

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: State Clearinghouse
PO Box 3044/1400 Tenth St
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: County of Tulare – RMA
5961 S Mooney Blvd
Visalia, CA 93277

Date: March 16, 2022

Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (EIR or SEIR) and Scoping Meeting

Project Title: Rexford 2 Solar Farm

Project Applicant: 20SD 8ME LLC

Project Location: The Rexford 2 Solar Farm Project (“Rexford 2” or “Project”) is located on approximately 1,200 acres of land near the unincorporated community of Ducor, a census-designated place, in south-central Tulare County. The Rexford 2 Project site is located in close proximity to the Rexford 1 Project, with two parcels being immediately adjacent to the Rexford 1 Project. The Project site is located west of State Route (SR) 65 and generally located north of Avenue 56, east of Road 200, south of Avenue 72, and west of Road 224. The Project is located in the Ducor, Richgrove, Sausalito School, and Delano East U.S. Geological Survey 7.5-minute topographic quadrangles. The Public Lands Survey System maps the area as Township 23 south, Range 26 east, Sections 24, 25, 35, and 36; Township 23 south, Range 27 east, Sections 17, 19, 20, 29, and 30; Township 24 south, Range 26 east, Sections 1, 2, and 11-14; and Township 24, Range 27 east, Sections 17 and 18.

Tulare County Resource Management Agency (RMA) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare a supplemental EIR (SEIR) for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the SEIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit(s) or other approval(s) for the project. In addition, please provide us with contact information of the person(s) in your agency that we may contact during the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. The NOP is also available on the County website beginning on March 16, 2022 at: <https://tularecounty.ca.gov/rma/planning-building/environmental-planning/environmental-impact-reports/rexford-2-solar-farm-project-22-006/>.

Due to the limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

A scoping meeting is scheduled for **March 31, 2022 at 1:30 P.M.** in Conference Room F of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency at the address shown above. The meeting can also be attended online via Zoom at:

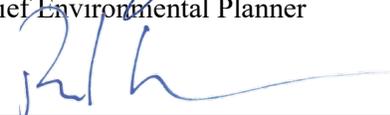
<https://tularecounty-ca.zoom.us/j/92682456744?pwd=MHErZGIWdEhHU2RPYU9JdHNjUUZTUT09>

Meeting ID: 926 8245 6744; Passcode: 371955.

*Notice of Preparation and Scoping Meeting
Rexford 2 Solar Farm Project
March 16, 2022*

Please direct your response to Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner at the address shown above. He may be contacted by e-mail at hguerra@co.tulare.ca.us or by telephone at 559-624-7121.

Signature:  Date: 3/16/2022
Hector Guerra
Title: Chief Environmental Planner

Signature:  Date: 3/16/2022
Reed Schenke, P.E.
Title: RMA Director / Environmental Assessment Officer

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375

INTRODUCTION

The Tulare County Planning Commission certified the Final Environmental Impact Report (State Clearinghouse No. 2020020326) and approved Special Use Permit No. PSP 19-073 for the Rexford Solar Farm Project (herein referred as “previously approved Project” or “Rexford 1”) on August 26, 2020. Rexford 1 involved the construction and operation of an up to 700 megawatt (MW) solar photovoltaic (PV) facility, including an energy storage system (ESS) with up to 700 MW storage capacity, on-site substation, transmission and/or collector lines, and ancillary components on approximately 3,614 acres of land historically used as agricultural farmland in unincorporated Tulare County, California. Power generation by Rexford 1 would connect to the Southern California Edison (SCE) Vestal Substation. Construction of Rexford 1 is scheduled to commence in spring of 2022.

The Project applicant is now requesting the expansion of the previously approved Rexford 1 Solar Farm Project. The proposed Rexford 2 Solar Farm Project (“Rexford 2” or “Project”) is the subsequent development phase of the Rexford 1 Project. As shown on Figure 1, the Rexford 2 Project site is located in close proximity to the Rexford 1 Project, with two parcels being immediately adjacent to the Rexford 1 Project.

PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The proposed Rexford 2 Solar Farm (Project) would be located on approximately 1,200 acres of land near the unincorporated community of Ducor, a census-designated place, in south-central Tulare County (Figure 2). Neighboring unincorporated communities include Terra Bella to the north and Richgrove to the southwest. As shown on Figure 3, the Project site is located west of State Route (SR) 65 and generally located north of Avenue 56, east of Road 200, south of Avenue 75, and west of Road 224.

