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6.11 VISUAL RESOURCES

This section presents an evaluation of the potential effects on scenic quality and sensitive viewers that would result from the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Project. Included is a discussion of the following major components:

- Compliance with CEC requirements and policies related to visual resources, as outlined in CEC Title 20 Appendix B, Siting Regulations, as well as Appendix G of the CEQA.
- Inventory of the landscape character (i.e., scenic attractiveness), existing scenic integrity levels (ESILs), and sensitive viewing areas within the visual sphere of influence (VSOI).
- Assessment of impacts on scenic attractiveness (in the absence of a viewer) and sensitive viewing areas.
- Compliance with applicable LORS associated with the management of visual resources.

The inventory and impact assessment methodology was conducted in compliance with guidelines established by the CEC relating to the inventory and assessment of visual impacts for inclusion in the Application for Certification process. Further, the visual resources study was conducted using tenants of the U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Visual Resource Management (VRM) Inventory and Contrast Rating System (BLM Manual 8410-1, January 1986). Additionally, in an effort to describe the existing visual setting, the USDA Forest Service Scenery Management System (USDA Handbook 701 1995) was used. Finally, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Visual Impact Assessment Methodology was also used for this Project. Additionally, the methodology has been tailored to meet the specific issues and regulatory requirements associated with this Project.

6.11.1 Affected Environment

This section describes the inventory of visual resources within the vicinity of the Project. A description of the regional landscape setting, the anticipated VSOI of the Project, and the inventory methods and results are included.

6.11.1.1 Regional Landscape Setting

The Project Site is located northeast of the Town of Niland on a Property owned by the Imperial Irrigation District (IID). The property legal description is R14E, T11S, S3, NE ¼. The property is located about 5 miles east of the Salton Sea in Imperial County, California. Most of the landscape can be characterized as agricultural lands supported by irrigation systems that draw water from the Colorado River. The primary crops grown in the area are fruits, vegetables, wheat, and alfalfa.

The landform within the area can be characterized as generally flat to slightly rolling topography, allowing for open, expansive views of several mountain ranges enclosing the Imperial Valley. Mountains surrounding the Imperial Valley include the Santa Rosa, Fish Creek, Coyote, and Jacumba mountains to the west; the Chocolate mountains to the northeast; Algodones Sand Dunes, Picacho Peaks, and Cargo Muchacho mountains to the southeast; and Palo Verde Peak to the northeast.

The Salton Sea, the largest body of water in California, lies about 5 miles west of the Project and is the dominant feature in this region. The 250,000-acre Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range is located approximately 5 miles to the east of the Project and contains the only mountains within the region. There are large expanses of open areas within Imperial County, with nearly 50 percent of the land undeveloped or under federal ownership. In general, the area comprises a patchwork of agricultural lands, industrial facilities and semi-urban developed areas. Niland, located southwest of the Project, is characteristic of the semi-urban development in the area containing a population of about 1,100 and covering a half square mile of area. Land uses within these communities are varied, ranging from heavy industrial facilities to commercial, residential, and park areas.

The predominant plant community can be classified as cultivated/ruderal, or those plants associated with agricultural practices. “Ruderal” refers to the type of vegetation that grows in response to human disturbance (along roadsides and in canal riparian/levee areas). Species include such plants as cheeseweed, shephards purse, salt cedar, bermuda grass, and other opportunistic plants. Rainfall averages 2.93 inches annually. The Imperial County’s location in the desert supports such drought-tolerant vegetation as desert scrub, creosote bush, salt bush, and tamarisk. The New River, approximately 10 miles southwest of the Project Site, and the Alamo River, approximately 3 miles southwest of the Project Site, flow from the California/Mexico border north to the Salton Sea.

Cultural modifications within the area of the Project Site include nine geothermal plants and associated facilities within 10 miles of the Project Site. Cultural modifications include, but are not limited to, existing generating plants and associated transmission lines, pipelines, substations, and other large industrial facilities. Several transmission lines that support electricity transmission from these facilities also traverse landscape within the area.

6.11.1.2 Visual Sphere of Influence

The inventory of visual resources is conducted within a specified geographical VSOI surrounding the Project Site. This is the area within which potential impacts from the long-term presence of the Project could range from significant to no impact. Levels of potential impact on sensitive viewing areas are established through an analysis of the following two primary components:

- Impact susceptibility – The degree to which a sensitive viewpoint would be impacted by changes within the viewshed.
- Impact severity – The degree of change to the landscape created within a specific viewshed.

The VSOI was determined to be a 5-mile radius from the Project Site (see Figure 6.11-1, Visual Sphere of Influence [VSOI]) based on the USDA Handbook. The distance established for the VSOI was based primarily on the Project description regarding the potential visibility of major Project components (e.g., two CTG stacks, generation switchyard, etc.) from sensitive viewing areas. Once the VSOI was established and the Project description refined to include assumed heights and locations of facilities, a viewshed analysis was conducted.

More specifically, the viewshed analysis was developed using USGS 7.5-Minute Digital Elevation Models (DEMs). DEMs in their inherent Spatial Data Transfer Standard (SDTS) format were converted to USGS DEM grid files and imported into an ArcView 3.2a-based geographical information system (GIS) using with the Spatial Analyst extension. Once in GIS,

the DEMs were mosaicked. From the combined DEM, a triangulated irregular network (TIN) was created. This TIN was used to run viewshed analyses in relation to the Project Site components in Universal Transverse Mercator, Zone 11, spatial measurement units of Meters, Clarke 1866 Spheroid, North American Datum 83 (UTM 83). For this Project, the centroid of the Project Site was used (at 6 feet above existing grade) to run an “existing” viewshed map. Next, a centroid of the Project Site’s tallest structures (two (2) CTG stacks at a height of 60 feet) was input and the viewshed model was re-run.

The factors used to conduct this analysis included the following:

- The viewer is 6 feet tall.
- Stack height is 60 feet tall.

Views of the Project discussed in this visual analysis could occur at varying distances and within varying viewing environments defined below:

- Foreground – 0 to 0.5 mile.
- Middleground – 0.5 to 3 miles.
- Background – 3 to 5 miles.

These distances are based upon those described in the USDA Handbook. Based on the 5-mile distance limit, the VSOI boundary was refined to account for local viewing conditions, primarily developmental screening. Character photos of the areas surrounding the Project Site (shown in Figure 6.11-2A and Figure 6.11-2B) show the general landscape character and typical developmental and screening in the area. The results of the viewshed analysis indicated that most sensitive viewing areas within the VSOI were adjacent to the Project Site (see Figure 6.11-3, Visually Sensitive Areas, Photo Locations and Key Observation Points [KOPs]). Because the Project site is relatively flat, the constructed Project will not be readily visible from the residences in Niland except for those located at the northeastern edge of town.

6.11.1.3 Visual Study Inventory Components

The following sections describe the visual study inventory components used to assess potential impacts. Three components that were inventoried include (1) an evaluation of scenic attractiveness, (2) consideration of existing scenic integrity levels, and (3) the identification of sensitive viewing areas.

Scenic Attractiveness

When evaluating scenic attractiveness, both natural and man-made components within the VSOI were considered as they relate to either adding to or detracting from the overall landscape character within a specific setting. Scenic attractiveness levels are established by evaluating the distinctiveness and diversity of a particular landscape setting in relation to the following elements:

- Landform
- Vegetation
- Water

- Color
- Effects of adjacent scenery
- Scarcity of the landscape
- Cultural modifications

In general, landscapes are characterized by three levels – A through C.

Class A areas have outstanding diversity or interest; characteristic features of landform, water, and vegetation are distinctive or unique in relation to the surrounding region. These areas contain considerable variety in form, line, color, and texture. Class B areas have above-average diversity or interest, providing some variety in form, line, color, and texture. The natural features are not considered rare in the surrounding region but provide adequate visual diversity to be considered fairly unique. Class C areas have minimal diversity or interest where representative natural features have limited variation in form, line, color, or texture in the context of the surrounding region. Discordant cultural modifications (e.g., geothermal plants, transmission lines, and pipelines) can be highly noticeable and can reduce the inherent value of the natural setting.

