

Chapter 1

Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

The North Sky River Wind Energy Project and Jawbone Wind Energy Project (proposed project or project) are two projects proposed by separate applicants that will be collectively addressed in one Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The North Sky River Project is proposed by North Sky River Energy, LLC and the Jawbone Wind Energy Project is proposed by Jawbone Wind Energy, LLC. The proposed project requires approval of zone change requests and a conditional use permit (CUP) and if approved would allow for the commercial production of 339 Megawatts (MW) of electricity from wind turbine generators (WTGs) on an 13,535-acre site in unincorporated Kern County, California (Figure 1-1). Land ownership in the vicinity of the project site is comprised of interspersed parcels of private land under the jurisdiction of Kern County, federal land managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and other federal and municipal lands. Proposed project WTGs would be located entirely on private land under Kern County jurisdiction, with some access roads, underground transmission collector lines and an overhead generation-tie (gen-tie) line occurring on BLM-managed land.

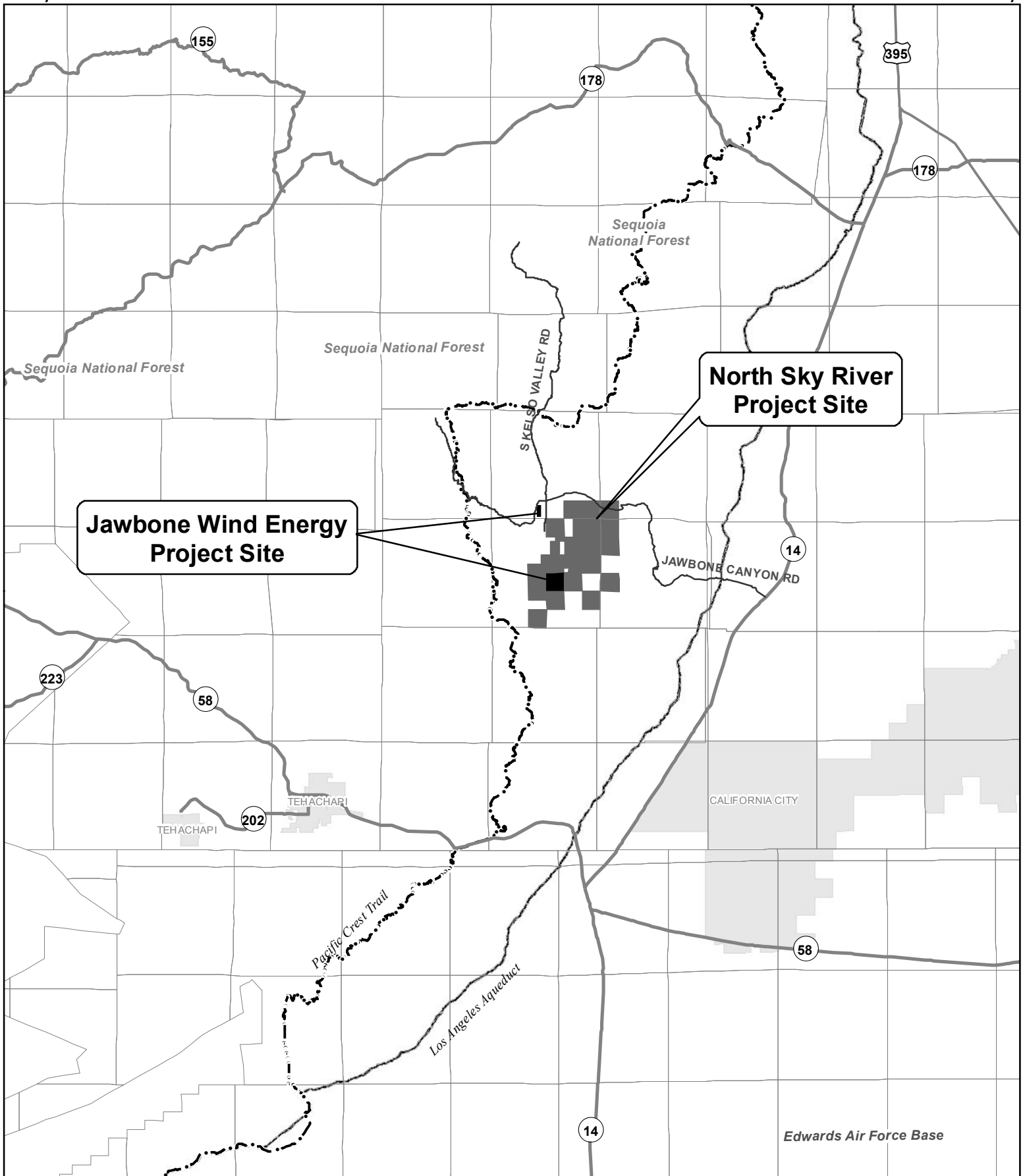
Power generated at the project would be transferred to the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) grid along the existing Wilderness transmission line and sold to a power purchaser (via a power purchase agreement), who in turn would sell energy output to California investor-owned utilities, municipalities, or other purchasers, in furtherance of the goals of the California Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards and other similar renewable programs in the State.