The Project is located in the Ducor, Richgrove, Sausalito School, and Delano East USGS 7.5-minute topographic quadrangles. The Public Lands Survey System maps the area as Township 23 south, Range 26 east, Sections 24, 25, 35, and 36; Township 23 south, Range 27 east, Sections 17, 19, 20, 29, and 30; Township 24 south, Range 26 east, Sections 1, 2, and 11-14; and Township 24, Range 27 east, Sections 17 and 18.

Elevations within the Project site range from 475-620 feet (145-189 meters) above mean sea level. The Project site is surrounded by existing agricultural uses including vineyards, orchards, dry-land grain, irrigated crops, and grazing lands and scattered rural residences and agricultural-related structures. The Project site is generally adjacent and/or co-terminus with the previously approved Rexford 1 Solar Farm Project.

The majority of the Project site is zoned as AE-20 (Exclusive Agriculture – 20 acre minimum) and AE-40 (Exclusive Agriculture – 40 acre minimum). The Project site is designated as Valley Agriculture by the Tulare County General Plan. These General Plan and zoning designations expressly allow the installation of renewable solar power with a Special Use Permit.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Resources Code §21000 et seq.), the County of Tulare Resource Management Agency (RMA) will be preparing a supplemental EIR to evaluate the environmental effects associated with the Rexford 2 Project. Rexford 2 would involve the construction and operation of an up to 500 megawatts-alternating current (MW-AC) solar PV facility, including an ESS with up to 500 MW-AC storage capacity on approximately 1,200 acres near the unincorporated community of Ducor. The proposed Project would include a ground mounted PV solar

power generating system, supporting structures, inverter modules, pad mounted transformers, ESS, access roads and fencing, and on-site substation. An operations and maintenance building may be constructed on the site.

The proposed Project would involve the construction of both transmission and collector lines. Power generated by the proposed Project would be transmitted to the Southern California Edison (SCE) Vestal Substation via an up to 230 kilovolt (kV) overhead and/or underground gen-tie line. The proposed transmission and/or collector lines would extend along existing roadway rights-of-way from various portions of the Project site (where substations are located) ultimately connecting to the SCE Vestal Substation. The transmission and/or collector lines will be located along portions of Road 192, Road 200, Road 208, Road 232, 24th Avenue, Avenue 42, Avenue 46, Avenue 56, Avenue 64, Avenue 68, and Avenue 72, or could possibly utilize additional nearby routings.

If you require additional information related to this notice, please contact:

Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner at:

E-mail: hguerra@tularecounty.ca.gov or

Phone: (559) 624-7121

REVIEWING AGENCIES AND POTENTIAL APPROVALS REQUIRED:

The following agencies may have jurisdiction/interests concerning the proposed Project:

