

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT  
AND PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING FOR  
THE LUNA VALLEY SOLAR PROJECT**

**TO:** Responsible and Trustee Agencies, other interested agencies, and members of the public

**FROM:** County of Fresno, Department of Public Works and Planning  
Development Services and Capital Projects Division  
2220 Tulare Street, Sixth Floor  
Fresno, CA 93721

**SUBJECT:** Notice of Preparation of Draft Environmental Impact Report No. 7813 for the Luna Valley Solar Project

**Date:** August 28, 2020

**Action:** The County of Fresno (County) will be the Lead Agency pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and will be responsible for preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. The EIR will analyze potential impacts of the requested Conditional Use Permit for the Luna Valley Solar Project (EIR #7813).

**Project Title:** Luna Valley Solar Project, Unclassified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3671

**Project Applicant:** Luna Valley Solar I, LLC

**Project Summary:**

Luna Valley Solar I, LLC (the Applicant) has submitted to the County an Unclassified Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application to construct, operate, and ultimately decommission an approximately 200-megawatt alternating current (MW<sub>AC</sub>) photovoltaic (PV) energy generation project, energy storage system (ESS), and related facilities and infrastructure, to be known as the Luna Valley Solar Project (Project). The Project would generate and deliver solar-generated power to the California electrical grid via PG&E's existing Tranquillity Switching Station.

The approximately 1,300-acre Project site is on Westlands Water District-owned lands in western Fresno County. It generally is bounded by State Route (SR) 33 (also known as South Derrick Avenue) to the east, West Dinuba Avenue to the south, South Bernardino Avenue to the west, and West South Avenue to the north. West Manning Avenue bisects the Project site from east to west; South Ohio Avenue, which is a private unimproved road, bisects the site from north to south. Access to the site would be provided from South Ohio Avenue. The nearest communities to the Project site include Tranquillity, Mendota, and San Joaquin. Westlands Water District acquired the property as part of a 2002 settlement agreement in the *Sumner Peck Ranch et al. v. Bureau of Reclamation et al.* lawsuit, which prohibits irrigation on subject parcels. The Project site has been dry-farmed for rangeland grasses or lain fallow for at least the past 10 years. A more detailed description is provided below.

The Applicant's Project Description and site plan as well as a location map, are available for review at the following locations:

- Fresno County Public Works and Planning Department, 2220 Tulare Street, Fresno, CA 93721
- Fresno County website: [www.co.fresno.ca.us/EIR](http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/EIR)

Please note that the 2220 Tulare Street office is currently closed to the public and arrangements must be made with Jeremy Shaw (contact info below) to review documents at this address. Documents will also be available on the County's website.

**Written Comments:**

As required by Section 15082 and CEQA Guidelines, this Notice of Preparation (“NOP”) has been prepared and distributed to solicit comments from potential Responsible and Trustee Agencies and other public agencies so that Project-related concerns relevant to each agency’s statutory responsibilities in connection with the Project can be addressed in the EIR, as well as any related issues from interested parties other than potential Responsible and Trustee Agencies, including other agencies and affected members of the public. The EIR will be the environmental document of reference for Responsible and Trustee Agencies when considering subsequent discretionary approvals.

The County requests that any potential Responsible or Trustee Agencies responding to this NOP reply in a manner consistent with Section 15082(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, which allows for submittal of any comments in response to this notice no later than 30 days after receipt of the NOP. Comments in response to this NOP will be accepted through 5 p.m., Monday, September 28, 2020. Written comments should be addressed to the person noted below.

Please send your written comments to:

Attn: Jeremy Shaw  
Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning  
Development Services and Capital Projects Division  
2220 Tulare Street, Sixth Floor  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Phone: (559) 600-4207 Fax: (559) 600-4200  
Email: [jshaw@FresnoCountyCA.gov](mailto:jshaw@FresnoCountyCA.gov)

Please reference EIR #7813, Luna Valley Solar Project. Please include your name, address, and phone number and/or email address so that we may contact you for clarification, if necessary. Comments may also be submitted online at [www.co.fresno.ca.us/EIR](http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/EIR).

**Public Scoping Meeting:**

The CEQA process encourages comments and questions from the public throughout the planning process. Consistent with the California Public Resources Code and Section 15083(c)(1), (2)(A) to (D) of the CEQA Guidelines, a Public Scoping Meeting will be held to solicit public and agency comments on the scope and content of the Draft EIR. Oral and/or written comments also may be presented at the Public Scoping Meeting. The Public Scoping Meeting will be held online on:

Date: Thursday, September 10, 2020

Time: 6 p.m.