Scenic Attractiveness Classification Evaluation Forms are developed for areas within the VSOI. The values underlined in the scenic attractiveness rating box on the forms illustrate the assigned values (H – high, M – moderate, L – low) for each natural feature (e.g., landform, vegetation, water, etc.) or negative/positive cultural modification. The combined value of these elements is used to determine in which class the landscape should be characterized. The VRM system is designed to separate the existing landscape and a project into their features and elements and to compare each part to the other to identify parts that are incompatible (BLM 1986). The outcome of this process is VRM classes, and the following is a summary of the VRM classes:

Class I – The objective of this class is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. Changes to the landscape character should not be evident.

Class II – The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. Changes to the landscape character may attract slight attention but should be subordinate to the visual setting.

Class III – The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. Changes to the landscape character may begin to attract attention but should not dominate the visual setting.

Class IV – The objective of this class is to allow for activities that modify the existing character of the landscape. Changes to the landscape character may attract attention and dominate the visual setting. However, these activities should minimize changes to the landscape where possible.

Existing Scenic Integrity Levels

The ESILs of a specific landscape setting can be defined as the extent to which natural features have been modified by human actions to the point of degrading the natural setting. An inventory of the ESILs within the VSOI was conducted and varying cultural modifications were documented. Varying cultural modifications included, but are not limited to, existing generating plants and associated transmission lines, pipelines, substations, and other large industrial facilities. The following ESIL criteria were used to evaluate degrees of modifications:

- **High** – The landscape character appears intact. Deviations are present but repeat form, line, color, texture, and patterns common to the landscape character so completely and at such a scale that they are not evident.
- **Moderate** – The landscape character appears slightly altered. Noticeable deviations remain visually subordinate to the landscape character being viewed.
- **Low** – The landscape character appears heavily altered. Deviations strongly dominate the landscape character. Deviations do not borrow from attributes such as size, shape, edge effects, vegetative type changes, or architectural styles within or outside the landscape being viewed. Most areas within the VSOI were classified as retaining low existing scenic integrity.

Viewer Sensitivity and Sensitive Viewing Areas

Viewer Sensitivity

While conducting this study, no attempt was made to model for varying levels of viewer concern of change within their landscape. Because of the difficulty in inventorying for every individual's sensitivity level, it was assumed that all viewers may have a high level of concern related to changes occurring in landscapes within the VSOI. A viewer's concern level may be associated with the following factors:

- Viewing location, orientation, and duration.
- Activity in which the viewer is engaged (e.g., water-related recreation activities, bird-watching).
- Visual acuity related to the intensity of visual detail within a landscape setting.
- State of mind or attitude.
- Preconceived expectations related to scenic quality.
- Inherent values related to scenic quality and familiarity within specific landscape settings.

Sensitive Viewing Areas

Sensitive viewing areas are identified and inventoried within the defined VSOI. The identification of sensitive viewing areas within the VSOI is conducted through review of existing land use data, viewshed models, planning documents, agency consultation, and during field reviews.

Viewer sensitivity is a measure of the degree of concern for change in the visual character of a landscape. Viewer sensitivity considers type of use, user attitude, volume of use, adjacent land use, visual quality, and special classifications.

Visibility determines how the Project would be seen from a particular viewing area or KOP. The inventory of Project visibility documented the distance from the viewpoint to the Project. Perception of details (i.e., form, line, color, and texture) diminishes with increasing distance. As defined previously, the distance zones were: foreground (0 to ½ mile), middleground (½ to 3 miles), and background (beyond 3 miles). In addition, the inventory evaluated if views were open, partially screened (filtered), or screened (i.e., presence of hillside terrain, vegetation, and/or buildings).

Other variables affecting potential visibility of a project include orientation of the viewer, duration of view, atmospheric conditions, lighting (daylight versus nighttime), and visual absorption capability (VAC). VAC is defined as the extent to which the complexity of the landscape can absorb new elements without changing the overall visual character of the area.

KOPs are viewing locations chosen to be representative of the most visually sensitive areas that would view the Project. The inventory of KOPs includes three components: (1) identification and photo documentation of viewing areas and potential KOPs, (2) classification of visual sensitivity of KOPs, and (3) description of Project Site visibility from KOPs. KOPs are identified based on review of available land use data, field inspection, and discussion with CEC staff responsible for the evaluation of visual resources.

6.11.1.4 Inventory Results

Scenic Attractiveness

The VSOI is composed primarily of Class C and marginal Class B landscapes because of the high degree of human modifications present within the VSOI and the absence of distinctive natural amenities (e.g., diverse and distinctive natural elements). Areas inventoried along the Salton Sea have a higher degree of scenic attractiveness because of the marshlands and the presence of large quantities of water. However, the natural amenities of the area adjacent to the Salton Sea have been visually affected by geothermal plants, transmission lines, pipelines, canals, and other similar industrial facilities.

The VSOI for the Project area was characterized at the C level for scenic attractiveness. No landscapes were considered to have distinctive characteristics as defined for Class A levels. Most landscapes within the VSOI were identified as Class C or as landscapes lacking significant natural amenities.

Within the VSOI, agricultural lands add to the general continuity of the visual setting. Checkerboard parcels of an assortment of crops add to the distinctiveness of the rural setting and openness of the landscape. Background views of several large mountain ranges add variety within the background-viewing threshold.

Natural desert vegetation occurs in areas not used for agricultural purposes (e.g., the Project Site). The vegetative pallet within undisturbed desert areas consists mainly of desert scrub bushes and low-lying trees, adding little diversity to the visual setting.

Scenic Attractiveness Classification Evaluation Forms (see Figure 6.11-4, Scenic Attractiveness Evaluation Form for Sensitive View Area and KOP #1, Figure 6.11-5, Scenic Attractiveness Evaluation Form for Sensitive View Area and KOP #2, and Figure 6.11-6, Scenic Attractiveness Evaluation Form for Sensitive View Area #3) were developed for areas within the VSOI. The values underlined in the scenic attractiveness rating box on the forms illustrate the assigned values (H – high, M – moderate, L – low) for each natural feature (e.g., landform, vegetation, water, etc.) or negative/positive cultural modification. The combined value of these elements is used to determine in which class the landscape should be characterized.

Existing Scenic Integrity Levels

Most landscapes inventoried within the VSOI can be classified as retaining primarily low ESILs because of the presence of industrial/commercial land uses including: transmission lines, substations, industrial facilities, and pipelines within 5 miles of the Project Site. Areas adjacent to the Project Site were also identified as low ESIL because of the existing substation, transmission lines, railroad tracks and nearby fuel tank farm.

Sensitive Viewing Areas and Key Observation Points

Three levels of viewer sensitivity (high, moderate, and low) were used to describe the sensitivity of viewers within the study area. High-sensitivity viewpoints identified in the study area included existing and future residences. Moderate-sensitivity viewers identified in the study area consisted of commercial areas, as well as existing and future primary (major arterial) roads. Low-sensitivity viewers include industrial areas and were not evaluated in detail for this study because these are considered to be a compatible use with the facility, and therefore would not result in significant visual impacts.

The highest level of Project visibility exists when the viewer is adjacent to the Project and there is no screening. Conversely, the lowest level of visibility exists when the viewer is located at greater distances from the Project and in partial to fully screened conditions.

The following is a representative list of sensitive viewing areas that were considered during the inventory:

- Residential areas (see Figure 6.11-3, Visually Sensitive Areas, Photo Locations and KOPs).
- Parks, recreation areas, wildlife areas, visitor's centers; or areas used for camping, picnicking, bicycling, boating (e.g., Salton Sea), or other recreational activities. There are none within the VSOI.
- Travel routes – Major roads or highways used primarily by origin/destination travelers and designated scenic roads (see Figure 6.11-3, Visually Sensitive Areas, Photo Locations and KOPs).