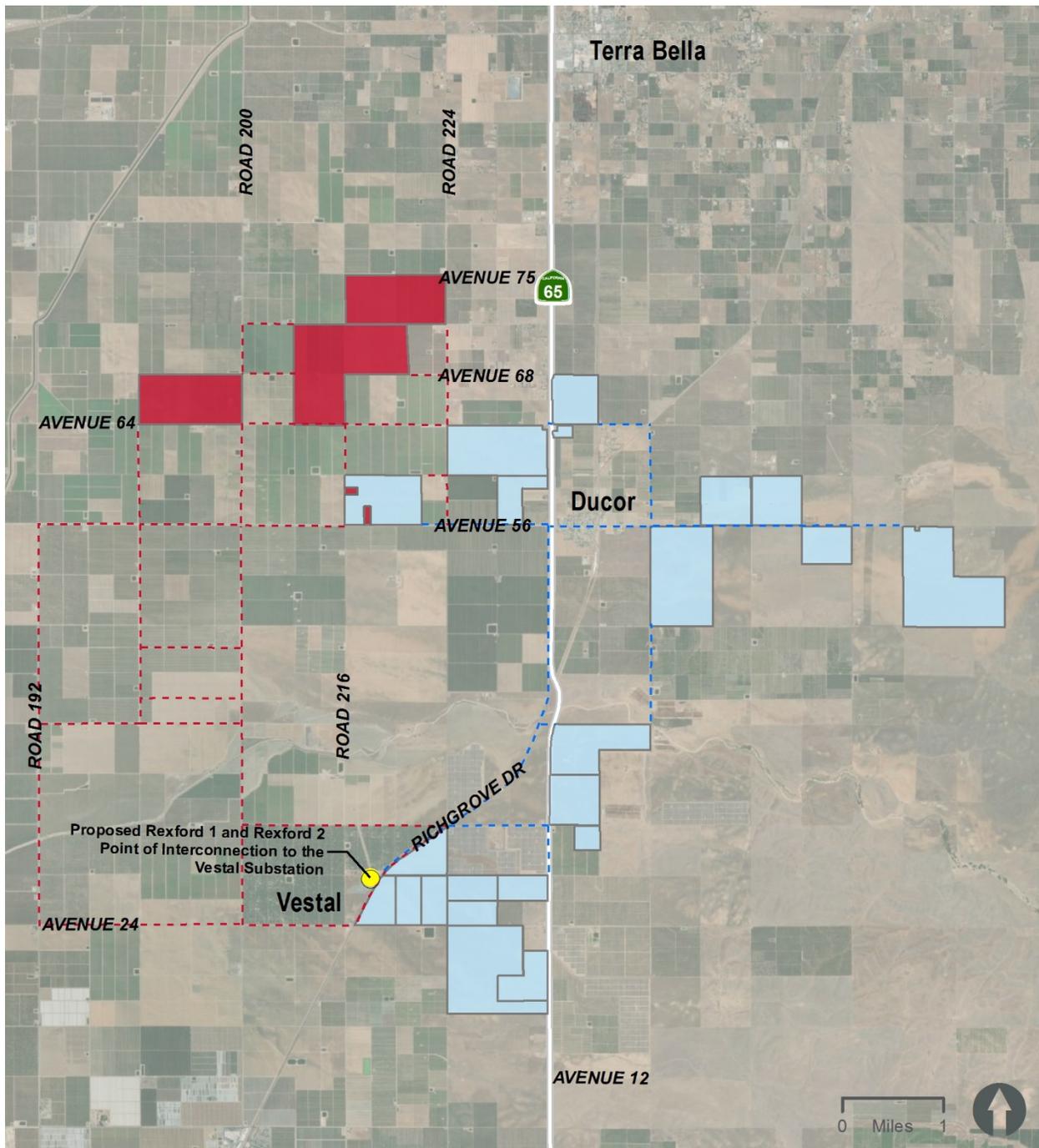
Regional, State and Federal:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- California Department of Conservation – Division of Land Resource Protection
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife – Region #4
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board – Region #5
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
- California Energy Commission
- California Public Utilities Commission

Local:

- Tulare County Resource Management Agency
- Tulare County Environmental Health and Human Services Agency
- Tulare County Flood Control
- Tulare County Fire
- Planning Branch (Environmental Planning, Project Review, Building and Housing Divisions)
- Public Works Branch

