in indirect (\$0.8 million) and induced (\$1.1 million) output (sales) (Table 5.8-17). These impacts would occur in Riverside County on an annual basis for the duration of Project operation. Output and income estimates are in 2009 dollars.

Table 5.8-17. Summary of Annual Total Economic Impacts from Operation

	Employment	Income (\$ million)	Output (\$ million)
Direct	65	6.0	6.5
Indirect	43	1.3	0.8
Induced	81	1.7	1.1
Total	190	9.0	8.5

Note:

1 Income and output estimates are in 2009 dollars.

Operation Impacts on Fiscal Resources

Solar projects in California are presently covered by a taxation exemption (Section 73 of the California Taxation and Revenue Code) that was recently extended until the 2015 to 2016 fiscal year (Resinger,

2009). Solar Project components covered by this exemption include storage devices, power conditioning equipment, transfer equipment, and parts related to the functioning of these items. The total capital cost (plant and equipment) of the Project is estimated to be approximately \$1 billion. The taxable value of the non-solar Project components, which would include the proposed administrative offices, operations control room, and maintenance facilities, is estimated to be approximately six percent of the total capital cost, about \$60 million. Assuming a Riverside County property tax rate of 1.0445 percent, the first operational year at full build-out (2014) would generate approximately \$627,000 in property taxes (in 2009 dollars) on Project components.

Taxation on the value of the land itself would be calculated based on the value of the lease with the BLM (*i.e.*, the flow of income to the BLM that is generated by the lease) (Resinger, 2009). The BLM would determine the value of the lease following approval of the Project. BLM typically calculates the value of this type of lease as 10 percent of the value of the property based on the values of surrounding private property. For the purposes of this analysis, private property in the vicinity of the Project site is assumed to have an average value of \$500 per acre. Using this value, the approximate value of the BLM lease would be approximately \$90,000. Assuming a property tax rate of 1.0445 percent (per Riverside County), the Project would generate approximately \$1,000 in property taxes (in 2009 dollars) based on the value of the BLM lease.

These are approximate estimates developed to provide an indication of the property tax revenues that would be generated by the Project. These estimates indicate total annual property tax revenues generated by operation of the Project (approximately \$628,000 in 2009 dollars) would be equivalent to approximately 0.2 percent of total county tax revenue recommended for 2009/2010 (Table 5.8-10). The exact values would be calculated by BLM (for the lease) and the Riverside County Assessor's office, and payments would be reduced over time to account for depreciation.

Based on the distribution of a typical Riverside County property tax dollar, approximately 48 percent of the annual total would go to schools, 25 percent to community redevelopment, 12 percent to the county, 8 percent to special districts, and 7 percent to cities (Riverside County, 2008b).

The Project is expected to be completed in 2014. Local purchases of materials, supplies, equipment, and services are expected to total approximately \$500,000 a year once the Project is fully operational. Assuming a Riverside County tax rate of 8.75 percent, the Project would generate approximately \$44,000 a year in sales tax (in 2009 dollars). This would be equivalent to approximately 0.01 percent of recommended tax revenues for Riverside County for 2009/2010 (Table 5.8-10).

Operation Impacts on Schools

Based on the average number of children under 18 years of age per family household in California of 1.1, the potential addition of 33 new family households to the Project area would result in the addition of 36 children (a smaller share of which would be school-aged). These potential new students would likely be enrolled in the Palo Verde Unified School District. The addition of 36 new students would be equivalent to about 1 percent of enrollment in the school district in the 2007 to 2008 school year (Table 5.8-11). A representative of the Palo Verde Unified School District stated student enrollment would either remain stable or decline during the foreseeable future. This representative was unable to estimate the maximum number of students the district could accommodate at this time, but was confident the district had adequate capacity to enroll any new students resulting from the operation of the Project (Barns, 2009).

The current school impact fee levied by the Palo Verde Unified School District for commercial development is \$0.47 per square foot for new commercial construction. A representative at the Palo Verde Unified School District indicated that, although the Project is planned for construction entirely on Federal lands, the impact fee would still be required (Schriner, 2009).