During field surveys conducted within the VSOI, it was estimated that several detached homes and several mobile homes are present and may have views of the Project Site. Subsequently, it was determined that sensitive viewing areas within the VSOI consisted primarily of adjacent residential areas. The nearest residents to the Project site are located approximately one-half to the east, across Cuff Road. Additional residents are located approximately one-half mile southwest within the mobile home park on Main Street. No roads within the VSOI are designated as federal, state, or county scenic highways or travel routes subject to aesthetic management goals or objectives.

Additionally, traffic flow was examined for major and secondary travel routes within the VSOI. Average daily road counts are approximately 4,290 vehicles per day (vpd) along Highway 111 (although there are no views of the Project from Highway 111). Along secondary travel routes, average daily road counts are as follows:

- Niland Avenue – 1,100 vpd
- Beal Road – 1,042 vpd

- Main Street – 910 vpd

Three sensitive viewing areas were identified as representative of viewers who would be most susceptible to visual impact within their viewshed as a result of the Project. A brief characterization of these areas follows:

Sensitive Viewing Area and Key Observation Point #1 (Figure 6.11-4)

KOP #1 is from a residence closest to the proposed site along Cuff Road (see Figure 6.11-3, Sensitive Areas, Photo Locations and KOPs, for site location), approximately one-tenth mile north of Beal Road. There are several detached homes along this road. The photo from this location represents views from this road. Although some residences are partially or completely screened from view by existing mature vegetation, this residence has the most unobscured view of the Project Site and therefore was chosen as a representative Key Observation Point. This view has the longest viewing duration of the Project, as well as the highest degree of severity because of proximity. The Project, in the absence of screening, would be highly visible because of the flat, open viewing conditions. Further, the viewshed has been modified with the presence of existing transmission lines, the existing substation, and the fuel tank farm in the distance. The ESIL from this area can be characterized as Class C (see Figure 6.11-4, Scenic Attractiveness Evaluation Form for Sensitive View Area and KOP #1).

Sensitive Viewing Area and Key Observation Point #2 (Figure 6.11-5)

KOP #2 is from a mobile home park on the northeast edge of Niland, at the intersection of Commercial Avenue and Main Street (see Figure 6.11-3, Visually Sensitive Areas, Photo Locations and KOPs, for site location). The Project Site is located approximately one-half mile east of the mobile home park, and east of the Union Pacific railroad track. The Project would be visible from the mobile home park, although obstructed by the existing substation. This photo, taken at the edge of the mobile home park closest to the Project, represents views from the mobile home park. In addition, it also acts as a KOP for the residential views along Commercial Road (see Figure 6.11-3, Visually Sensitive Areas, Photo Locations and KOPs). This view has a longer duration view of the Project, as well as a high degree of severity because of the close distance. The Project, in the absence of screening from the railroad and/or the substation, would be highly visible because of the flat, open viewing conditions. Further, the viewshed has been modified with the presence of existing transmission lines and the fuel tank farm nearby. The ESIL from this area can be characterized as Class C (see Figure 6.11-5, Scenic Attractiveness Evaluation Form for Sensitive View Area and KOP #2).

Sensitive Viewing Area #3 (Figure 6.11-6)

This view is from residences on Commercial Avenue, south of Main Street, near the mobile home park, less than one-half mile southwest of the Project Site. Foreground views from these houses is dominated by a fuel tank farm that sits on an adjacent lot. This viewpoint represents a high degree of visibility expected from a sensitive viewing area not considered a KOP. Again, since the mobile homes are actually closer to the proposed site, and do not have the obstructed view (e.g., the fuel tanks), this area was considered sensitive but not a KOP location. KOP #2 was chosen as representative of all residential viewers in the area. The ESIL from this area can be characterized as Class C (see Figure 6.11-6, Scenic Attractiveness Evaluation Form for Sensitive View Area #3).

6.11.2 Environmental Consequences

6.11.2.1 Significance Criteria and Assessment Methodology

The visual resources study included the assessment of impacts on scenic attractiveness and sensitive viewing areas within the VSOI related to the construction, operation, maintenance, and long-term presence of the Project.

The consideration of significant visual impacts was based predominantly on the requirements of CEQA, with input from the US Forest Service, BLM and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Appendix G of the CEQA guidelines states that potential impacts to visual resources would be significant if a project results in:

- A substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- Substantial damage of scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings.
- Substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- Creation of a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day time or nighttime views in the area.

Additionally, the CEC requires that consideration be given to the following:

- Compliance with laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards.
- Level of viewshed alteration and ground form manipulation.
- Regional affects to visual resources.
- Magnitude of impact related to light and glare.
- Magnitude of back-light scatter during nighttime hours.
- Level of sunlight reduction or increase in shadows in areas used by the public.

Additionally, the matrix presented in Table 6.11-1, Visual Impact Significance Matrix – Sensitive Viewing Areas, aids in the assessment of visual impact significance.

**TABLE 6.11-1
VISUAL IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE MATRIX – SENSITIVE VIEWING AREAS**

Visual Impact Severity	High Susceptibility	Moderate Susceptibility	Low Susceptibility
High Impact Severity	Significant	Less Than Significant	No Impact
Moderate Impact Severity	Less Than Significant	No Impact	No Impact
Low Impact Severity	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact

Visual Simulations

BLM methodology (in addition to others) recommends using visual simulations to help define visual impacts. A visual simulation is a comparison of an existing view (without the Project in place) with a visual simulation (the existing view with the Project in place). Simulations help visualize potential aesthetic impacts. To more accurately assess a project’s potential impacts,

simulation KOPs focus on views from those potentially affected by a project. Although other angles or other views might show Project features more clearly, visual assessment simulation KOPs select views from potentially affected viewers only.

To ensure a high degree of visual accuracy in the visual simulations, computer-aided design (CAD) equipment, GIS, and the use of global positioning systems (GPS) allow for life-size modeling with a computer. This translates to using real-world scale and coordinates to locate facilities, other site data, and the actual camera locations corresponding to three-dimensional (3D) simulation viewpoints. The degree of accuracy of the CAD and GIS equipment is absolute; the accuracy for the GPS location data is to within approximately 1 meter, or 3.28084 feet.

A GIS site map is imported as a background reference. CAD drawings of proposed facilities are placed on top of the site map in GIS. GPS locations of sensitive viewing areas are also input into GIS. The GPS camera positioning information is then referenced to the 3D data set. The 3D massing models of both the proposed plant and all ancillary facilities are generated in real-world coordinates and scaled and input into GIS.

An electronic camera lens matches the camera lens that was actually used in the field. A 35-mm camera with a 50-mm lens was used consistently throughout the process. This lens selection allows for viewing the computer-generated model in the same way that the Project would be viewed in the field.

Next, the photograph is imported into the 3D database and loaded as an environment within which the view of the 3D model is generated. To generate the correct view relative to the actual photograph, the electronic camera is placed at a location (within the computer) from where the photograph was taken. This is supported by the GPS location. From there, the 3D wire frame model is displayed on top of the existing photo so that proper alignment, scale, angle, and distance can be verified. When all lines of the wire frame model match the photograph exactly, the camera target position is confirmed.

It should be noted that final simulations were created by POWER Engineers to remain consistent with general plant development engineering. Once field KOP location photos and GPS coordinates for photo locations were gathered in the field, these were given to POWER Engineers for final simulation production. The processes described above relate to general simulation construction and are included for reader understanding of the procedures. Actual modeling techniques and accuracy levels can be verified with POWER Engineers if needed.

The visual simulations developed for this Project have been designed to be viewed 18 inches from the viewer's eye. This distance will portray the most realistic life-size image from the location of the sensitive viewing area.

Assessing Visual Impact Susceptibility on Sensitive Viewing Areas

Following the identification of the three most sensitive viewing areas within the VSOI, the degree of impact on each area was determined through the analysis of the following components:

- Existing Scenic Integrity Level – The degree of existing disturbance within the natural setting.
- Viewer Sensitivity – All identified viewers were considered high sensitivity viewers.

- Project Visibility – An assessment of the viewing angle, potential screening, lighting conditions, and time of day.
- Viewer Exposure – An assessment of the distance from the Project, number of viewers, and duration of views.

