



COUNTY OF COLUSA

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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July 31, 2020

NOTICE OF PREPARATION DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

To: State Clearinghouse, Agencies and Interested Parties

From: Colusa County Community Development Department 220
12th Street, Colusa CA, 95932

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Proposed Janus Solar PV (Solar Farm), Use Permit Application No. 20-01 (Project).

The Purpose of This Notice of Preparation

The purpose of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to comply with the California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15082. The Colusa County Community Development Department (the Department) is the Lead Agency for the project. The Use Permit application triggers environmental review and County staff has determined that an EIR is the appropriate level of review.

The County is requesting input for the preparation of EIR regarding the scope and content of environmental concerns from your agency's area of responsibility. The EIR will be utilized by various agencies for subsequent approvals. Please provide appropriate contact information for the person(s) in your agency for consultation regarding this project that is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The NOP is available on the County website at:

<https://www.countyofcolusa.org/25/Community-Development-Department>

Project Location

The project would be located on private property currently used for grazing. The project site includes three parcels with Assessor Parcel Numbers 018-050-005, 018-050-006, and 018-050-013, which are 630.5, 255.7, and 137.7 acres in size, respectively, for a total area of 1,023.9 acres. These parcels are located at 1958 and 1961 Spring Valley Road. The site is more generally located in Township 14 North, Range 4 West, Sections 1, 2 and 3. The project would connect to the Cortina Substation, which is located on Walnut Drive approximately 3 miles northeast of the project site, as shown on Figure 1 (see Attachment A). The project is approximately 6.5 miles southwest of the city of Williams. State Highway 20 runs as close as 1 mile from the project site, to the north and west.

Several alignments for the 60 kilovolt (kV) generation tie (gen-tie) line from the project site to the Cortina Substation have been initially identified. The first would be located on the Colusa County's right-of-way (ROW) on Walnut Drive and Spring Valley Road and the second on private land and Walnut Drive ROW from the project site to the point of interconnection (POI) at the Cortina Substation. Both initial options are shown on Site Plan Option 1 and Site Plan Option 2 included as Attachment A. The gen-tie line may be overhead, underground, or a combination of both.

Project Setting

The project site is located in a transitional area of Colusa County between the intensively farmed valley floor and the westerly foothills of the California Coast Range. Topographic survey is underway and has not been completed. Preliminary maps show that site topography varies from relatively flat to gently rolling hills with elevation changes of approximately 150 feet.

The Project site historically has been used for grazing activities and has cattle ranch facilities located in the northwest corner. These facilities include a single family residence and accessory ranching buildings (approximately 5 acres). The area immediately surrounding the homes site and ranching buildings includes an area of un-vegetated agricultural land and existing corrals (approximately 225.4 acres), all of which are outside the project boundary and would be retained by the landowner as a residence and for cattle ranching, as shown on CUP Site Plan Option 1 and CUP Site Plan Option 2, provided as Attachment A.

The Project site is under Williamson Act contract. While energy production is considered a compatible use under the County's Williamson Act Program, due to the size and scope of the project the County believes it is appropriate to cancel that portion of the contract affected by the project.

Project Description

The project will utilize approximately 650 acres of the 1,023.9 acre project site. Construction is planned for the end of 2022. The project will be capable of producing 80 MWs of electricity for distribution on the PG&E grid. A more detailed description is provided as follows:

Solar Arrays and Inverter Blocks - The project solar PV power generation facilities include solar arrays and inverter blocks, as shown on the Site Plans, included as Attachment A. The project's solar PV modules (also known as panels) would convert solar energy into direct current (DC) electricity. By design, the solar PV panels absorb sunlight to generate electrical output by being manufactured with anti-reflective glass that also minimizes potential for glare. The PV modules would be mounted together in arrays on a modular tracking system such that the angle of the panels varies throughout the day. Each tracking assembly would consist of galvanized steel posts on which the frames which range between 6 and 10 feet above grade, depending on the topography, as shown on the Site Plans, included as Attachment A. The project would also include inverter blocks to convert the DC electricity from the solar arrays to alternating current (AC) electricity. The inverter blocks would be located along the internal access roads within the solar arrays. Each inverter block would consist of enclosed inverter stations and a transformer approximately 10 feet in height above grade set on concrete or steel foundations, as shown on the Site Plans, included as Attachment A.

Related and Supporting Facilities - The project-related supporting facilities include underground electrical collection lines, an on-site substation, a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), a 60-kV transmission line to the point of interconnection (POI), an operations and maintenance (O&M) facility, internal service roads, security fencing, gates and lighting, a construction laydown yard, and other temporary construction areas.