Operation Impacts on Public Services

Operation of the Project is not expected to result in a substantial increase in demand for public services. Representatives of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, Riverside County Fire Department, and Palo Verde Hospital and Palm Springs Desert Hospital, the local and regional hospitals that would serve the Project site, all stated that operation of the Project would be unlikely to have a significant impact on their ability to serve the community (Neumann, 2009; Krisell, 2009; McLain, 2009; Hudson, 2009). The police and fire departments are well staffed (Neumann, 2009; Krisell, 2009), and local and regional medical facilities are capable of handling any injuries that might occur during operation (McLain, 2009; Hudson, 2009). Most injuries would likely be treated at the Palo Verde Hospital, with major traumas treated at the Palm Springs Desert Hospital.

The Project would have its own on-site fire protection system. This system would include a sprinkler system in the control building, equipment room, and cooling tower. Additional sprinklers would be located around the turbine/generators, the heat transfer fluid heaters, and in the heat transfer fluid area. The control room would include a fire control system that would be inspected semi-annually by State fire officials. The solar fields would have hydrants installed around the perimeter, which would be operated by a pumper truck equipped with hoses. Employees would be given safety training courses in fire prevention, and a fire brigade of specially trained employees would be created. The Applicant would work with engineers from the Riverside County Fire Department to incorporate any necessary fire prevention measures into the Project's final design. In addition, a fire protection plan and emergency action plan for the facility would be submitted to the Riverside County Fire Department for approval.

Operation Impact on Utilities

Operation of the Project is not expected to result in a substantial increase in demand for utilities. The likely source of water for the Project would come from groundwater supplied from on-site wells and the Project would, therefore, have no impact on local water utilities. Project sanitary wastes would be disposed via an on-site septic system and leach field and would have no impact on the availability of local wastewater treatment capacity. Solid waste generated through Project operation would be disposed at the Blythe Sanitary Landfill, which is currently permitted to accept a maximum of 400 tons of waste per day and, on average, collects about 80 tons per day (Gow, 2009).

The Project would use natural gas for start-up and heat transfer fluid freeze protection and a new pipeline would be constructed to connect the Project with an existing Sempra gas line. The Project would also require electrical power for operational activities during nighttime hours when the facility is not generating its own power. These demands for natural gas and electricity are not expected to significantly affect the local supply of these resources.

5.8.3 Cumulative Effects

As of May 2009, BLM's Palm Springs Office had received applications for 18 solar projects in eastern Riverside County, including, in some cases, overlapping applications filed for the same site. Plans of Development (PODs) have been submitted for 16 of these projects, but none of these projects have advanced to the point where sufficient information is available to evaluate their impact on

socioeconomic resources in the Project area. Limited information is available with respect to potential construction schedules and it is unknown whether construction of these projects, if they were to proceed, would coincide in time with construction of the Project. The existence of overlapping applications for the same site suggests not all of these projects will be built. If the construction schedules for two or more large-scale solar projects do coincide at some point in the future, potential issues may arise with respect to housing construction labor and demand for local services. Project proponents would need to work with appropriate government officials to resolve these potential issues at that time or when additional information is available regarding the timing of other projects.

5.8.4 Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires each Federal agency to make the achievement of environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low income populations. The Order further stipulates the agencies conduct their programs and activities in a manner that does not have the effect of excluding persons from participation in, denying persons the benefits of, or subjecting persons to discrimination because of their race, color, or national origin.

5.8.4.1 Public Participation

The CEC and BLM will consider all input from persons or groups regardless of race, income status, or other social and economic characteristics. As part of the Application for Certification (AFC) process, the CEC will provide information to residents in the area and provide opportunities for their involvement.

The CEC typically:

- Mails written notice to all property owners within 1,000 feet of the site and within 500 feet of the centerline of all linear corridors.
- Publishes notice in the local newspaper announcing public workshops and hearings.
- Provides access to information by submitting copies of key documents to local libraries and providing materials via a web page.
- Holds hearings and workshops in the local community.
- Assigns a public advisor to assist the public in participating in the process.

The BLM will also provide a process for public participation. After the filing of the AFC and a notification from the CEC of Data Adequacy, the BLM will publish a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Per the requirements of NEPA, there will be various opportunities for the public to comment on the Draft EIS, as well as attend public meetings and provide public input.