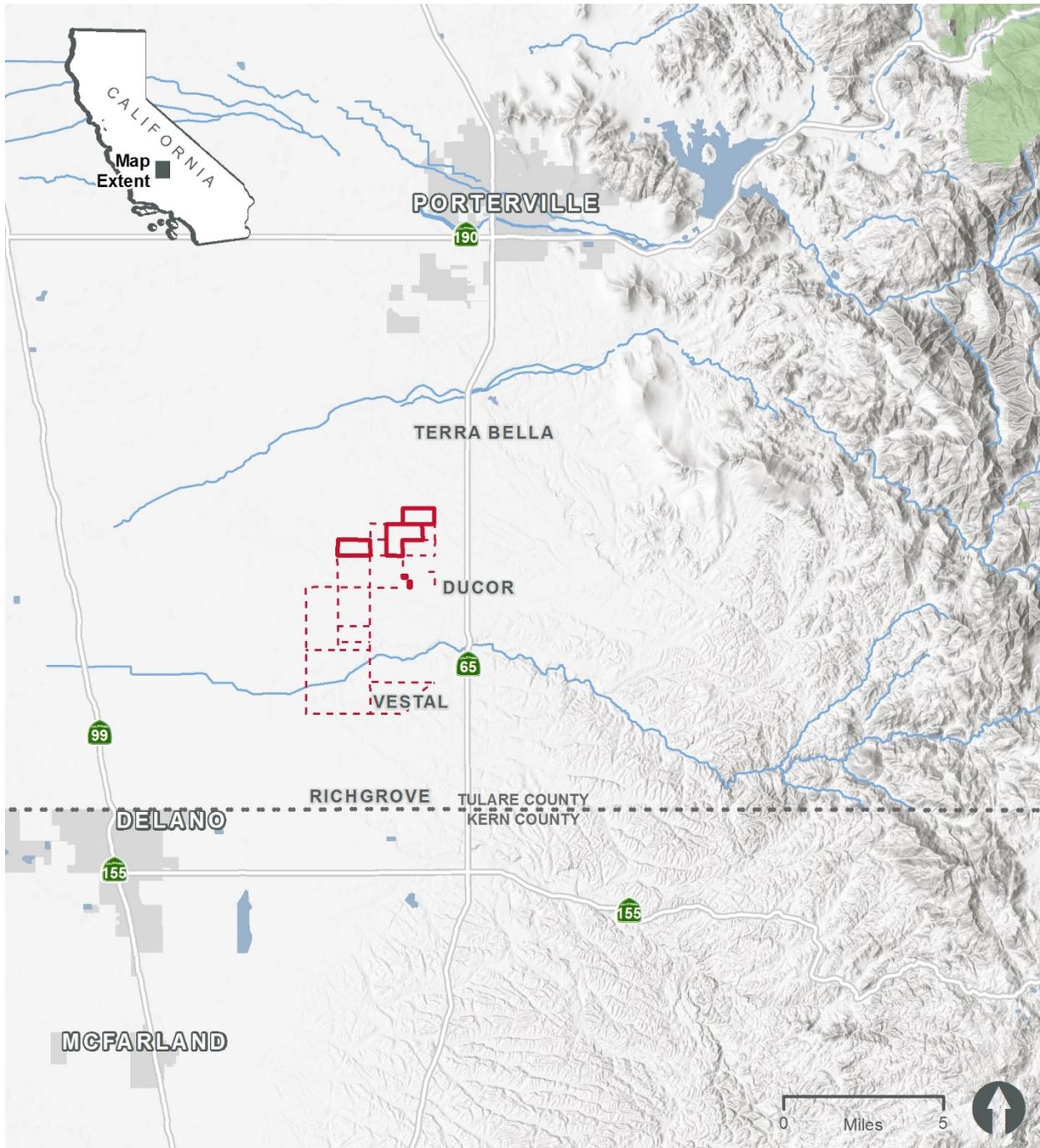
Figure 1. Rexford 1 and Rexford 2 Location



LEGEND

- Rexford 2 Project Site
 - Rexford 2 Transmission and/or Collector Line
 - Proposed Rexford 1 and Rexford 2 Point of Interconnection to the Vestal Substation
- Rexford 1 Project Site
 - Rexford 1 Transmission and/or Collector Line

