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2.1 PURPOSE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that all state and local governmental agencies consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary authority prior to taking action on those projects. This draft environmental impact report (DEIR) has been prepared to satisfy CEQA, as set forth in the Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq., and the State CEQA Guidelines, 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15000, et seq. The environmental impact report (EIR) is the public document designed to provide decision makers and the public with an analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed project, to indicate possible ways to reduce or avoid environmental damage, and to identify alternatives to the project. The EIR must also disclose significant environmental impacts that cannot be avoided; growth-inducing impacts; effects not found to be significant; and significant cumulative impacts of all past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

Pursuant to CEQA Section 21067, the lead agency means “the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project which may have a significant effect upon the environment.” The Town of Yucca Valley has the principal responsibility for approval of the Yucca Valley General Plan Update project. For this reason, the Town of Yucca Valley is the CEQA lead agency for this project.

The intent of the DEIR is to provide sufficient information on the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Yucca Valley General Plan Update to allow the Town of Yucca Valley to make an informed decision regarding approval of the project. Specific discretionary actions to be reviewed by the Town are described later in Section 3.4, *Intended Uses of the EIR*.



This DEIR has been prepared in accordance with requirements of the:

- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.)
- State Guidelines for the Implementation of the CEQA of 1970 (herein referenced as CEQA Guidelines), as amended (California Code of Regulations Sections 15000 et seq.)

The overall purpose of this DEIR is to inform the lead agency, responsible agencies, decision makers and the general public of the environmental effects of the development and operation of the proposed Yucca Valley General Plan Update project. This DEIR addresses the potential environmental effects of the project, including effects that may be significant and adverse, evaluates a number of alternatives to the project, and identifies mitigation measures to reduce or avoid adverse effects.

2.2 NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND INITIAL STUDY

The Town of Yucca Valley determined that an EIR would be required for this project and issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Initial Study on November 8, 2012 (See Appendix A). Comments received during the public review period, which extended from November 8, 2012, to December 10, 2012, are contained in Appendix B.

The NOP process is used to help determine the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the DEIR. Based on this process and the Initial Study for the project, certain environmental categories were identified as having the potential to result in significant impacts. Issues considered Potentially Significant are addressed in this DEIR. Issues

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identified as Less Than Significant or No Impact are not addressed beyond the discussion in the initial study. Refer to the initial study in Appendix A for discussion of how these initial determinations have been made.

2.3 SCOPE OF THIS DEIR

Based upon the initial study and environmental checklist form, the Town of Yucca Valley staff determined that a DEIR should be prepared for the proposed project. The scope of the DEIR was determined based on the town's initial study, comments received in response to the NOP, and comments received at the scoping meeting conducted by the Town on December 5, 2012. Pursuant to Sections 15126.2 and 15126.4 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the DEIR should identify any potentially significant adverse impacts and recommend mitigation that would reduce or eliminate these impacts to levels of insignificance.

The information in the project description establishes the basis for analyzing future project-related environmental impacts. However, further environmental review by the Town may be required as more detailed information and plans are submitted on a project-by-project basis.

2.3.1 Impacts Considered Less Than Significant

Two environmental impact categories are identified here as not being significantly affected by or affecting the proposed Yucca Valley General Plan Update project and as such are not discussed in detail in this DEIR. This determination was made by the Town of Yucca Valley in its preparation of the initial study.

- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Mineral Resources

2.3.2 Potentially Significant Adverse Impacts

15 environmental factors have been identified as potentially significant impacts if the proposed project is implemented. These factors are:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

2.3.3 Unavoidable Significant Adverse Impacts

This DEIR identifies five significant and unavoidable adverse impacts, as defined by CEQA, that would result from implementation of the proposed project. Unavoidable adverse impacts may be considered significant on a project-

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specific basis, cumulatively significant, and/or potentially significant. If the Town, as the lead agency, determines that unavoidable significant adverse impacts will result from the project, the Town must prepare a “Statement of Overriding Considerations” before it can approve the project. A Statement of Overriding Considerations states that the decision-making body has balanced the benefits of the proposed project against its unavoidable significant environmental effects and has determined that the benefits of the project outweigh the adverse effects, and therefore the adverse effects are considered to be acceptable. The impacts that were found in the DEIR to be significant and unavoidable are:

- Air Quality (AQMP consistency, construction and operation air pollutant emissions, localized air quality)
- Biological Resources (cumulative habitat loss)
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Noise (construction-related noise and vibration, traffic noise)
- Transportation (congestion management plan intersections)

2.4 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

The following documents are incorporated by reference in this DEIR, consistent with Section 15150 of the State CEQA Guidelines, and are available for review at the Town of Yucca Valley.

- *Town of Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan*. Prepared by the Town of Yucca Valley. December 14, 1995
- *Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Town of Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan* (SCH# 95072080). Prepared by the Town of Yucca Valley. September 15, 1995

This DEIR also relies on previously adopted regional and statewide plans and programs, agency standards, and background studies in its analysis, such as:

- Town’s Municipal Code
- US Fish and Wildlife Service, Revised Recovery Plan for the Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise
- Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District, Federal 8-hr Ozone Attainment Plan and CEQA and Federal Conformity Guidelines
- Water Quality Control Board for Colorado River Basin (Region 7), Water Quality Control Plan for the Colorado River Basin Region
- Hi-Desert Water District, Urban Water Management Plan
- Southern California Association of Government (SCAG), Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategies (RTP/SCS).

Whenever existing environmental documentation or previously prepared documents and studies are used in the preparation of this DEIR, the information is summarized for the convenience of the reader and incorporated by reference. In addition, each section that relies on previously adopted plans, programs, environmental documentation, and background studies notes how it specifically relates to the proposed project and that the information has been reconfirmed. These documents and other referenced source material in this DEIR will be made available to the public for inspection at the Town upon request, at the Town of Yucca Valley, Planning Division, 58928 Monterey Business Center Drive.



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2.5 FINAL EIR CERTIFICATION

This DEIR is being circulated for public review for a period of 45 days. Interested agencies and members of the public are invited to provide written comments on the DEIR to the Town address shown on the title page of this document. Upon completion of the 45-day review period, the Town of Yucca Valley will review all written comments received and prepare written responses for each comment. A Final EIR (FEIR) will then be prepared incorporating all of the comments received, responses to the comments, and any changes to the DEIR that result from the comments received. This FEIR will be presented to the Town of Yucca Valley for potential certification as the environmental document for the project. All persons who commented on the DEIR will be notified of the availability of the FEIR and the date of the public hearing before the Town.

The DEIR is available to the general public for review at the following locations:

- Town of Yucca Valley, Planning Division
58928 Business Center Drive
Yucca Valley, CA 92284
- Town of Yucca Valley Town Hall
57090 29 Palms Highway
Yucca Valley, CA 92284
- Yucca Valley Branch Library
57098 29 Palms Highway
Yucca Valley, CA 92284

2.6 MITIGATION MONITORING

Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 requires that agencies adopt a monitoring or reporting program for any project for which it has made findings pursuant to Public Resources Code 21081 or adopted a Negative Declaration pursuant to 21080(c). Such a program is intended to ensure the implementation of all mitigation measures adopted through the preparation of an EIR or Negative Declaration.

The Mitigation Monitoring Program for the Yucca Valley General Plan Update will be completed as part of the Final EIR and prior to consideration of the project by the Yucca Valley Town Council.