Electrical Collection System - The electrical collection system would be installed underground. Underground AC electrical cables would be arranged in several branch circuits to connect the electrical output of the energy facility to the on-site substation. Cable lengths would vary with the distance of the solar arrays to the on-site substation.

Substation - The project substation would be located on an approximately 1-acre area in a corner of the project site within the perimeter fence. The substation would include a generator step-up transformer to increase the output voltage from the module blocks (34.5 kV) to the voltage of the 60-kV transmission line, protective relay and metering equipment, utility and customer revenue metering, and a station service

transformer that would provide power to the substation and its weatherproof control house.

Energy Storage System - The BESS would be located next to the substation within a 5-acre area. The BESS would consist of lithium ion battery technology that would be used to either control electric frequency or store energy from the solar project. The BESS would be housed in standard shipping containers or inside an air-conditioned building.

Transmission Line and Point of Interconnection - The 60-kV transmission line would extend from the project site approximately 2 to 4 miles (depending on the alignment) along the County ROW or a combination of County ROW and private land to reach the Walnut Drive substation. The line would be installed on existing, retrofitted or new poles, underground or a combination of the two.

Operations and Maintenance Facility - The O&M facility would include office space, storage, and sanitary facilities. The sanitary facilities would drain to an on-site septic system. Water would be supplied by either on-site wells or trucked to the site. An equipment storage area and a gravel parking lot for employees, visitors, and emergency response vehicles would be located adjacent to the container. The O&M facility would be located with the substation.

Internal Service Roads - Internal service roads would be built to access the project, for ingress and egress to the project site, to individual project components, and between the solar array rows to facilitate installation, maintenance, and cleaning of the solar panels. Roads throughout the arrays would provide access to the inverter equipment pads and substations and would be graveled. The roads would be 12 feet wide. A summary of the components and required acreage is listed in the Table Below.

Security Fencing, Gates, and Lighting - The solar array perimeter would be bordered by a 6- to 8-foot-tall woven wire or chain link fence. This type of fence would provide necessary security for the project while also being friendly to wildlife. A locked security gate would be located at the site entrance

Construction Laydown Yards - One main, temporary, construction laydown yard is included in the project. The laydown yard is approximately 3 acres in size and located within the project site. The laydown yard would be graded with a gravel surface and temporarily fenced to provide storage for supplies, vehicles, and equipment during construction.

Potential Environmental Impacts

Pursuant to CEQA and CCR Section 15064, the discussion of potential environmental impacts in the EIR shall be focused on impacts identified by the County as potentially significant. The EIR will evaluate cumulative impacts of the project when considered in conjunction with other related past, current, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The lead agency has initially identified

the following environmental considerations as potentially significant effects of the Project:

Aesthetics – The project is located in a rural area surrounded by existing agricultural uses consisting of grazing lands and scattered residential buildings and accessory buildings. The placement of PV solar panels and associated structures on the project site would alter the existing character of the site and surrounding area. The project site is divided by Spring Valley Road with majority of the facilities being located to the east of the road. Residents and travelers and residents in the area would observe alterations to the existing landscape. The EIR will provide an assessment of project impacts to visual resources, as well as glint and glare impacts.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources - The site is unirrigated and farming activities are restricted to ranching. The entire project site is designated as Farmland of Local Importance by the California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. The project site is surrounded by grazing land. The project site is under Williamson Act contract. The EIR will provide an assessment of potential project related impacts to agricultural resources including potential cancellation of the Williamson Act contract.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions - The EIR 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 Colusa County Air Pollution Control District and California Air Resources Board. The EIR will describe existing air quality conditions within the Sacramento 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 EIR 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, in addition to being subject to the provisions of CEQA. A preliminary biological assessment special status species review was completed in November of 2019 and was provided with the application. The assessment indicated that the project site primarily consists of non-native grasslands (approximately 706.1 acres); however, smaller areas of disturbed potential wetland (approximately 4.7 acres), disturbed riparian woodland (approximately 4.2 acres), and native forbs (approximately 21.9 acres) are present on the project site. The project site contains several ephemeral drainages and riverine drainages, all of which have been heavily disturbed due to historical and existing ranching activities. The preliminary biological assessment also determined that certain wildlife may utilize the habitats found on site, including raptor and bat species. One invertebrate species, the Vernal Pool Tadpole Shrimp, is considered to have moderate potential to utilize the site due to the potential wetlands. Additional plant and wildlife studies and a wetland delineation study will be prepared, and the Project's potential impacts to biological resources will be further analyzed in the EIR. A wetland delineation will be conducted to identify waters within the project boundary that are within federal or state jurisdiction.

Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources - The County has begun the AB 52 process by notifying seven tribes, six from the NAHC lists and another who has requested consultation in the past. A records search, tribal consultation, and a cultural pedestrian survey will be conducted for the project site.. There are no known historic architectural resources on the site. The EIR will examine the proposed project's potential to affect cultural resources and tribal cultural resources.

Energy - The EIR 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 in the County are general related to gravel along existing waterways. While no significant waterways exist on the project site gravel resources have the potential to be present due to the proximity of the Coast Range and possible alluvial fans.

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. geological

evaluation of the proposed project site will be conducted to establish baseline, project conditions, and 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 EIR. The proposed project's estimated greenhouse gas emissions will be evaluated for consistency with the Colusa County 2012 General Plan Update and 2017 State Scoping Plan.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials - There are no known hazards or hazardous materials located within the proposed project site according to the Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment provide in the application. The EIR 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 06011C0625F and 06011C0650F), 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. There are locations along drainages that are identified as Zone A and are considered to be with the 100 Year Flood Plain. The EIR will analyze the proposed project's impacts on hydrology and water quality.

Land Use/Planning - The EIR will describe the proposed project's potential effects on existing and planned uses on and around the project site. The General Plan land use designation is Upland Agricultural. The site is zoned as Foothill Agriculture (FA), which has a minimum parcel size of 80 acres. The designations are intended to promote and support agricultural uses such as grazing. The FA zoning designation allows the installation of energy production for off-site use with a Use Permit. The EIR will provide a discussion of relevant local plans and policies because conflicts with other uses, including agricultural operations, could potentially result in environmental impacts.

Noise - The EIR will describe the noise levels associated with proposed project construction and operations 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 EIR 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 EIR 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 - Recreational activities such as hunting in the vicinity of the project will be analyzed in the EIR.

Transportation/Traffic - The EIR 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). Construction-related vehicles would primarily access the project site from State Route 20, Walnut Drive and Spring Valley Road. The EIR will evaluate traffic safety, road damage impacts, and agricultural aircraft operations.

Utilities and Service Systems - The proposed project would not require extension/connection to urban services such as potable water service, wastewater treatment, and storm-water drainage. However, the EIR will analyze drainage, wastewater, natural gas, and electrical systems and the proposed project's impact on these systems. The EIR also will analyze water supply for construction activities and solar facility maintenance. A water supply assessment will be conducted for the EIR analysis. The EIR will also describe the existing solid waste facilities that serve the project site.

Wildfire - The proposed project is/is not located within a Moderate fire hazard severity zone The EIR will evaluate the potential impacts of the project related to Wildfire.

GROWTH INDUCEMENT - The EIR will evaluate the proposed project's potential for growth inducement resulting from the construction and operation of the solar energy and battery 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 EIR 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.

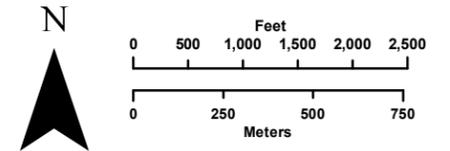
ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED IN THE EIR - In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project that are capable of meeting most of the proposed project's objectives, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed project. The EIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the Lead Agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. The EIR 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 Colusa Community Development Department, written comments on topics to be addressed in the EIR for the proposed project. Because of time limits mandated by state law, comments should be provided no later than 5:00 p.m. September 1, 2020. Agencies that will need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed project should provide the name of a staff contact person. Please send all comments to:

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Colusa County Community Development Department
220 12th Street, Colusa CA, 95932
(530) 458-0480
kjohanns@countyofcolsa.org