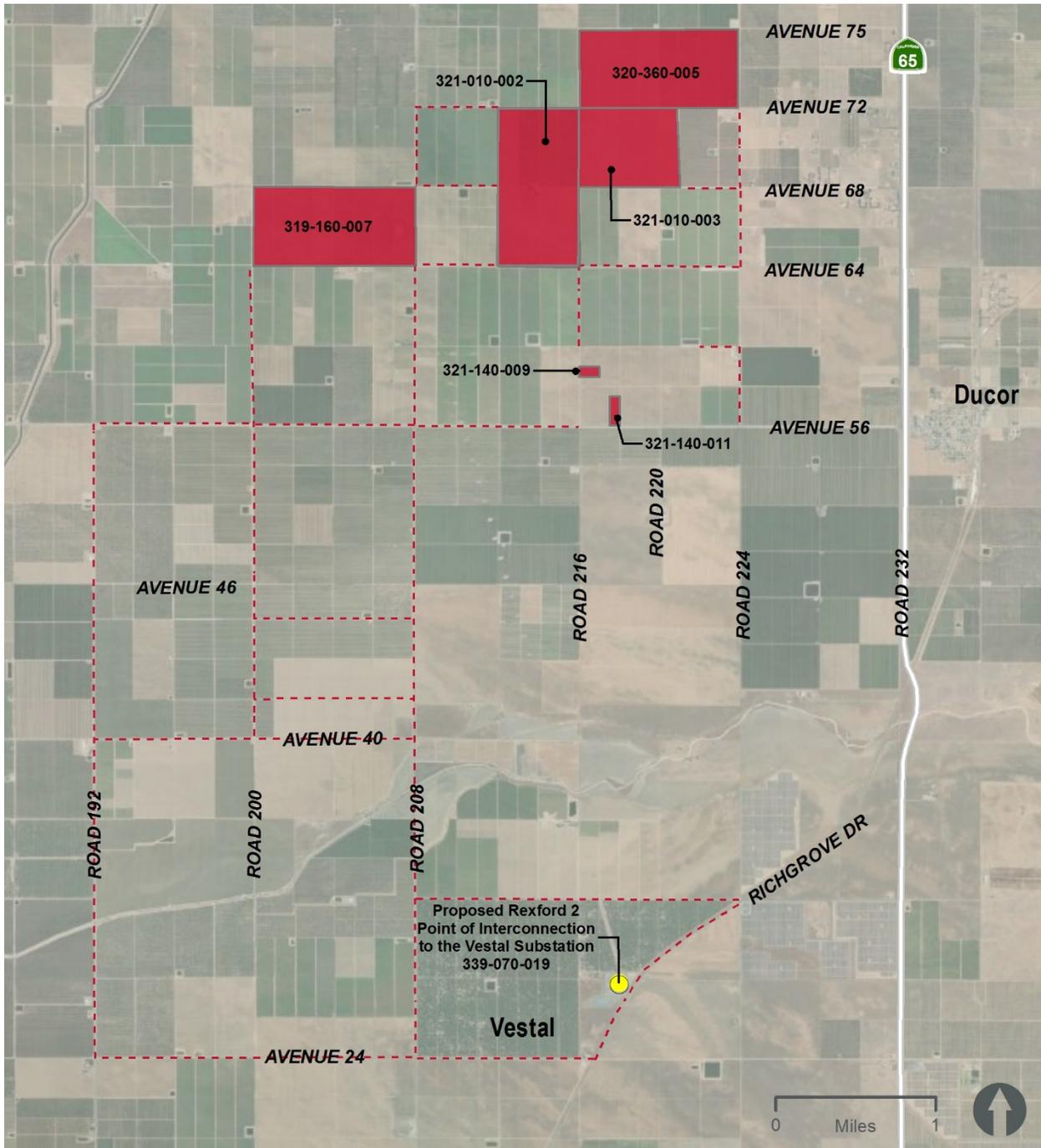
Figure 2. Regional Location Map



LEGEND

- Rexford 2 Project Site
- Rexford 2 Transmission and/or Collector Line

Figure 3. Vicinity Map



LEGEND

- Rexford 2 Project Site
- Rexford 2 Transmission and/or Collector Line
- Proposed Rexford 2 Point of Interconnection to the Vestal Substation

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The SEIR will evaluate, among other things, the probable direct and cumulative environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of the solar energy facility and associated infrastructure. Mitigation measures will be recommended, where feasible, to mitigate potentially significant impacts. The proposed Project will be evaluated on its own merits, resource specific facts, and determinations; therefore, a project specific environmental document will be prepared. The following issues are proposed for analysis in the SEIR:

Aesthetics

The Project is located in a generally rural area comprised of agricultural lands and surrounded by existing agricultural uses including vineyards, orchards, dry-land grain, irrigated crops, and grazing lands and scattered rural residences and agricultural-related structures. The placement of PV solar panels and associated structures on the Project site would alter the existing character of the Project site and vicinity. Residents and travelers on adjacent roads would observe alterations to the existing agricultural landscape. The SEIR will provide an assessment of Project impacts to visual resources, as well as lighting and glare impacts.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

The Project site is designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Farmland of Local Importance by the California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. The Project site is surrounded by existing agricultural uses including vineyards, orchards, dry-land grain, irrigated crops, and grazing lands. The majority of the Project site is under Williamson Act contracts. The SEIR will provide an assessment of potential Project related impacts to agricultural resources.

