4.0 WEED MANAGEMENT AREAS

Weed management will occur site-wide and in all areas directly or indirectly affected by the project; however, different areas will require different specific management considerations depending on a range of factors described in this section. Weed Management Areas will include a 100-foot buffer surrounding the project site, including linear elements, except in downwind or downstream areas, in which case the buffer will expand as appropriate, to accommodate seed transport. In the event that weed species are noted to proliferate off the project site within the buffers, the project owner shall be held responsible for control of invasive species, and will need to timely notify and coordinate remedial action with BLM.

4.1 Temporary Disturbance Areas

Soil disturbance during construction and temporary use may create habitat well suited to disturbance-adapted invasive species and, therefore, measures to minimize the potential for weed introduction by personnel and equipment will be needed. Transmission line and natural gas pipeline construction will involve some temporary disturbance along with permanent tower placement and an access road for maintenance. Areas temporarily disturbed will promote weed invasion and establishment, and ongoing monitoring and management will be required. In addition, ongoing maintenance has the potential for ongoing introduction of weedy species through soil disturbance and equipment entrance, with ongoing weed management requirements. Potential areas meeting these criteria are described below.

Gas Pipeline

Southern California Gas Company (SCG) will construct a new approximately 2960 foot -long, 8-inch gas pipeline extension from its main transmission gas pipeline located approximately just south of I-10 A 50 foot- wide construction corridor will be used and most major pieces of construction equipment will remain along the pipeline route during construction. Regular weed monitoring and management during construction will be required, and weed management will be a key requirement of the revegetation effort after construction is complete.

Gen-tie Line and Telecommunications Cable

A single-circuit 230 kV generation tie-line will be constructed from the PSEGS switchyard to SCE's Red Bluff Substation. A telecommunications cable will be installed entirely underground entirely in the same right of way as the gen-tie line in a trench approximately 12 inches wide. Regular weed monitoring and management during construction will be required. Some areas temporarily disturbed during construction will require revegetation, and weed management will be required at revegetated areas. Access for gen-tie line tower inspection and cleaning will occur along the transmission line. This has the potential for ongoing introduction of weedy species through soil disturbance and equipment entrance, and will necessitate ongoing implementation of weed management requirements.

Staging and Laydown Areas

An approximately 218 acre temporary construction laydown area will serve as the location for laydown of materials, staging of traffic to avoid congestion on the I-10/Corn Springs interchange, and may be the temporary location of the concrete batch plant. This area has the potential for ongoing introduction of weedy species through soil disturbance and equipment entrance, and will necessitate ongoing implementation of weed management requirements. Approximately 169 acres of the total 218 area is not planned for temporary or permanent use but will be inside the desert tortoise and security fence.

4.2 Long-term Disturbed Areas

The areas described in this section would be permanently developed, but could support weedy species function as seed reservoirs to adjacent natural habitats if not managed. Further, without management, the disturbance associated with the construction of the associated facilities would likely promote density increases and population spread of weedy species.

Heliostat Arrays and Service Tanks

The PSEGS will replace the parabolic trough solar collection system and associated HTF with BrightSource Inc. technology. The BrightSource technology uses heliostats—elevated mirrors guided by a tracking system mounted on a pylon—to focus the sun's rays on the SRSG located atop a solar tower near the center of each solar field to create steam. Each of the heliostat assemblies is composed of two mirrors, each approximately 12 feet high by 8.5 feet wide, with a total reflecting surface of 204.7 square feet. Each heliostat assembly is mounted on a single pylon, along with a computer-programmed aiming control system that directs the motion of the heliostat to track the movement of the sun. The final layout will be completed during detailed design but is expected to consist of approximately 85,000 heliostats in each solar field.

Heliostat arrays will set atop existing soil surfaces. Vegetation clearing, grubbing, and contour smoothing in the heliostat fields will occur where necessary to allow for equipment access and storm water management. Surface preparation will consist of shallow (less than 6 inches deep) blading of curvilinear, concentric service tracks (referred to as "drive zones"), and parallel rows of heliostats. The drive zones will be cleared, grubbed, smoothed and rolled to permit safe and efficient installation of the heliostats and washing of the mirrors. In areas where these activities are not required for access or construction, the vegetation will not be removed but will be mowed (if needed) to a height of approximately 12 to 18 inches. Post-construction cleaning and other routine maintenance activities will result in continuing disturbance of much smaller areas.

Soil disturbance during construction will create habitat well suited to disturbance-adapted invasive species, and the continual use of the area by personnel and heavy equipment has the potential to introduce weed propagules. During operations, equipment and personnel will continue to access the area for heliostat cleaning and other maintenance. Wash water overflow from the ongoing cleaning of heliostat mirrors will provide a water source to support weed establishment and growth.

Roads and Other Internal Features

Roadsides and the medians of unpaved service tracks are vulnerable to weed invasion. Internal roads may alter local hydrology; are subject to initial and ongoing disturbance during construction, maintenance, and use; provide topographic variation that could capture windborne or waterborne seed; and may be subject to seed distribution from passing vehicles. Other features of the solar field may enhance weed establishment. This may include soils that have been cleared, compacted, or otherwise disturbed, areas where hydrology is altered, such as from increased drainage from developed areas, or areas where continued vehicle or foot traffic persist.

4.3 As-Built Mapping

Upon completion of construction, the applicant will prepare “as built” maps designating temporary disturbance, permanent disturbance, landscaped areas, other permanent facilities, and buffer areas. This map will be appended to the WMP to facilitate compliance monitoring. The map will have the following features:

- maximum map scale of 1 inch = 400 feet
- boundaries of the Weed Management Area (WMA), including buffer areas
- Vegetation mapping in the WMA
- land ownership boundaries
- non-native weed populations found during the AFC studies and classified as noxious
- boundaries of any conservation plan or special management areas
- location of high-risk area relating to project operation
- clearly depict the location of special-status plant and animals that remain in the area
- any other sensitive biological resources found within the WMA