CUP Site Plan Option 1 Colusa Co., CA

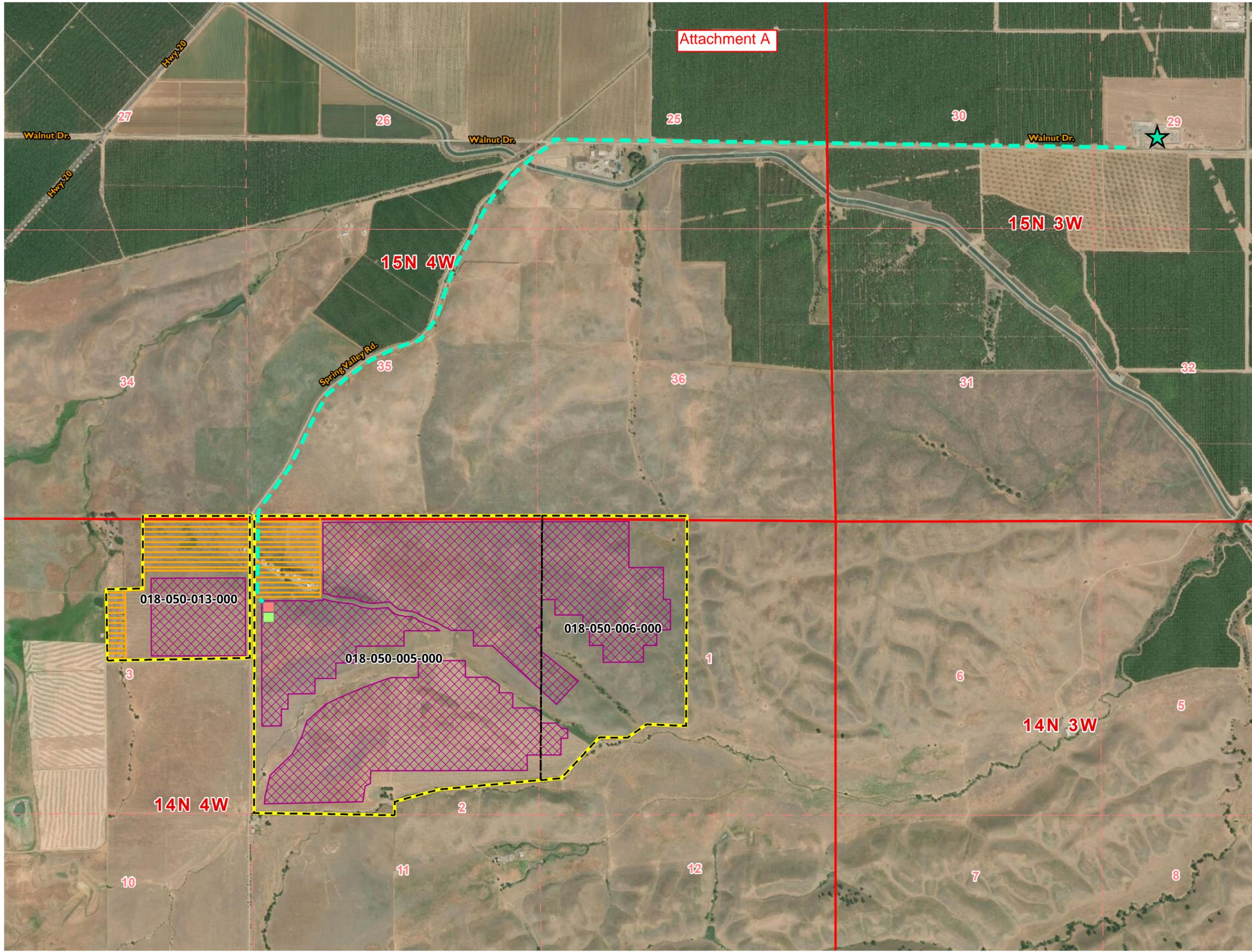


-  Cortina Substation
-  Gen-tie (40 Ft. Wide Transmission Easement; Opt. 1)
-  Project Substation (Opt. 1)
-  Project BESS (Opt. 1)
-  Solar Panel Layout (Approx. 607 Ac)
-  Favero's Cattle Ranch Operations
-  Janus Solar Site
-  Project Parcels (Approx. 1,018 Ac)
-  Township
-  Section

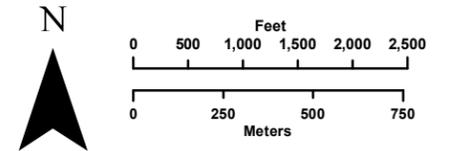
Date: April 15, 2020
 Map Scale: 1:20,000
 Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 10N



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CUP Site Plan Option 2 Colusa Co., CA



- Cortina Substation
- Gen-tie (40 Ft. Wide Transmission Easement; Opt. 2)
- Project Substation (Opt. 2)
- Project BESS (Opt. 2)
- Solar Panel Layout (Approx. 607 Ac)
- Favero's Cattle Ranch Operations
- Janus Solar Site
- Project Parcels (Approx. 1,018 Ac)
- Township
- Section

Date: April 15, 2020
 Map Scale: 1:20,000
 Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 10N



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