Table 6.11-2, Visual Impact Susceptibility – Sensitive Viewing Areas, illustrates the level of visual impact susceptibility anticipated for each sensitive viewing area based on an evaluation of the previously stated factors.

**TABLE 6.11-2
VISUAL IMPACT SUSCEPTIBILITY – SENSITIVE VIEWING AREAS**

	Existing Scenic Integrity Level	Viewer Sensitivity	Project Visibility	Viewer Exposure	Visual Impact Susceptibility
Sensitive Viewing Area and KOP #1 (Figures 6.11-4 and 6.11-7) – from residences along Cuff Road	Low	High	High	Low	Moderate
Sensitive Viewing Area and KOP #2 (Figure 6.11-5 and 6.11-8) – from mobile home park on Main Street	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Sensitive Viewing Area #3 (Figure 6.11-6) – from residences on Commercial Avenue	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

Notes:
KOP = key observation point

Assessing Visual Impact Severity on Sensitive Viewers

The severity of the impact (high to low) on sensitive viewers was assigned a severity level proportionate to the amount of anticipated change created within a specific viewshed. The primary criteria for Project impacts include:

- The degree of Project contrast (e.g., form, line, color, and texture).
- Scale and spatial dominance.
- Extent of view blockage/screening (i.e., topographic and/or vegetative) and night lighting.

Table 6.11-3, Visual Impact Severity – Sensitive Viewing Areas, describes levels designated to each variable above as they relate to the degree of visual impact severity anticipated on representative sensitive viewing areas.

**TABLE 6.11-3
VISUAL IMPACT SEVERITY – SENSITIVE VIEWING AREAS**

	Form Contrast	Line Contrast	Color Contrast	Texture Contrast	Scale Dominance	Spatial Dominance	View Blockage Night Lighting	Visual Impact Severity
Sensitive Viewing Area and KOP #1 (Figures 6.11-4 and 6.11-7) – from residences along Cuff Road	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Dominant	Dominant	Moderate High	High
Sensitive Viewing Area and KOP #2 (Figure 6.11-5 and 6.11-8) – from mobile home park on Main Street	Low	Low	Low	Low	Co-Dominant	Co-Dominant	Low Low	Low
Sensitive Viewing Area #3 (Figure 6.11-6) – from residences on Commercial Avenue	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Subordinate	Subordinate	Low Moderate	Low

Notes:
KOP = key observation point

The final evaluation conducted in the impact assessment was the assignment of potential impact levels on representative sensitive viewing areas by combining viewer susceptibility and severity levels at key and characteristic viewing locations.

6.11.2.2 Visual Impact Assessment Results

Visual Project Description

This section discusses the affected visual resources for the Project. A description of the potential impacts on scenic attractiveness and on sensitive viewers is provided. A detailed description of the Project is in Section 2.0, Project and Facility Description. The following Project description elements are some of the more important Project features related to the visual impact assessment:

- IID intends to build a new 93-megawatt (MW) peaking power plant.
- The simple-cycle peaking Project consists of two GE LM6000 PD SPRINT NxGen CTGs with inlet air chillers located adjacent to IID’s existing Niland Substation.
- The Project Site is located northeast of the Town of Niland on a Property owned by IID. The property legal description is R14E, T11S, S3, NE ¼.
- The Project is located in the southwest portion of the Property, adjacent to the existing Niland Substation. The final Project area is approximately 26 acres including temporary construction laydown areas.

- The two CTG trains are aligned along an east-to-west axis. In consideration of the prevailing winds from the west, the stacks are located at the east end of each CTG. The distance between the stacks is approximately 135 feet, with the south stack located approximately 325 feet from the south Property boundary and approximately 850 feet from the west Property boundary.
- A generation switchyard will be built on the west side of the combustion turbines. This switchyard provides a common place from which to interconnect the output from both CTGs to the existing Niland Substation.
- Transmission line corridors extend out from the Niland Substation along the south and west sides of the Property. An existing east-west distribution line that runs along the south border of the Property will be undergrounded for the portion along the s Project Site.
- The two CTG exhaust stacks are round and 60 feet tall.
- The Project includes an approximately 5,000 square feet (SF) administration building. The building is divided between the control room, office area and the maintenance and warehouse area.
- New stormwater basins will be located along the west and south edges of the Project Site. These include excavation for one unlined stormwater retention basin for onsite flow (1.5 acres, 295,000 CF), and two stormwater detention basins for offsite flow (total 0.8 acres, 105,000 CF). These three basins cover approximately 2.3 acres with a total volume of approximately 395,000 CF.
- Project roadways and parking areas will be paved with asphalt. Unpaved surfaces in and around the main equipment area will be covered with crushed stone or gravel.
- The entire Project Site, including stormwater basins, is enclosed by an 8-foot tall metal fabric security fence with barbed wire or razor wire on top.
- There will be two permanent access points to the Project Site. The primary access to the Project Site will be from Beal Road near the administration building. The second access to the Project Site will be from the west side of the Property. Temporary construction access will also utilize the second access road. Security gates control access to the site.

Project Lighting

Adequate lighting will be provided for operation, safety, and security around the Project, specifically in the following areas:

- Building interior, office, control, and maintenance areas
- Building exterior entrances
- Outdoor equipment platforms and walkways
- Transformer areas
- Power island perimeter roads

- Parking areas
- Entrance gate

Lighting on the Project Site will be limited to areas required for operations and safety, directed on site to avoid back-scatter, and shielded from public view to the extent practicable. Lighting not required to be on during nighttime hours will be controlled with sensors or switches operated such that lighting will be on only when needed.

No FAA beacons will be required or installed at the Project Site. It should be noted that during construction-related activities, slightly higher amounts of backscatter lighting may be apparent to the casual observer. This condition is due to providing for safety of construction workers during this phase of the Project. Upon completion of construction, night lighting at the Project Site will be substantially reduced and less noticeable to the casual observer.

Direct Impacts

The following sections describe direct impacts related to the Project.

Visual Impact Significance on Scenic Attractiveness

The Project and related facilities would be visible from adjacent locations in the area. Given the lack of significant topographic features and degree of existing modification and landscape degradation (e.g., substation, transmission lines, and adjacent fuel tank farm) within the VSOI, no significant impacts on scenic attractiveness would occur. Ground-disturbing activities at the Project Site would occur in areas previously disturbed or with degraded landscapes and within areas classified as retaining low distinctive or diverse natural amenities or lacking substantial positive cultural modifications. Therefore, no significant impacts would occur.

Visual Impact Significance on Sensitive Viewing Areas

Figure 6.11-7, Existing and Simulated Views from KOP #1: Residences on Cuff Road, and Figure 6.11-8, Existing and Simulated Views from KOP #2: Mobile Home Park on Main Street, aided in verifying Project-related impacts. These simulations served to present a representative sample of the existing landscape settings contained within the VSOI, as well as an illustration of how the Project may look from specific key viewing locations. They also aided in assessing visual impact significance.

Tables 6.11-2 (Visual Impact Susceptibility – Sensitive Viewing Areas), 6.11-3 (Visual Impact Severity – Sensitive Viewing Areas), and 6.11-4 (Visual Impact Significance – Sensitive Viewing Areas), illustrate the visual impact susceptibility, visual impact severity, and resultant visual impact significance on sensitive viewing areas, respectively. As illustrated in Tables 6.11-2 through 6.11-4, no significant impacts will occur on within the VSOI, with the exception of less than significant impacts which will occur for those residences immediately adjacent to the proposed site (as illustrated in Figure 6.11-7, Existing and Simulated Views from KOP #1: Residences on Cuff Road). Therefore, it is determined that no significant visual impacts will occur due to the construction, operation, maintenance, or long-term presence of the Project.