This Draft EIR has been prepared by Kern County as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR provides information about the environmental setting and impacts of the proposed project and alternatives. It informs the public about the project and its impacts and provides information to meet the needs of local, State, and federal permitting agencies that are required to consider the project. The EIR will be used by Kern County to determine whether to approve the zone changes and grant the CUPs for the project.

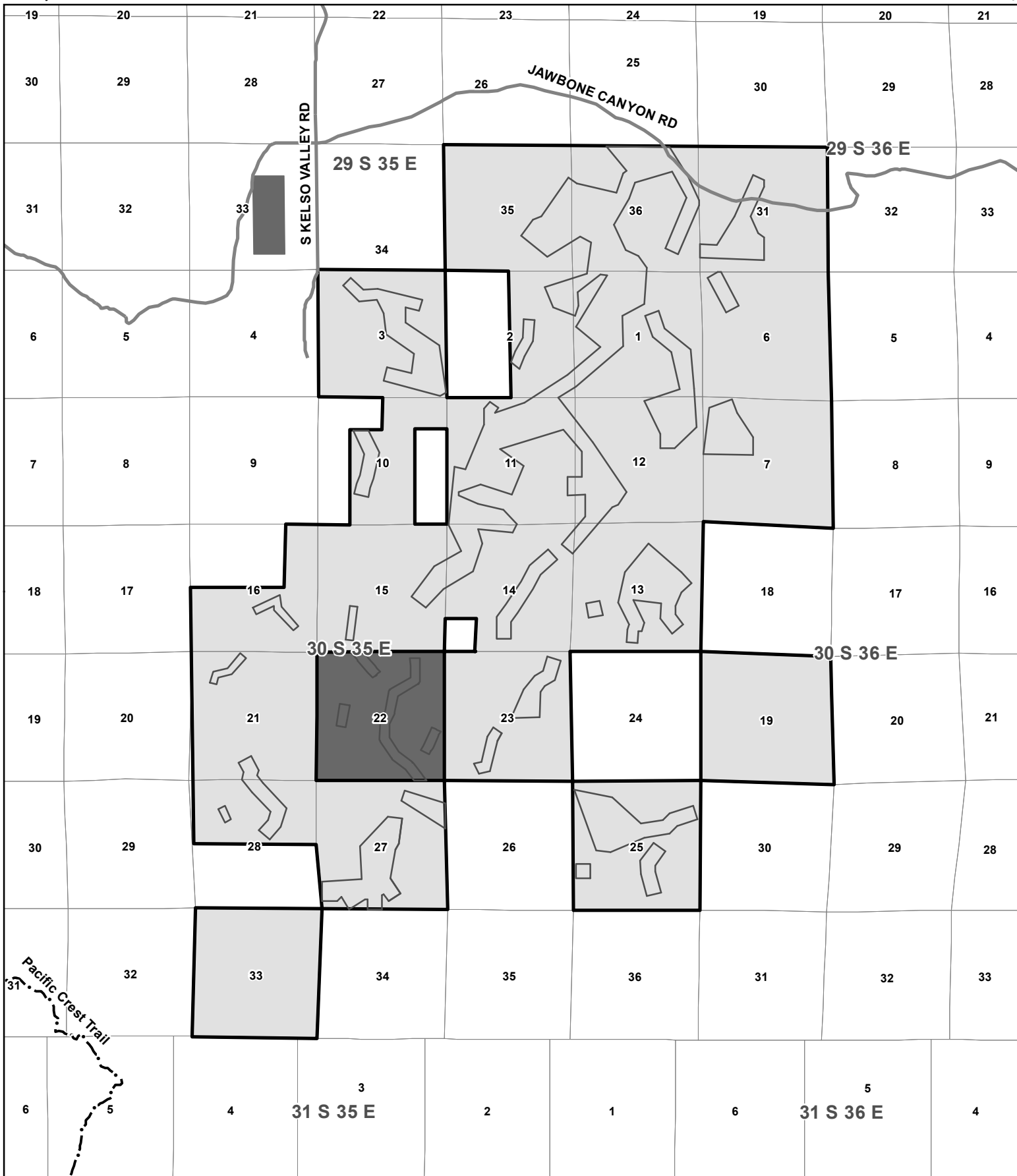
This Executive Summary summarizes the requirements of the CEQA Statute and Guidelines, provides an overview of the proposed project and alternatives, identifies the purpose of the Draft EIR, outlines the potential impacts of the project and the recommended mitigation measures, and discloses areas of controversy and issues to be resolved.

