3.9 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY – Would the Project:	**Potentially Significant Impact**	**Less Than Significant with Mitigation**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	☐	☐	☐	☒
h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☐	☒
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	☐	☐	☐	☒
j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.9.1 Environmental Setting

The Project area is located 2 miles east-northeast of Niland, Imperial County, in the central basin of the Colorado Desert within the Salton Trough (Salton Sink). Niland is a small community on the southeast side of the Salton Sea, approximately 80 miles

southeast of Palm Springs and 19 miles north of Brawley. The Salton Trough is the northwestern landward continuation of the rift that extends 140 miles northwest from the head of the Gulf of California. The Trough is traversed by the San Andreas Fault and bordered on the east by the Chocolate Mountains, which stretch more than 60 miles in a northwest to southeast direction and rise to an elevation of 2,475 feet asl. The Trough was formed by a gradual sinking of the land concurrent with uplift of the surrounding mountains during the Miocene, Pliocene, and Pleistocene eras. Much of the Salton Trough lies below sea level, and at its lowest elevation lies the Salton Sea, a 376-square mile saltwater lake located about 6 miles to the east of the Project area.

The Colorado Desert is a hot, dry desert region that consists of low valleys surrounded by high mountains. The average annual rainfall and temperature vary with elevation. In much of the lower region, rainfall ranges from 2.5 centimeters (cm) to 5 cm per year; while other areas receive as much as 20 to 25 cm of precipitation per year. The marked elevation changes in the area also reflect variations in temperature. Summer temperatures range between 100° and 120° F, while in the mountainous regions, they tend to hover around 90° F. The winters are windier and more variable in temperature than in the summer, but rarely reach below freezing. The relatively low rainfall totals (2.5 cm) do not indicate a potential for hydrogeological or water quality issues.

3.9.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal and State laws and regulations pertaining to this issue area and relevant to the Project are identified in Table 3.9-1.

Table 3.9-1. Laws, Regulations, and Policies (Hydrology and Water Quality)

U.S.	Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 USC 1251 et seq.)	The CWA is comprehensive legislation (it generally includes reference to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, its supplementation by the CWA of 1977, and amendments in 1981, 1987, and 1993) that seeks to protect the nation's water from pollution by setting water quality standards for surface water and by limiting the discharge of effluents into waters of the U.S. These water quality standards are promulgated by the USEPA and enforced in California by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs). CWA sections include: • State Water Quality Certification. Section 401 (33 USC 1341) requires certification from the State or interstate water control agencies that a proposed water resources project is in compliance with established effluent limitations and water quality standards. USACE projects, as well as applicants for Federal permits or licenses are required to obtain this certification. • National Pollution Discharge Elimination System)(NPDES). Section 402 (33 USC 1342) establishes conditions and permitting for discharges of pollutants under the NPDES.
CA	Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Wat. Code, §	Porter-Cologne is the principal law governing water quality in California. The Act established the SWRCB and nine RWQCBs who have primary responsibility for protecting State water quality and the beneficial uses of State waters. Porter-Cologne also implements many provisions of the Federal CWA, such as the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program.

Table 3.9-1. Laws, Regulations, and Policies (Hydrology and Water Quality)

	13000 et seq.) (Porter-Cologne)	Pursuant to the CWA section 401, applicants for a Federal license or permit for activities that may result in any discharge to waters of the U. S. must seek a Water Quality Certification (Certification) from the State in which the discharge originates. Such Certification is based on a finding that the discharge will meet water quality standards and other appropriate requirements of State law. In California, RWQCBs issue or deny certification for discharges within their jurisdiction. The SWRCB has this responsibility where projects or activities affect waters in more than one RWQCB's jurisdiction. If the SWRCB or a RWQCB imposes a condition on its Certification, those conditions must be included in the Federal permit or license. Porter-Cologne (§ 13240) requires each RWQCB to formulate and adopt a Basin Plan for all areas within the Region. Each RWQCB establishes water quality objectives to ensure the reasonable protection of beneficial uses and a program of implementation for achieving water quality objectives within the basin plans. 40 CFR 131 requires each State to adopt water quality standards by designating water uses to be protected and adopting water quality criteria that protect the designated uses. In California, the beneficial uses and water quality objectives are the State's water quality standards. These Plans contain enforceable standards for the various waters they address.

There are no local goals, policies, and/or regulations applicable to this issue area.

3.9.3 Impact Analysis

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?

No Impact. The proposed sale of School Lands does not include any construction or modification of existing conditions that could subject topography, buildings, structures or people to modifications to any water body, streambed or channel. Therefore, there is no potential for violation of any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements.

b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?

No Impact. The proposed sale of School Lands will not substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted). The proposed sale does not include any construction or modification of existing conditions that would warrant a modification of the topography, buildings, structures or people to modifications to any water body, streambed or channel.

c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

No Impact. The proposed sale of School Lands does not include any construction or modification of existing conditions that could subject topography, buildings, structures or people to modifications to any water body, streambed or channel. Therefore, there is no potential for altering the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site.

d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?

No Impact. The proposed sale of School Lands does not include any construction or modification of existing conditions that could subject topography, buildings, structures or people to modifications to any water body, streambed or channel. Therefore, there is no potential for altering the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site.

e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?

No Impact. The proposed sale of School Lands does not include any construction or modification of existing conditions that could subject topography, buildings, structures or people to modifications to any water body, streambed or channel. Therefore, there is no potential for creating or contributing to runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff.

f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?

No Impact. The proposed sale of School Lands does not include any construction or modification of existing conditions that could subject topography, buildings, structures or people to modifications to any water body, streambed or channel. Therefore, there is no potential for substantial water quality degradation.

g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?

h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?

No Impact. There is no potential for placing housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map. There is no potential for being within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows. The proposed sale is not within the federal or State adopted plans of flood control.

i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?

No Impact. The proposed sale of School Lands does not include any construction or modification of existing conditions that could subject topography, buildings, or structures to modifications to any water body, streambed or channel. Therefore, there is no potential for exposing people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding.

j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?

No Impact. Due to the location of the School Lands parcels proposed for sale, there is no potential for inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow.

3.9.4 Summary

Based upon the above considerations, no impacts to hydrology and water quality are expected to occur as a result of the proposed sale of School Lands. The proposed purchasers of the School Lands parcels plan to continue the existing uses (current baseline conditions) associated with the respective parcels. The Project does not include any construction or ground-disturbing activities. Any other uses and potential impacts are too speculative for evaluation.