5.8.4.2 Environmental Justice Screening Analysis

Evaluating whether a proposed action has the potential to have disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and/or low income populations typically involves: 1) identifying any potential high and adverse environmental or human health impacts, 2) identifying any minority or low income communities within the potential high and adverse impact areas, and 3) examining the spatial distribution of any minority or low income communities to determine if they would be disproportionately affected by these impacts.

Guidelines provided by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (1997) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (1998) indicate a minority community may be defined as either: 1) where the minority population comprises more than 50 percent of the total population, or 2) where the minority population of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population in the general population of an appropriate benchmark region used for comparison. Minority communities may consist of a group of individuals living in geographic proximity to one another, or a geographically dispersed set of individuals who experience common conditions of environmental effect. Further, a minority population exists if there is “more than one minority group present and the minority percentage, as calculated by aggregating all minority persons, meets one of the above-stated thresholds” (CEQ, 1997).

The CEQ and EPA guidelines indicate low income populations should be identified based on the annual statistical poverty thresholds established by the U.S. Census Bureau. Like minority populations, low income communities may consist of individuals living in geographic proximity to one another, or a geographically dispersed set of individuals who would be similarly affected by the proposed action or program. The U.S. Census Bureau defines a poverty area as a census tract or other area where at least 20 percent of residents are below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009e).

Data on race and ethnicity for the populations that reside in the two census block groups within a six-mile radius of the Project site are summarized in Table 5.8-2. These data indicate both of these census block groups include minority populations that exceed 50 percent of the total population.

The EPA environmental justice guidelines suggest that in addition to evaluating census tract data, environmental justice analyses should attempt to identify whether high concentration “pockets” of minority populations exist in specific geographic areas. The preceding analysis and data (Table 5.8-2) evaluates data at the census block group level. Census block groups are a smaller geographic subdivision of a census tract and analysis at this level allows a review of the characteristics of surrounding populations at a finer geographic resolution than analysis at the census tract level. However, in this case, the sparsely populated nature of the area surrounding the Project site is reflected in the size of the census block groups, which together include more than 1,700 square miles.

As a result, the potential existence of “high concentration pockets” of minority communities in the vicinity of the Project site was evaluated by reviewing 2000 Census data at the block level. A block is the smallest geographic entity for which the Census Bureau collects and tabulates 100-percent decennial census data. Data on race and ethnicity are 100-percent data and available at the block level. Many census blocks correspond to individual city blocks bounded by streets, but some blocks, especially those in rural areas, include many square miles. The area within a six-mile radius of the Project site includes all or part of 53 census blocks. A majority of the land within six miles of the Project site, including the Project site itself, is public land administered by the BLM. This is reflected in the census block data for the area, which indicates that only 3 of the 53 census blocks included population in 2000. The populated census blocks within six miles of the Project site are highlighted in Figure 5.8-1.

The entire population in Census Tract 458, Block Group 3 (8,308 people) in 2000 resides in Census Block 002 (Figure 5.8-1). Inmates at the two state prisons, Ironwood State Prison and Chuckwalla Valley State Prison, located in this census block are the only population within the area. The race and ethnicity data for this block are the same as for the block group it is part of (Census Tract 458, Block Group 3) (see Table 5.8-2). The majority of the prison population (80 percent) in this Census Block was non-White in 2000. This population, therefore, meets the definition of a minority population identified in the EPA environmental justice guidelines (EPA, 1998). However, the prisons are located about seven miles southeast of the closest portion of the Project site and are not expected to be affected by the Project.

As shown in Figure 5.8-1, the minority population of one of the other census blocks (Block Group 6, Block 090) within six miles of the Project site also exceeded 50 percent of the total population in 2000. The block included just eight households with a total population of 17. The residents in this block do not reside in close proximity of the Project site, which is located on public land managed by the BLM, and are not expected to be affected by the Project.