1.2 Project Summary

The proposed project is to construct and operate a wind energy generation facility on 13,535 acres. The project proponent is requesting a change in zone classification to incorporate the Wind Energy (WE) Combining District to the base district for 1,292 acres of the 13,535-acre project site (Figure 1-2).



**Figure 1-1
Regional Location Map**



**Figure 1-2
Project Site and
Areas Proposed for Zoning Change**

Rezoning would allow for construction of the WTGs, ancillary facilities, and supporting infrastructure. The purpose of the WE Combining District is to promote the use of an alternative to fossil fuel-generated electrical power in areas of the County that are identified to have suitable wind resources for production of commercial quantities of wind-generated electrical power. The WE Combining District contains specific development standards that apply to the siting and construction of WTGs and accessory facilities in the WE zone, obviating further discretionary review.

Construction of the proposed project would also require approval of a CUP to allow the use of five temporary, mobile concrete batch plants to provide concrete and materials for turbine, substation, and building foundations. The batch plants would be located onsite during construction only. In addition, due to military air traffic restrictions, the WTGs would need to conform to the height requirements for the proposed project area as defined by Section 19.64 and Figure 19.08.160 of the Kern County Zoning Ordinance unless the military authority responsible for operations in that flight area first provides the planning director with written concurrence that the height of the proposed structure or building would create no significant military mission impacts. The project site is located across several of the military review zones in Figure 19.08.106, including green (no review requirement), yellow (all structures over 500 feet), and red (wind turbines and communications towers over 80 feet and all other structures over 100 feet). Without military review, those structures falling within the yellow zone would be limited to 500 feet above ground elevation; those structures falling within the red zone, which includes the eastern portion of the site (10.1 percent of the site with 1,337 acres), would be limited to 80 feet above ground elevation for wind turbines and communications towers and 100 feet for all other structures. Figure 3-4 shows military review requirements for the proposed project site.

1.3 Purpose and Use of the Draft EIR

An EIR is a public informational document used for planning and decision-making purposes. The Kern County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors will consider the information in the EIR, including the public comments and staff response to those comments, during the public hearing process. As a legislative action, the final decision is made by the Board of Supervisors, who may approve, conditionally approve, or deny the project. The purpose of an EIR is to identify:

- The significant potential impacts of the proposed project on the environment and indicate the manner in which those significant impacts can be avoided or mitigated;
- Any unavoidable adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated; and
- Reasonable and feasible alternatives to the project that would eliminate any significant adverse environmental impacts or reduce the impacts to a less-than-significant level.

An EIR also discloses growth-inducing impacts; impacts found not to be significant; and significant cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects. The CEQA requires an EIR be prepared that reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency regarding the impacts, the level of significance of the impacts both before and after mitigation, and mitigation measures proposed to reduce the impacts. A draft EIR is circulated to responsible agencies, trustee agencies with resources affected by the project, and interested agencies and individuals. The purposes of public and agency review of a draft EIR include sharing expertise, disclosing agency analyses, checking for accuracy, detecting omissions, discovering public concerns, and soliciting counterproposals. Reviewers of a draft EIR are requested to focus on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts on the environment and ways in which