**TABLE 6.11-4
VISUAL IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE – SENSITIVE VIEWING AREAS**

	Description	Visual Impact Susceptibility	Visual Impact Severity	Visual Impact Significance
Sensitive Viewing Area and KOP #1 (Figures 6.11-4 and 6.11-7) – from residences along Cuff Road	KOP #1 is from the residence closest to the Project Site along Cuff Road, just off Beal Road. KOP #1 is located approximately one-half mile east from the Project Site. It should be noted that existing vegetative screening has contributed to reduced visibility from some residences at this location. (Note that Figures 6.11-4 and 6.11-7 were taken from the closest residence along Cuff Road with no vegetative screening. The Project would be clearly visible from this location.)	Moderate	High	Less Than Significant
Sensitive Viewing Area and KOP #2 (Figure 6.11-5 and 6.11-8) – from Mobile Home Park on Main Street	KOP #2 is from the mobile home park located just off Main Street on the outermost northeast edge of Niland. The Project Site is located less than one-half mile east. The Union Pacific Railroad and the existing Niland Substation will be in the middleground for viewers from this location. The Project will be slightly visible in the background, behind these features. The Project would be a subordinate feature from this location due to distance.	Moderate	Low	No Impact
Sensitive Viewing Area #3 (Figure 6.11-6) – from residences on Commercial Avenue	Sensitive Viewing Area #3 is taken from a residence on the south side of Main Street, off Commercial Avenue in Niland. The Project is located less than one-half mile northeast of this area. The dominant view is of the fuel tank farm in the foreground. In addition, the existing Niland Substation and transmission lines add to the existing visual character. The Project would be visible, but in a subordinate view in the background.	Low	Low	No Impact

Notes:
IID = Imperial Irrigation District
KOP = key observation point

Three sensitive viewing areas were identified as representative of viewers who would be most susceptible to visual impact within their viewshed as a result of the Project. A brief description of potential impacts for these areas is described below:

Sensitive Viewing Area and Key Observation Point #1 (Figure 6.11-4)

KOP #1 is from an unscreened residence adjacent to the Project Site along Cuff Road, just off Beal Road (see Figure 6.11-3, Visually Sensitive Areas, Photo Locations and KOPs, for KOP location). Figure 6.11-7, Existing and Simulated Views from KOP #1: Residences on Cuff Road, shows the existing view and the proposed visual simulation from this location. It should be noted that existing vegetative screening has contributed to reduced visibility from some residences at this location. However, the Project would be clearly visible from this location.

Visual impact susceptibility from this location is characterized as Moderate (see Table 6.11-2, Visual Impact Susceptibility – Sensitive Viewing Areas). Visual impact severity from this location is characterized as High (see Table 6.11-3, Visual Impact Severity – Sensitive Viewing Areas). Thereby, aesthetic impact significance from this location is classified as Less than Significant (see Table 6.11-1, Visual Impact Significance Matrix – Sensitive Viewing Areas).

Sensitive Viewing Area and Key Observation Point #2 (Figure 6.11-5)

KOP #2 is from the mobile home park on the northeast edge of Niland, at the intersection of Commercial Avenue and Main Street (see Figure 6.11-3, Visually Sensitive Areas, Photo Locations and KOPs, for KOP location). Figure 6.11-8, Existing and Simulated Views from KOP #2: Mobile Home Park on Main Street, shows the existing view and the proposed visual simulation from this location. It should be noted that the Project would only be slightly visible in the middleground, behind the railroad tracks and Niland Substation shown here.

Visual impact susceptibility from this location is characterized as Moderate (see Table 6.11-2, Visual Impact Susceptibility – Sensitive Viewing Areas). Visual impact severity from this location is characterized as Low (see Table 6.11-3, Visual Impact Severity – Sensitive Viewing Areas). Thereby, aesthetic impact significance from this location is classified as No Impact (see Table 6.11-1, Visual Impact Significance Matrix – Sensitive Viewing Areas).

Sensitive Viewing Area #3 (Figure 6.11-6)

Viewing Area #3 is from residences on Commercial Avenue, south of Main Street; located less than one-half mile southwest of the Project Site (see Figure 6.11-3, Visually Sensitive Areas, Photo Locations and KOPs, for KOP location). It should be noted that the Project would be visible in the middleground, to the left of the fuel tank farm shown here, although the fuel tank farm would clearly be dominant in the foreground. KOP #2 was chosen to represent views from residences at this location.

Visual impact susceptibility from this location is characterized as Low (see Table 6.11-2, Visual Impact Susceptibility – Sensitive Viewing Areas). Visual impact severity from this location is characterized as Low (see Table 6.11-3, Visual Impact Severity – Sensitive Viewing Areas). Thereby, aesthetic impact significance from this location is classified as No Impact (see Table 6.11-1, Visual Impact Significance Matrix – Sensitive Viewing Areas).

Night Lighting and Light Glare

Direct impacts resulting from night lighting and glare would range from less than significant to no impact for all sensitive viewing areas. Currently, light glare is produced by existing nearby fuel tank farms in the general vicinity of the Project Site. Safety night lighting for the railroad tracks, fuel tank farms, transmission lines, and the Niland Substation also exist currently in the area. The Project would not significantly increase the impact created by existing night lighting, back-scatter light, or glare from viewers within the VSOI when looking toward the site, based on existing lighting conditions. The only exception would be for those unscreened residences located directly adjacent to the Property, across Cuff Road. The addition of the Project would significantly increase night lighting to these residences due to proximity and lack of screening.

Visible Plumes

The frequency, visibility, and size of visible plumes are dependent on the atmospheric conditions during viewing. No visible plumes will be associated with this Project (see Section 6.1.2.5). In addition, given the number of existing facilities producing plumes within the VSOI, the addition of the Project would not create a significant change in the viewing conditions. Therefore, there are no impacts relating to visible plumes.

Landscaping

Landscaping will be incorporated into the Project so as not to add incrementally to the overall change in viewsheds. At this time, impacts relating to landscaping are considered less than significant.

Indirect and Construction-Related Impacts

Construction activities are limited to the southwest portion of the Property. Project Site preparation includes removing miscellaneous debris and old steel tower sections, along with surface grading.

The construction period is expected to last 9 months. The construction period is scheduled from September through May to avoid the hottest period of the year. The daily work schedule may be adjusted to avoid the hottest hours of the day. The workforce is expected to average 40 construction workers, peaking to approximately 60 workers.

There will be two permanent access points to the Project Site. The primary access to the Project Site will be from Beal Road near the administration building. The second access to the Project Site will be from the west side of the Property. Temporary construction access will also utilize the second access road. Construction trailers will be located in the west section of the Project Site, to the west of the power island. The construction laydown areas will be located to the north of the CTGs. Construction parking will be located between the west Property boundary and the Project Site within the transmission line corridor along the west side of the Property.

Indirect impacts associated with the construction, operation, and long-term presence of the Project and ancillary facilities may include impacts associated with fugitive dust plumes, night lighting, and presence of construction equipment. These impacts were considered temporary and insignificant.

6.11.3 Cumulative Impacts

The areas within the VSOI and greater Imperial County are generally characterized by desert open space and agricultural uses supported by small towns and other sparsely populated communities. Accordingly, the number, size, and scale of cumulative projects in the area are substantially less than in other more-urbanized portions of California. See Appendix H, List of Proposed Projects in Imperial County, for a list of proposed development projects in Imperial County. None of the projects listed are located in Niland, nor within close proximity to the Project.

The Project will contribute to the overall industrial nature of this landscape setting. The VSOI has already experienced a significant amount of cultural modifications, and the addition of any of these

projects, when considered with the Project, will not significantly affect the visual setting within the VSOI. No significant cumulative impacts have been identified as a result of the construction, operation, maintenance, or long-term presence of the Project. The addition of the Project will not significantly alter the landscape or alter the visual setting and therefore will not create a substantial additive impact to the general character of the area.

6.11.4 Mitigation Measures

Specific mitigation measures are not required because Project design elements have been incorporated into the Project description that will reduce potential Project visual impacts to below a level of significance. A detailed description of the proposed design features that minimized visual impacts is provided within the direct impact section. These include mitigation for lighting, night lighting and glare, and landscaping requirements.