Data on income and poverty are presented for the two census block groups within six miles of the Project site in Table 5.8-8 and shown in Figure 5.8-2. Decennial census data on income and poverty are sample data and the census block group is the smallest geographic area for which these data are available. The entire population identified in Census Tract 458, Block Group 3 is incarcerated and household income and poverty data are not available for this population (Table 5.8-8). Median household income in the other Census Block Group within six miles of the Project site (Census Tract 458, Block Group 6) was 58 percent and 64 percent of the State and Riverside County averages in 2000, respectively, and the percent of the population below the poverty line in 1999 was twice the average in Riverside County and California (Table 5.8-8). This Block Group includes a total area of 1,040 square miles with a population of 27,404 in 2000. Just 26 members of this population resided within six miles of the Project site and none in close proximity. This population is, therefore, not expected to be affected by the Project.

While the preceding analysis identified the potential presence of minority or low income communities within six miles of the Project site, construction and operation of the Project is not expected to result in significant adverse environmental and human health impacts to these populations or to communities of interest, such as construction employees who would be employed on the Project site.

5.8.5 Mitigation Measures

The current school impact fee levied by the Palo Verde Unified School District for commercial development is \$0.47 per square foot for new commercial construction. A representative at the Palo Verde Unified School District indicated that, although the Project is planned for construction entirely on Federal lands, the impact fee would still be required (Schriner, 2009). The Applicant will pay this fee, as required.

The housing analysis suggests that if a temporary influx of 720 to 760 workers were to occur, as projected during peak construction, there would likely be a shortage of spaces in RV parks in the Blythe area, as well as a potential shortage of hotel and motel rooms, depending on the number of workers seeking this type of accommodation. The Applicant will work with the Blythe Area Chamber of Commerce and other appropriate officials to develop a housing plan, as needed.

Workers may also temporarily locate further afield and commute longer distances to work at the Project site. At least 57 motels or hotels are located between one hour and 90 minutes drive from the Project site, with an estimated total of 8,285 rooms, and, on average, 2,420 of these rooms are vacant and available for rent. RV parks are also located in Ehrenberg, Arizona and Quartzsite, Arizona, approximately 4 miles and 20 miles east of Blythe, respectively.

5.8.6 Compliance with LORS

The LORS applicable to the socioeconomic analysis are identified in Table 5.8-18. This table also briefly summarizes the requirements of the applicable LORS and identifies where they are addressed in this section.

Federal LORS

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) establishes a public and open framework to be used when considering Federal actions which could have an impact on environmental resources. NEPA does not mandate protection of these resources. Instead, it requires that any potential impacts, and the process used to make the final decision, are disclosed to the public.

Executive Order 12898 requires that Federal agencies identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low income populations.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in connection with programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.

State LORS

Solar projects in California are presently covered by a taxation exemption (Section 73 of the California Taxation and Revenue Code) that was recently extended until the 2015 to 2016 fiscal year (Resinger, 2008). Solar Project components covered by this exemption include storage devices, power conditioning equipment, transfer equipment, and parts related to the functioning of these items. This exemption does not exclude taxation on the value of the land or the non-solar components of a property.

State Government Code Sections 65996 and 65997 establish the methods used to consider and mitigate “impacts on school facilities that occur or might occur as a result of any legislative or adjudicative act, or both, by any state or local agency involving, but not limited to, the planning, use, or development of real property or any change of governmental organization or reorganization.”

Education Code Section 17620 establishes that “the governing board of any school district is authorized to levy a fee, charge, dedication, or other requirement against any construction within the boundaries of the district, for the purpose of funding the construction or reconstruction of school facilities.”

Table 5.8-18. Laws, Ordinances, Regulations, and Standards Applicable to Socioeconomics

LORS	Requirements	Administering Agency	Refer to Section
Federal			
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969/ Bureau of Land Management	Comply with the combined Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement process.	Bureau of Land Management	Section 5.8.6
Executive Order 12898	Avoid disproportionate impacts to minority and low-income members of the community.	Bureau of Land Management	Section 5.8.4
Civil Rights Act of 1964	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.	Bureau of Land Management	Section 5.8.6
State			
California Revenue and Taxation Code, Section 73	Solar energy systems installed on or before the 2015-16 fiscal year are exempt from property taxes.	California State Board of Equalization	Section 5.8.2.3
Government Code Sections 65995-65998	Establishes that the levy of a fee for construction of an industrial facility be considered as mitigation for impacts on school facilities.	Palo Verde Unified School District	Sections 5.8.2.3 and 5.8.5

Table 5.8-18. Laws, Ordinances, Regulations, and Standards Applicable to Socioeconomics