Link: <http://bit.ly/lunavalley> or call-in: US: 888 788 0099 (Toll Free), Webinar ID: 821 2426 9045

Signature: 

Date: 8.26.20

**Project Location:**

The Project site is located on Westlands Water District-owned lands in unincorporated western Fresno County. It generally is bounded by State Route 33 (SR 33, also known as South Derrick Avenue) to the east, Dinuba Avenue to the south, South Bernardino Avenue to the west and West South Avenue to the north. West Manning Avenue bisects the site from east to west; South Ohio Avenue bisects it from north to south. Site access would be provided from S. Ohio Avenue. The nearest communities to the site include Tranquillity (approximately 9 miles to the east-northeast), Mendota (approximately 10 miles to the north), and San Joaquin (approximately 10 miles to the east). Interstate 5 is approximately 11 miles to the west and south. See Figure 1, *Luna Valley Solar Project Site Location*.

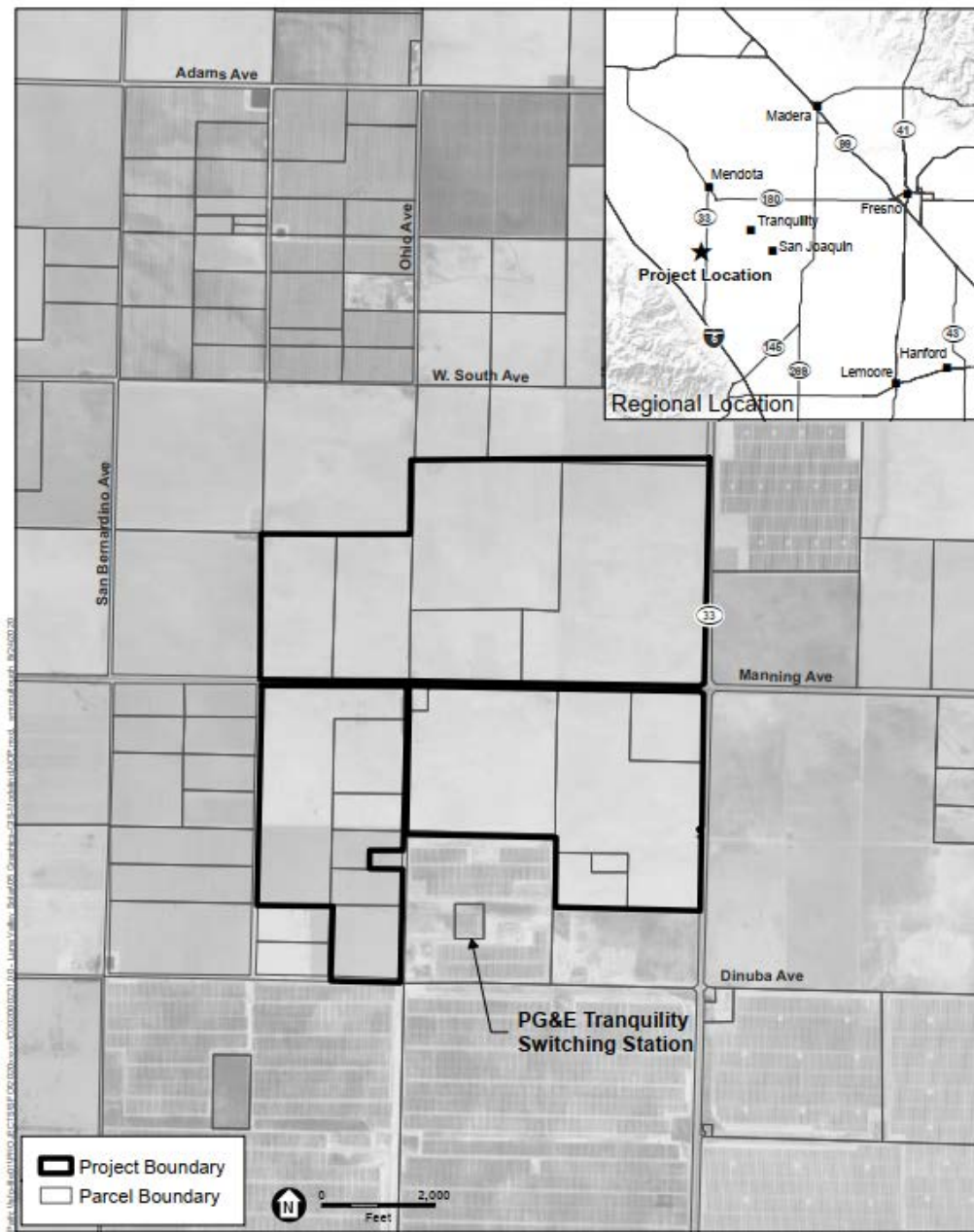
**Physical Setting:**

The Project site encompasses 16 parcels currently owned by either the Applicant or the Westlands Water District and is under a purchase option agreement with the Applicant, who would buy the land prior to starting Project construction. The Project site consists of disturbed agricultural land that currently is dry-framed for rangeland grasses or lays fallow. Westlands Water District acquired the property as part of a 2002 settlement agreement in the *Sumner Peck Ranch et al. v. Bureau of Reclamation et al.* lawsuit, which prohibits irrigation. Together with relatively high levels of selenium and a water table that does not provide sufficient drainage for commercially irrigated crops, the non-irrigation covenants restrict what agricultural use may be made of the property. One non-operational well is located on the Project site (parcel 028-60-72ST). Residual subsurface oil pipeline infrastructure associated with Chevron's former pipeline operations in Fresno County also may be present on the Project site. The nearest residences are located approximately 1,500 feet from the southeast corner of the Project site along SR 33.