Night Lighting and Light Glare

To help minimize night lighting impacts to a level below significance, night lighting elements will be shielded and directed downward. Type, style, and placement of lighting features will also be designed to minimize aesthetic impacts. Colors and textures will be chosen to help minimize light glare in the area.

Visible Plumes

At this time, no visible plumes will be associated with this Project. Therefore, there are no impacts relating to visible plumes.

Landscaping

The Project will comply with any landscaping standards required by Imperial County. This may be accomplished by providing landscaping of an equal value or benefit to an alternative location within the Town of Niland.

Underground Pipelines

After construction, areas stripped of vegetation will be revegetated or returned to their existing condition.

Transmission Lines

Structures and conductors will be treated to reduce sun reflectivity. New or replacement transmission lines will parallel existing linear features, or will be undergrounded where deemed necessary.

Laydown Yard

The laydown yard is located inside the permanent Project fence line and will remain graveled following the completion of construction.

6.11.5 Laws, Ordinances, Regulations, and Standards

Applicable visual resource LORS are summarized in Table 6.11-5, Summary of Laws, Ordinances, Regulations, and Standards, and described below. Agency contacts are provided in Table 6.11-6, Agency Contact List For Laws, Ordinances, Regulations, and Standards.

**TABLE 6.11-5
SUMMARY OF LAWS, ORDINANCES, REGULATIONS, AND STANDARDS**

Jurisdiction	LORS	Requirements	Conformance Section	Administering Agency	Agency Contact
6.11 Visual Resources					
Federal					
	Application for Certification Requirements	As required.	Section 6.11.5.1, Federal and State	CEC	1
State					
	State Scenic Highway Requirements	Requirements are applicable to state designated scenic highways. There are none in the Project area.	Section 6.11.5.1, Federal and State	Caltrans	2
Local					
	Land Use Regional Vision <i>Goal 3</i>	Achieve balanced economic and residential growth while preserving the unique, natural, scenic, and agricultural resources of Imperial County.	Section 6.11.5.2, Local	Imperial County Planning Department	3
	Land Use Regional Vision <i>Objective 3.4</i>	Protect and improve the aesthetics of Imperial County and its communities.	Section 6.11.5.2, Local	Imperial County Planning Department	3
	Circulation & Open Space Scenic Highways <i>Objective 4.3</i>	Protect areas of outstanding scenic beauty along the highways and protect the aesthetics of those areas.	Section 6.11.5.2, Local	Imperial County Planning Department	3
	Circulation & Open Space Scenic Highways <i>Objective 4.5</i>	Develop standards for aesthetically valuable sites. Design review may be required so that structures, facilities, and activities are properly merged with the environment.	Section 6.11.5.2, Local	Imperial County Planning Department	3
	Conservation & Open Space <i>Goal 7</i>	The aesthetic character of the region shall be protected and enhanced to provide a pleasing environment for residential, commercial, recreational, and tourist activity.	Section 6.11.5.2, Local	Imperial County Planning Department	3
	Conservation & Open Space <i>Objective 7.1</i>	Encourage the preservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the desert and mountain landscape.	Section 6.11.5.2, Local	Imperial County Planning Department	3

**TABLE 6.11-5
SUMMARY OF LAWS, ORDINANCES, REGULATIONS, AND STANDARDS**

Jurisdiction	LORS	Requirements	Conformance Section	Administering Agency	Agency Contact
	Conservation & Open Space <i>Goal 10</i>	Open space shall be maintained to protect the aesthetic character of the region, protect natural resources, provide recreational opportunities, and minimize hazards to human activity.	Section 6.11.5.2, Local	Imperial County Planning Department	3
	Geothermal Transmission <i>Goal 5</i>	When planning and designing transmission lines, the County will consider the following impacts to agricultural lands, wildlife, and the natural desert landscape: Require all major transmission lines to be located in designated corridors. Design lines for minimal impacts on agriculture, wildlife, urban areas, and recreational activities.	Section 6.11.5.2, Local	Imperial County Planning Department	3

Notes:
CEC = California Energy Commission
LORS = laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards

**TABLE 6.11-6
AGENCY CONTACT LIST FOR LAWS, ORDINANCES, REGULATIONS, AND STANDARDS**

State	
1	California Energy Commission 1516 9 th Street Sacramento, CA 958114 Eileen Allen, Facilities Siting Program Manager (916) 654-4082
2	California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Guidelines for the Official Designation of Scenic Highways, Office of Landscape Architecture, Caltrans, Sacramento
Local	
3	Imperial County Planning Department 939 Main Street, Suite B-1 El Centro, CA 92243 Jurg Heuberger, Planning Director (760) 482-4236

6.11.5.1 Federal and State

The Project is located on private lands and is not subject to any federal regulations pertaining to visual resources. Therefore, compliance with federal aesthetic LORS is inapplicable.

California State Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

Caltrans maintains a statewide system of designated and eligible scenic highways, with the intent of recognizing and protecting the more scenic corridors along the state highway system (Caltrans 1996). State-designated scenic highways or highways eligible for designation were not identified within the VSOL.

Further, no other area managed by the state by which the Project would be required to adhere to aesthetic LORS was identified. Therefore, compliance with state aesthetic LORS is inapplicable.

6.11.5.2 Local

The Project is located on private lands. The southern portion of the Property is zoned M1U by Imperial County and the northern portion of the Property is zoned A2. Acceptable M1U zoning uses include “Electric Power Generation,” although a CUP is required for construction activities. In addition, industrial facilities and transmission lines occur in proximity to the Project Site within the VSOL.

The Imperial County Planning Department has identified within its General Plan several regulations relating specifically to aesthetics and minimizing impacts to visual resources. These are summarized in Table 6.11-5, Summary of LORS. In addition, Project design elements have been incorporated into the Project description that will be effective in minimizing visual impacts. The Project will conform to all applicable local LORS related to the preservation of areas identified as retaining high scenic value. Based on the inventory of scenic attractiveness and ESILs, areas retaining high scenic value were not identified within the VSOL.

6.11.5.3 Permits Required and Permit Schedule

No permits are required pertaining to visual resources

6.11.6 References

Bureau of Land Management. 1986. Visual Resource Management Inventory and Contrast Rating System.

California Department of Transportation Web site – California Scenic Highway System: List of Eligible and Officially Designated Routes.

California Department of Transportation. 1992. AFC, p.6.9-1.

California Energy Commission. Systems Assessment and Facilities Siting Division, Environmental Protection Office. Personal correspondence and field visit, 2005-06.