Air Quality / Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The SEIR will describe regional and local air quality in the vicinity of the proposed Project site and evaluate impacts to air quality associated with the construction and operation of the Project. An air quality study will be prepared to establish baseline conditions, and project and cumulative impacts. The proposed Project's estimated air emissions will be compared to emissions thresholds of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The SEIR will describe existing air quality conditions within the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin and will evaluate the proposed Project's potential air quality impacts. Potential air quality emissions include fugitive dust and combustion exhaust. The SEIR will also include a discussion of greenhouse gas emissions and the proposed Project's contribution to potential cumulative impacts on global climate change.

Biological Resources

Construction of the proposed Project may modify biotic habitats used by sensitive plant and wildlife species. As such, site development may be regulated by state or federal agencies, subject to the provisions of CEQA, and/or covered by policies and ordinances of Tulare County. A biological resources report will be prepared to address issues related to: 1) the potential for sensitive biological resources occurring on the Project site; 2) the federal, state, and local laws regulating such resources; and 3) mitigation measures that may be required to reduce the magnitude of anticipated impacts and/or comply with permit requirements of state and federal resource agencies. The proposed Project's potential to impact biological resources will be analyzed in the SEIR.

Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources

Although the proposed Project will be constructed on previously disturbed land, it cannot be definitively concluded that cultural resources are absent. A search of the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) was conducted. The records search identified nine cultural resources documented within a 0.5-mile radius of the Project site. Four of the nine resources are recorded within the Project site.

A Sacred Land File (SLF) Search was submitted to the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) on December 10, 2020. The NAHC responded on January 12, 2021 stating that the SLF search was completed with “negative” results. The NAHC provided a list of tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the Project area. The County will fulfill its obligations consistent with tribal consultation pursuant to Assembly Bill 52 using the list provided by the NAHC. Depending upon responses from tribal consultation, a cultural resources evaluation may be prepared for this Project. The SEIR will examine the proposed Project’s potential to affect cultural resources and Tribal cultural resources.

Energy

The SEIR will include an analysis of the Project’s potential to result in impacts on energy conservation and/or consumption.

Geology/Soils and Mineral Resources

Initial construction, buildout, and operation of the proposed Project on the Project site could result in impacts related to geotechnical hazards, including seismicity of the area, potential for liquefaction and subsidence, potential for soil erosion, soil stability characteristics, and shrink/swell potential of site soils, as applicable.

Mineral resources located in south Tulare County are predominantly sand and gravel resources near waterways. The White River is mapped as MRZ-3a, which are areas considered to have a moderate potential for the discovery of economic mineral deposits. A segment of one of the proposed transmission/collector line alignments under consideration encroaches into the MRZ-3a zone.

It is currently unknown whether the proposed Project site soils have the potential to contain paleontological resources. If such resources exist on the site, ground-disturbing activities could result in potentially significant impacts. A geological evaluation of the proposed Project site will be conducted to establish baseline, project, and cumulative impacts related to geology, soils, mineral resources, and paleontological resources.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The temporary construction activities associated with the proposed Project, which would involve operation of heavy off-road equipment, on-road trucks, and construction worker commute trips, would generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. However, as a solar facility, the proposed Project is expected to displace traditional sources of electricity production that involves combustion energy sources (e.g., burning coal, fuel oil, or natural gas). As such, the provision of solar energy by the proposed Project would produce GHG-free electricity that is anticipated to offset GHGs that would otherwise be generated by traditional sources of electricity. The potential impacts associated with GHG emissions generated during construction of the Project and the potential GHG offsets resulting from operation of the Project will be evaluated in the SEIR. The proposed Project’s estimated greenhouse gas emissions will be evaluated for consistency with

the Tulare County 2030 General Plan, the Tulare County Climate Action Plan, and the State's 2017 Scoping Plan.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

There are no known hazards or hazardous materials located within the proposed Project site, nor is the proposed Project site located on a Cortese List site. The SEIR will evaluate the potential for the proposed Project to result in, or be affected by, impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials.

Hydrology/Water Quality

According to the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (Map Numbers 06107C1975E, 06107C1950E, 06107C2325E), the majority of the Project site is located within Zone X. Zone X is an area determined to be outside the 0.2 percent annual chance floodplain. Portions of the transmission/collector line near the White River and an unnamed tributary are mapped as Zone A. Zone A is an area subject to a 1 percent or greater annual chance of flooding in any given year. The SEIR will analyze the proposed Project's impacts on hydrology and water quality.