LORS	Requirements	Administering Agency	Refer to Section
Education Code Section 17620	Allows a school district to levy a fee against any construction within the boundaries of the district for the purpose of funding construction of school facilities.	Palo Verde Unified School District	Sections 5.8.2.3 and 5.8.5
Local			
Riverside County General Plan, Chapter 3 – Land Use Element, Economic Development.	Promote commercial and industrial development by encouraging industries to grow and/or relocate within the County.	Riverside County Planning Department	Sections 5.8.2.2, 5.8.2.3, and 5.8.6

Local LORS

There are no local (county or city) entities with jurisdiction over the Project site. The Riverside County General Plan identifies several steps to meet the overall economic development goal of being responsive to local markets and at the same time becoming “an equal participant in regional, national, and international markets.” These goals include, among others, “promoting commercial and industrial development to grow and/or relocate to the County” (Riverside County, 2003).

5.8.7 Agency Contacts

A list of agencies with jurisdiction and the name of the official contacted at each agency are provided in Table 5.8.19.

Table 5.8-19. Agency Contacts Regarding Socioeconomics

Issue	Agency	Contact Information
School Impact Fees Imposed By The Palo Verde Unified School District	Palo Verde Unified School District	Jennifer Schriener, Assistant, Business Office 295 North 1st Street Blythe, CA 92225 (760) 922-4164
Projected Student Enrollment At The Palo Verde Unified School District	Palo Verde Unified School District	Sharon Barns, Admissions 295 North 1st Street Blythe, CA 92225 (760) 922-4164 Ext. 227
Capabilities Of The Sheriff's Department	Riverside County Sheriff's Department	Sergeant Kent Krisell 260 North Spring Street Blythe, CA 92225 (760) 921-7900
Capabilities Of The California Highway Patrol (CHP)	California Highway Patrol	Officer Mark Kirchof 430 South Broadway # A Blythe, CA 92225 (760) 922-6141
Capacity Of The Blythe Sanitary Landfill	County Of Riverside Waste Management Department	Jeff Gow, City Engineer 1000 Midland Road Blythe CA, 92225 (951) 486-3200

Table 5.8-19. Agency Contacts Regarding Socioeconomics

Issue	Agency	Contact Information
Ambulance Services	Desert Air Ambulance	Christina Fabanich 140 North Broadway Blythe, CA 92225 (760) 922-5911
Capabilities Of The Palo Verde Hospital	Palo Verde Hospital	Catalina Mclain Chief Nursing Officer 250 North 1st Street Blythe, CA 92225-1702 (760) 921-5246
Capabilities Of The Riverside County Fire Department	Riverside County Fire Department	Jason Neumann, Captain Riverside County Fire Department Strategic Planning Bureau (951) 940-6900
Capabilities And Jurisdiction Of The Chuckwalla Valley State Prison Fire Department	Chuckwalla Valley State Prison	David Dobrinin, Fire Chief 19025 Wileys Well Road Blythe, CA 92225-2287 (760) 922-5300 Ext. 7700
Labor Availability Within The Project Area	San Bernardino, Riverside Building Trade Council	William Perez, Executive Secretary 1074 East La Cadena Dr. #8 Riverside, CA 92501 (951) 684-1040
Temporary Housing In The Blythe Area	Blythe Area Chamber Of Commerce	Jim Shipley, Chief Operating Officer 201 South Broadway Blythe, CA 92225 (760) 922-8166
Capabilities Of The Hazmat Team In Riverside County	Riverside County Fire Department	Linda Bettys, Fire Captain and Hazmat Specialist 37955 Washington Street Palm Desert, CA 92211 (760) 772-4391
Ambulance Services In The Area	Blythe Ambulance	Gerry Art, Vice President of Operation, Blythe Ambulance 129 South 1st Street Blythe, CA 92225 (760) 922-8460
Capabilities Of The Palm Springs Desert Hospital	Palm Springs Desert Hospital	Henry Hudson Director of Human Resources 1150 North Indian Canyon Drive Palm Springs, CA 92262 (760) 323-6511

5.8.8 Permits Required and Permitting Schedule

There are no required permits that specifically address the socioeconomic aspects of the Project.

5.8.9 References

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