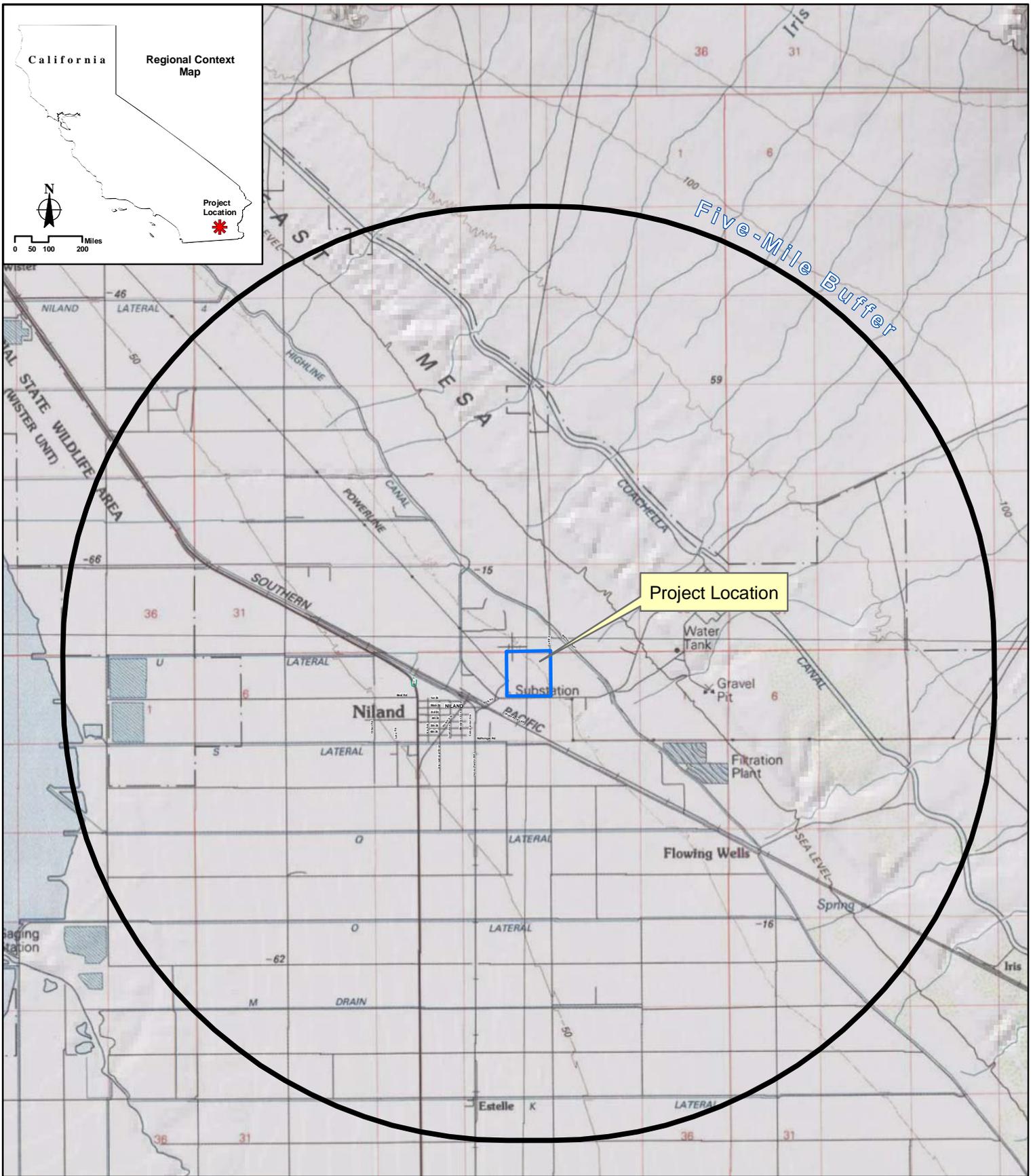
Caltrans. 1996. Guidelines for the Official Designation of Scenic Highways.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). March 1981. Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects Manual.

Imperial County General Plan. 1989.

Salton Sea Unit 6 Geothermal Power Plant AFC, URS. 2004.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 1996. Landscape Aesthetics – A Handbook for Scenery Management. USDA Handbook 701.

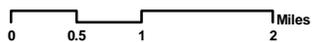


Visual Sphere of Influence (VSOI)

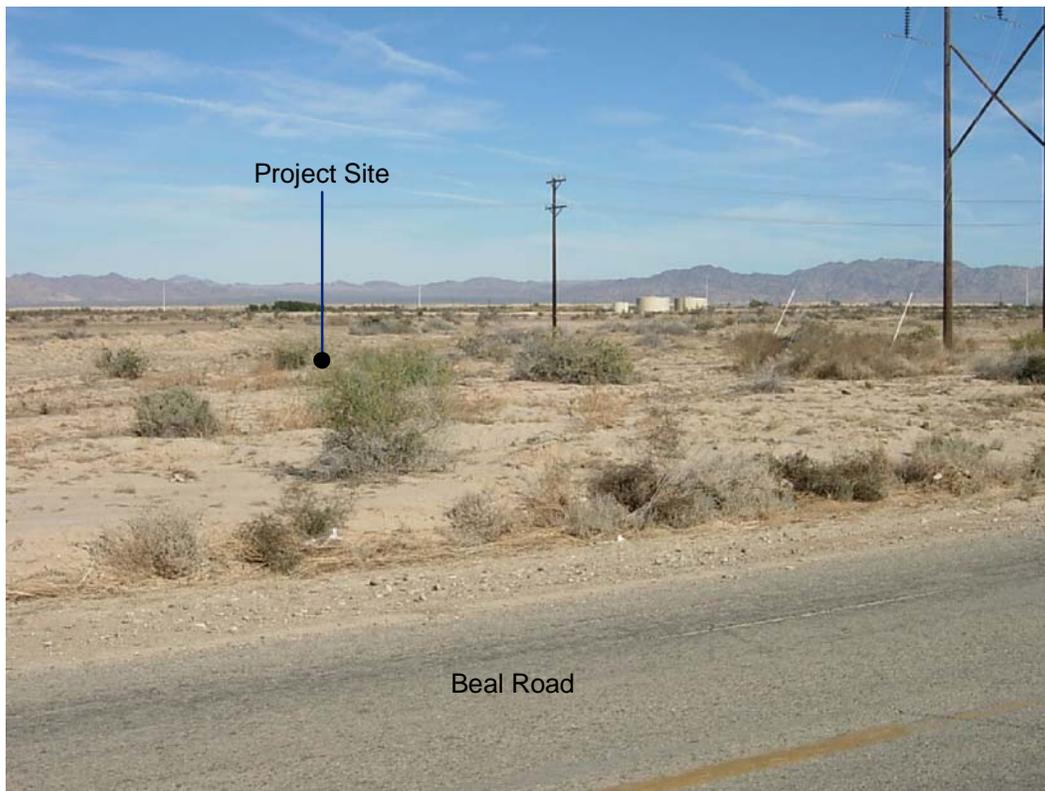
Niland Gas Turbine Plant
Imperial Irrigation District



FIGURE 6.11-1



SOURCE:
USGS (7.5 Minute Topographic Base, 1970s).



Above: Proposed Niland Gas Turbine Plant Project Site Location



Above: Intersection of Main St./Memphis Ave./Niland Ave.

Character Photos - Areas Surrounding the Project

Niland Gas Turbine Plant
Imperial Irrigation District



FIGURE 6.11-2A

SOURCE:
URS (Field Photos, January 2006)



Above: Typical Residence Along Cuff Road



Above: Niland, Intersection of SR-111/Niland Ave.

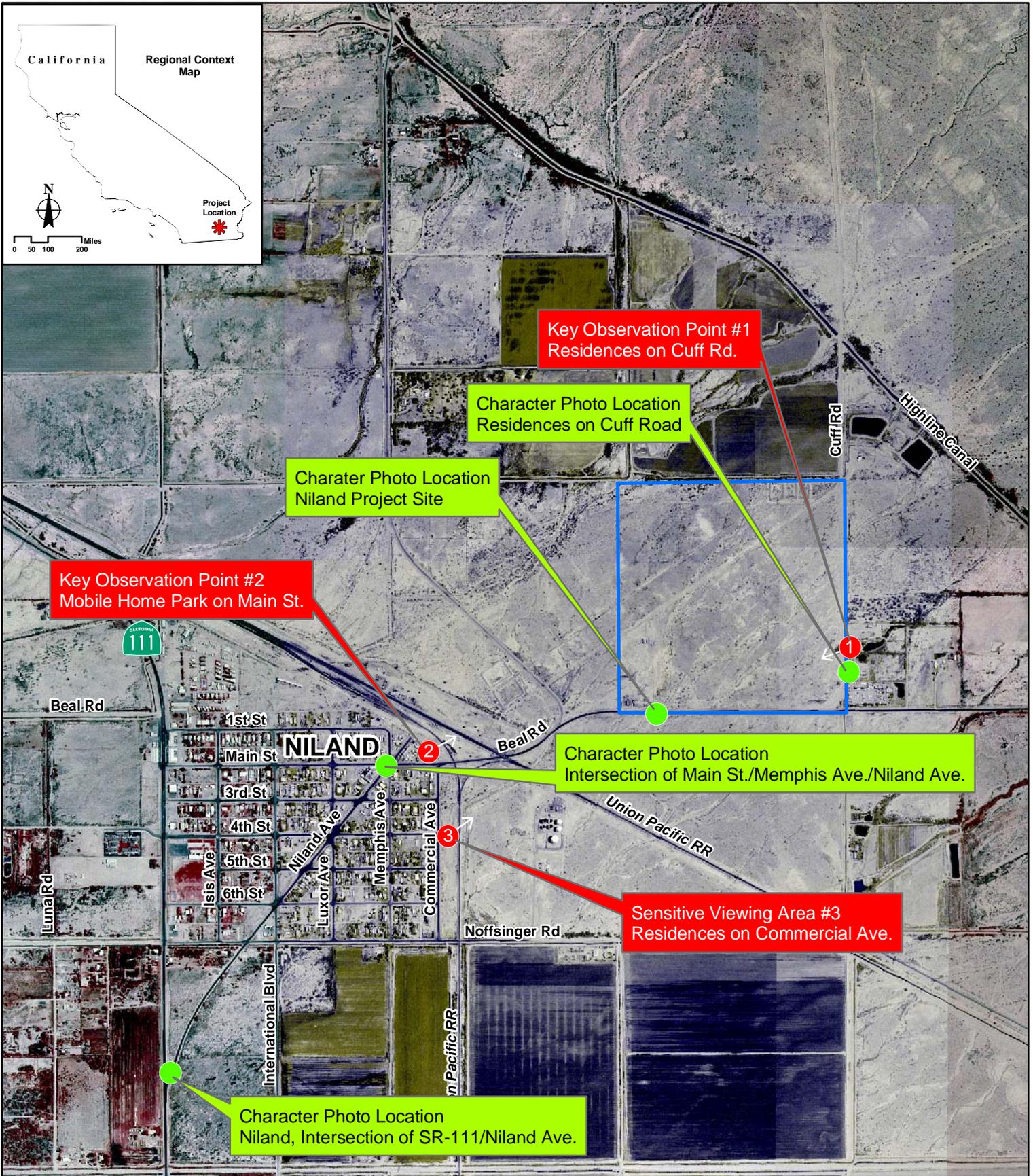
**Character Photos - Areas
Surrounding the Project**