Land Use/Planning

The SEIR will describe the proposed Project's potential effects on existing and planned uses. The majority of the Project site is zoned as AE-20 (Exclusive Agriculture – 20 acre minimum) and AE-40 (Exclusive Agriculture – 40 acre minimum). The Project site is designated as Valley Agriculture by the Tulare County General Plan. These General Plan and zoning designations expressly allow the installation of renewable solar power with a Special Use Permit; however, the SEIR will provide a discussion of relevant local plans and policies because conflicts could potentially result in environmental impacts.

Noise

The SEIR will describe the noise levels associated with proposed Project construction and operations and will compare these levels to applicable noise thresholds to determine whether the proposed Project would result in a significant noise impact. A noise study will be prepared to establish baseline, project, and cumulative impacts.

Population/Housing

The SEIR will evaluate the Project's effect on population and housing in the local area based on estimations of Project employment and distribution of the employees by place of residence.

Public Services

The SEIR will evaluate the proposed Project's potential to create an adverse impact to schools, and will also evaluate effects on local police and fire services along with parks and regional recreational facilities.

Recreation

Although unlikely due to the nature of the proposed Project, the increase in use of parks and other recreational facilities near the vicinity of the Project will be analyzed in the SEIR.

Transportation/Traffic

The SEIR will evaluate the proposed Project's impact on regional and local transportation facilities based on a transportation analysis that will assess both construction-related impacts (heavy truck trips and construction worker trips), as well as operational impacts (employee and visitor trips). Impacts to roadways

would be limited to construction-related activities of the Project. Construction-related vehicles would primarily access the Project site from existing local roadways, and may also utilize county roads (e.g., Avenue 56 and Richgrove Drive). The site will not be accessed directly from State Route 65. The Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update considers Level of Service (LOS) D as the minimum acceptable LOS standard during peak hours for County roadways and intersections. According to Caltrans' SR 65 Transportation Concept Report dated June 2014, the acceptable Concept LOS is C for SR 65. A traffic impact study will be prepared to establish a baseline, and to evaluate project and cumulative impacts for the proposed Project in consultation with the County of Tulare, the Tulare County Association of Governments, and Caltrans. Similarly, the SEIR will examine alternative traffic distribution.

Utilities/Service Systems

The proposed Project would not require extension/connection to urban services such as potable water service, wastewater treatment, and stormwater drainage. However, the SEIR will analyze drainage, water, wastewater, natural gas, and electrical systems and the proposed Project's impact on these systems. The SEIR will also describe the existing solid waste facilities that serve the Project site.

Wildfire

According to the Fire Hazard Severity Zones map published by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire), the Project site is not located within a State Responsibility Area classified as having a very high potential for wildfires. However, the area immediately east of the Project site, east of State Route 65 is within a State Responsibility Area classified as having moderate potential for wildfires. The SEIR will evaluate the proposed Project's impacts related to wildfire.

GROWTH INDUCEMENT

The SEIR will evaluate the proposed Project's potential for growth inducement resulting from the construction and operation of the solar energy facility, as well as new demand for housing, and goods and services. The effect of primary and secondary increases in employment and economic activity will be discussed.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The SEIR will discuss the incremental contribution of the proposed Project to cumulative effects of other past, current, and planned and reasonably foreseeable Projects in the vicinity. The summary of projects method will be used where applicable. Also, to the extent feasible, the Cumulative Impacts section will quantify the degree of severity of any cumulative impact.

ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED IN THE EIR

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the SEIR will describe a reasonable range of alternative to the proposed Project that are capable of meeting most of the proposed Project's objectives, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed Project. The SEIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the Lead Agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. The SEIR will also provide an analysis of the No Project Alternative.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Interested individuals, groups, and agencies may provide to the County of Tulare Resource Management Agency, Planning Branch, written comments on topics to be addressed in the SEIR for the proposed Project. Because of time limits mandated by state law, comments should be provided no later than **5:00 p.m on**

*Notice of Preparation and Scoping Meeting
Rexford 2 Solar Farm Project
March 16, 2022*

April 15, 2022. Agencies that will need to use the SEIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed Project should provide the name of a staff contact person. Please send all comments to:

**Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner
Tulare County Resource Management Agency
Economic Development and Planning Branch
5961 South Mooney Boulevard
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