

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

This section of the AFC describes the affected environment and potential environmental impacts of construction and operation of the Victorville 2 Hybrid Power Project. Applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards (LORS) are addressed, and mitigation measures are presented to avoid or reduce identified significant adverse impacts. Potential cumulative impacts are summarized in the discussion of each environmental resource area.

6.1 GENERAL

The following subsections of the AFC address the various environmental resource areas identified in the CEC power plant siting regulations. In each resource area, the discussion addresses the applicable LORS, describes existing environmental conditions that represent the context within which the VV2 Project will occur; assesses the environmental impacts of Project construction and operation as well as its cumulative impacts; and identifies mitigation measures to avoid or reduce identified significant adverse impacts.

6.1.1 Resource Sections

The resource areas addressed and the order in which they are presented are as follows:

- 6.2 Agriculture and Soils
- 6.3 Air Quality
- 6.4 Biological Resources
- 6.5 Cultural Resources
- 6.6 Geologic Hazards and Resources
- 6.7 Hazardous Materials Handling
- 6.8 Land Use
- 6.9 Noise
- 6.10 Paleontological Resources
- 6.11 Public Health
- 6.12 Socioeconomics
- 6.13 Traffic and Transportation
- 6.14 Transmission System Safety and Nuisance

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- 6.15 Visual Resources
 - 6.16 Waste Management
 - 6.17 Water Resources
 - 6.18 Worker Safety

6.1.2 Cumulative Projects

The following paragraphs identify and briefly summarize the cumulative projects that are being considered in each of the environmental resource areas addressed in this section of the AFC. As required under CEQA, the impacts of the VV2 Project must be considered together with those of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area that may produce related or cumulative impacts.

As discussed below, there are a number of industrial projects near the VV2 Project site that merit consideration for potential cumulative impacts, primarily those associated with ongoing and planned development at SCLA. However, although the Victorville area is experiencing rapid residential and related growth, because the VV2 Project site is in a designated industrial area, none of the identified residential and related development projects are within five miles of the VV2 Project site, and thus they are not considered in the VV2 cumulative impact analysis.

- **Southern California Logistics Airport Expansion Project (SCLA)** - Since 1995, the former George Air Force has been operated as the SCLA. The City of Victorville and Stirling Airports, International, have been working to develop the SCLA as a major, multi-modal (air, rail, truck) regional cargo distribution center for the southwestern United States. These plans include both expansion of the air cargo and aviation-related industrial operations at the site, as well as other industrial and commercial activities largely centered on the development of major rail facilities (see discussion of rail project below). The expansion program involved an amendment to the SCLA Specific Plan, whose environmental impacts were addressed in a 2004 EIR. This EIR also addressed the rail service project discussed below, which is a key element of the overall expansion program (City of Victorville 2004). By the year 2009, as portions of the rail project begin to come on line and other industrial and commercial development continues, SCLA would have over 1.2 million square feet (SF) of office space, 13.4 million SF of warehouse space and 11,600 employees. By 2025, SCLA master planning forecasts over 34 million SF of office and warehouse space, and over 19,000 employees.

At present (early 2007), there are a number of specific development projects that are in the permitting process or have been approved at SCLA. These include three warehouse projects (total of approximately 900,000 SF), a 45,000 SF warehouse manufacturing project, and four aircraft hangars (approximately 75,000 SF each). None of these projects are in the northern area of the SCLA Planning Area, which is where the VV2 Project site is located. The nearest of these sites is approximately three miles south of the VV2 Project site.

- **SCLA Rail Service Project** - Often referred to as the “Intermodal” project, the Rail Service project is a cornerstone of the overall SCLA development plans. As noted above, the Intermodal project was included in the 2004 EIR that addressed the SCLA Specific Plan Amendment prepared for the overall SCLA expansion. The project includes two separate rail yards Intermodal (referring to the movement of freight between rail and truck) and Multimodal (a mix of freight containers and other types such as autos, that involves various transfers from rail to rail, as well between truck and rail). In addition to the rail facilities themselves, the project includes storage areas for autos and containers, as well as administrative; equipment, truck, and rail maintenance facilities. The project would cover approximately 1,600 acres and, over the first five years, would generate over 1,500 rail-related jobs and lead to the related development of nearly 600 acres of industrial development at SCLA with an additional 6,400 jobs. Construction of the initial off-site phases is beginning in early 2007, and the construction of the Intermodal rail yard is scheduled to extend from September 2007 to September 2008. The Intermodal yard would involve 4 to 7 tracks running approximately 12,000 linear feet and construction would involve the movement of approximately 14.5 million cubic yards of earth.
- **VVWRA Expansion Project** - Based on the ongoing rapid growth of the Victor Valley, demand on the wastewater treatment system in the VVWRA service area is expected to exceed 15 million gallons per day (MGD) by 2008. An ongoing expansion and upgrade project would increase the VVWRA regional wastewater treatment facility capacity to 18 MGD. The project consists of a series of improvements while making minimal changes to the existing treatment process. The improvements include: two new aeration tanks, four new five-acre percolation ponds, one new blower building, several new or modified pumping stations, several new metering facilities, and other miscellaneous modifications. Construction began in 2006 and is expected to be completed in the spring of 2008.

There are two other projects that were initially considered as potential cumulative projects but were subsequently eliminated. As described below, one of the two projects

(TXI Riverside Oro Grande Cement Plant upgrade) will be completed before VV2 Project construction begins, and the other (High Desert Corridor) is not expected to begin construction until after construction of VV2 is complete. Thus, both projects were eliminated from consideration for the cumulative impacts evaluation of the VV2 Project.

- **High Desert Corridor Project** - A major realignment and upgrade of SR 18 is planned between the cities of Palmdale and Victorville and into Apple Valley to the east. In the area between U.S. 395 and past I-15, the “High Desert Corridor” would mostly be freeway with much of the route following the alignment of Air Expressway. Construction of the High Desert Corridor is not expected to begin before approximately 2012, by which time the VV2 Project would already be in operation. Thus, there would be no overlap between the impacts of VV2 Project construction and those of the highway project. Because overlapping construction phase impacts would be a primary cumulative concern, the High Desert Corridor project was not considered in the VV2 Project cumulative impacts evaluation.
- **TXI Riverside Cement Oro Grande Plant Upgrade** - This project, at the cement plant in Oro Grande east of the VV2 site, is a major modernization and expansion of an existing portland cement plant. The project involves replacing five existing kilns with one new, more efficient, state-of-the-art kiln. The upgrade will expand total production capacity by approximately 75 percent, while at the same time reducing air emissions. The project is currently under construction and is expected to be completed and operational in 2007, before construction begins on the VV2 Project. Because there will be no overlap in construction and because the cement plant expansion will lower the facility’s environmental impacts, this project was not considered in the VV2 Project cumulative impacts evaluation.