Niland Gas Turbine Plant
Imperial Irrigation District



FIGURE 6.11-2B

SOURCE:
URS (Field Photos, January 2006)

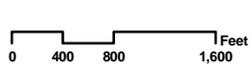


Visually Sensitive Areas, Photo Locations and Key Observation Points (KOPs)

Niland Gas Turbine Plant
Imperial Irrigation District



FIGURE 6.11-3



SOURCES:
USGS (aerial).

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**Figure 6.11-4
SCENIC ATTRACTIVENESS EVALUATION FORM FOR
SENSITIVE VIEW AREA AND KOP #1**

Landform	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	M/L (2)	<u>L (1)</u>
Vegetation	H (5)	H/M (4)	<u>M (3)</u>	M/L (2)	L (1)
Water	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	<u>M/L (2)</u>	L (1)
Color	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	<u>M/L (2)</u>	L (1)
Adjacent Scenery	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	<u>M/L (2)</u>	L (1)
Scarcity	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	M/L (2)	<u>L (1)</u>
Modifications*	H (2)	H/M (1)	M (0)	<u>M/L (-2)</u>	L (-4)
Scenic Attractiveness Class C (9)					

<p align="center">Scenic Quality Classifications</p> <p align="center">A = 19 or more</p> <p align="center">B = 12 to 18</p>

Notes:

Evaluation score is bold and underlined

H = High; M = Moderate; and L = Low

* = Explains cultural modifications present in the landscape, ranging from negative intrusions (-4) to those which complement the scenic quality and promote visual harmony (2)



Narrative Landscape Description and Photograph. The photo was taken 0.25 mile northeast of the Project site (see Figure 6.11-3), on Cuff Road, approximately 500 feet north of Beal Road. This location is just in front of the closest residence to the Project site, looking southwest toward the Project site. Topographic relief across the setting is minimal, adding limited visual appeal to form and line characteristics. Very distant views of the mountains add slight interest to the setting although they are impeded by middleground views of transmission lines, the IID substation, and the nearby fuel tank farm. Moderately diverse vegetation consists of desert lands with intermittent desert scrub bushes. It should be noted that other residences along this same stretch of roadway are partially or completely screened by mature vegetation.

**Figure 6.11-5
SCENIC ATTRACTIVENESS EVALUATION FORM FOR
SENSITIVE VIEW AREA AND KOP #2**

Landform	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	M/L (2)	<u>L (1)</u>
Vegetation	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	M/L (2)	<u>L (1)</u>
Water	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	M/L (2)	<u>L (1)</u>
Color	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	<u>M/L (2)</u>	L (1)
Adjacent Scenery	H (5)	H/M (4)	<u>M (3)</u>	M/L (2)	L (1)
Scarcity	H (5)	H/M (4)	<u>M (3)</u>	M/L (2)	L (1)
Modifications*	H (2)	H/M (1)	M (0)	<u>M/L (-2)</u>	L (-4)
Scenic Attractiveness Class C (9)					

<p align="center">Scenic Quality Classifications</p> <p align="center">A = 19 or more</p> <p align="center">B = 12 to 18</p>

Notes:

Evaluation score is bold and underlined

H = High; M = Moderate; and L = Low

* = Explains cultural modifications present in the landscape, ranging from negative intrusions (-4) to those which complement the scenic quality and promote visual harmony (2)



Narrative Landscape Description and Photograph. This photo was taken 0.25 miles southwest of the Project site (see figure 6.11-3), on the northeastern edge of the Mobile Home Park on Main Street in Niland, CA. The terrain is flat desert varying little in distinctive setting. Unique forms are created by the mountains in the background. Vegetation is limited to void in this landscape, offering little diversity to the visual setting. Cultural modifications include transmission lines, the existing IID substation and Union Pacific railroad tracks in the middleground.

**Figure 6.11-6
SCENIC ATTRACTIVENESS EVALUATION FORM FOR
SENSITIVE VIEW AREA #3**

Landform	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	M/L (2)	<u>L (1)</u>
Vegetation	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	M/L (2)	<u>L (1)</u>
Water	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	M/L (2)	<u>L (1)</u>
Color	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	<u>M/L (2)</u>	L (1)
Adjacent Scenery	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	<u>M/L (2)</u>	L (1)
Scarcity	H (5)	H/M (4)	M (3)	M/L (2)	<u>L (1)</u>
Modifications*	H (2)	H/M (1)	M (0)	M/L (-2)	<u>L (-4)</u>
Scenic Attractiveness Class C (4)					

<p>Scenic Quality Classifications</p> <p>A = 19 or more</p> <p>B = 12 to 18</p>

Notes:

Evaluation score is bold and underlined

H = High; M = Moderate; and L = Low

* = Explains cultural modifications present in the landscape, ranging from negative intrusions (-4) to those which complement the scenic quality and promote visual harmony (2)



Narrative Landscape Description and Photograph. The photo was taken on Commercial Road, 0.25 miles southwest of the Project site, just south of Main Street, looking northeast toward the fuel tank farm which is just south of the Project site (see Figure 6.11-3). This photo represents residential views in the area, immediately adjacent to the existing fuel tank farm shown here. Topographic relief across this setting is minimal and offers little diversity to form and line characteristics. All contrasts to form and line are created from cultural modifications (e.g., Union Pacific railroad tracks, transmission lines and the fuel tank farm). The homogeneous vegetative pallet consists of intermittent desert scrub bushes adding little interest to the area.



Above: Existing View from Residences on Cuff Road



Above: Simulated View from Residences on Cuff Road

**Existing and Simulated Views from
KOP #1: Residences on Cuff Road**

Niland Gas Turbine Plant
Imperial Irrigation District

SOURCES:
URS (Field Photos, January 2006),
Power Engineers (Simulation, 2006)



FIGURE 6.11-7



Above: Existing View from Mobile Home Park on Main Street



Above: Simulated View from Mobile Home Park on Main Street

**Existing and Simulated Views from
KOP #2: Mobile Home Park on Main Street**

Niland Gas Turbine Plant
Imperial Irrigation District

SOURCES:
URS (Field Photos, January 2006),
Power Engineers (Simulation, 2006)



FIGURE 6.11-8