Existing agricultural uses, including non-irrigated fields owned mostly by the Westlands Water District, generally surround the Project site. Multiple solar energy facilities also are operating or under development in the immediate surrounding area, including the existing Tranquillity Solar Project and proposed Scarlet and Sonrisa solar projects. Interstate 5, the California Aqueduct, the San Joaquin Airport, and Tranquillity, Mendota, and San Joaquin also are located nearby.

**Land Use Designation:**

The Project site consists of disturbed agricultural land designated as Agriculture in the Fresno County General Plan, and zoned AE-20 (Exclusive Agricultural, 20-acre minimum parcel size) pursuant to the Ordinance Code of the County of Fresno, Zoning Map. The County Code (Section 816.2) permits electric transmission substations and electric distribution stations on parcels zoned Exclusive Agricultural, subject to Director Review and Approval; however, said use is being processed under the more intensive Unclassified Conditional Use Permit application required for solar facilities. The designation protects the general welfare of the agricultural community from encroachments of unrelated agricultural uses that, by their nature, would be injurious to the physical and economic well-being of the agricultural district. Uses in the AE-20 zone district are limited to primarily agricultural uses and other activities compatible with agricultural uses. The Project site consists of approximately 1,300 acres of Farmland of Local Importance as designated by the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. The Project site is not subject to a Williamson Act contract.



Luna Valley Solar Project

**Figure 1**  
Project Location



**Major Components of the Project:**

The Project consists of two major components: The Solar Facility and the PG&E infrastructure to interconnect the Project to the grid at the existing Tranquillity Switching Station. The Solar Facility would consist of solar PV modules (or panels) and support structures, and electrical inverters and transformers. Related facilities and infrastructure would include an on-site substation, energy storage system, generation tie (gen-tie) lines, access roads, perimeter fencing, telecommunications infrastructure, a meteorological data collection system, signage, lighting, stormwater facilities, and an operations and maintenance building supported by a septic system and leach field. Water needs could be served via recommencement of use of the existing on-site well or by the

Westlands Water District. The solar modules at the site would operate during daylight 7 days a week, 365 days a year, and would generate up to 200 MW of alternating current energy at the point of electrical grid interconnection. The Project would include an energy storage system.

To interconnect the Project, PG&E would extend the footprint of its existing Tranquillity Switching Station by approximately 100 feet to the north, and would construct a new, approximately 1,300-foot 230 kV transmission line to connect the existing switching station to a structure to be built within the Project site. This would include approximately four new tubular poles of up-to 140 feet in height. Fiber optic line also would be provided. The fiber optic lines could be co-located on the transmission line poles or could require separate, adjacent poles. Potential environmental impacts of this proposed PG&E infrastructure will be analyzed as part of the Project.

**Alternatives to be Analyzed in the EIR:**

In accordance with Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines, the Draft EIR will assess a range of reasonable alternatives to the Project. The range of alternatives to be addressed will include a No Project Alternative as well as other alternatives that would attain most of the basic objectives of the Project while avoiding or reducing any of its significant environmental effects. Potential alternatives will be identified during the coordinated consultation and scoping process.

**Potential Environmental Impacts:**

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(d), the County has determined that this Project could result in one or more significant impacts on the physical environment, thereby necessitating the preparation of an EIR, and so has not prepared an Initial Study.

The EIR will analyze all environmental issues identified in the Environmental Checklist provided in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G (which issues are listed below), after having first established the environmental setting, or baseline, for the environmental analysis. The EIR will identify any potential significant direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Project and alternatives related to:

- Aesthetic quality and views, particularly in the vicinity of existing communities;
- Agriculture and forestry resources, including the use of property now in non-irrigated agricultural use to a renewable energy generation use for the duration of the permit term;
- Air quality and noise in the vicinity of sensitive receptors, particularly during construction;
- The intersection of energy use, transportation, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions;
- Biological resources, including species and habitats, based on database queries, field surveys, and agency consultations, if required;
- Cultural and tribal cultural resources that could be disturbed during construction, based on record searches and field surveys;
- Geology and soils, paleontological resources, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and related considerations and constraints;
- The Project's relationship to land use and planning, as well as lands subject to special resources management activities, such as mineral resources and recreation;
- Population and housing, public services, and utilities and service systems;
- Wildfire, including the potential to exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose people to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire; and
- Growth inducement, particularly in relation to existing, adopted development plans for Fresno County.