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Notice of Preparation

Gibson Solar Farm Project

October 13, 2021

To: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

Introduction

Yolo County intends to prepare a Focused Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Gibson Solar Farm Project (ZF2020-0043). Yolo County is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency, and, as such will accordingly prepare the Draft and Final EIR to comply with CEQA.

Gibson Renewables, LLC is proposing to construct and operate a solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating facility with the capacity to generate up to 20 megawatts alternating current (MWac) of renewable electrical energy during periods of production.

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR provides:

- A brief description of the proposed Project;
- A list of potential Project impacts;
- The time and location of the public scoping meeting;
- Information on how to provide comments; and
- Instructions for obtaining additional Project information.

Yolo County will conduct a 31-day scoping comment period. The comment period starts on Wednesday, October 13, 2021, and ends on Friday, November 12, 2021. During the public comment period, agencies, organizations, and interested parties may submit comments on the scope and content of the EIR (e.g., the proposed action, alternatives, and environmental issues, as examples). The lead agency will consider all comments received in the preparation of the EIR.

Project Description and Location

Gibson Renewables, LLC is seeking to construct and operate a solar PV electric-generating facility with the capacity to generate up to 20 MWac of renewable electrical energy. The Gibson Solar Farm Project (Project) would also include a 6.5 MWac/26 megawatt-hour (MWh) Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). The facility would be designed to operate year-round and would generate electricity during the daylight hours when local electricity demand is typically at its peak. The electricity generated by the PV field will be used in part for charging the batteries and the remaining energy generated by the PV field will be delivered to the grid. The batteries will discharge the stored energy during a 4-hour period (generally off-peak) providing 26 MWh of renewable energy. The major components of the facility include PV modules,

single-axis sun tracking support structures, BESS, and electronic/electrical equipment to convert the electricity from the PV modules from direct current (DC) to alternating current (AC) electricity and transfer the electricity to the Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) Madison Substation via a short generation tie line (gen-tie line), which will be either underground or overhead, that connects the plant to existing overhead 21-kilovolt (kV) distribution line.

The Project would be constructed on a 147.42-acre parcel of land, 0.6 miles west of Madison in unincorporated Yolo County. The PV modules themselves would cover approximately 34.4 acres, and the area used for access roads, equipment, and other fixtures would require another 5.5 acres. Hence, the total Project footprint would cover 39.9 acres. Because spacing between the parallel arrays is about 14 feet—to minimize inter-row shading of the sun—more than 107 acres would be available for use as a stable grassland/pollinator plant substrate. The Project would be located on a parcel that is currently in agricultural production and is surrounded by orchards and field crops. The parcel is currently under a Williamson Act Contract (Contract #71-206).

A multi-use plan for the Project site has been proposed to support pollinators, grazing, growing native plants, host apiary use at the site, and carry out “agrivoltaics” (the practice of having agricultural uses in and around large-scale solar PV farms).

Potential Environmental Effects

The EIR will discuss the potential environmental effects of the proposed Project and will identify mitigation measures to avoid or substantially reduce any potentially significant adverse effects, to the extent feasible. Yolo County will identify and consider feasible alternatives to the project in the EIR analysis. Based on preliminary analysis, the factors below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a “Potentially Significant Impact” and requiring implementation of mitigation:

- Agriculture & Forestry Resources
- Biological Resources
- Geology/Soils
- Cultural Resources
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Mandatory Findings of Significance

The project would have less than significant or no impact on the following factors:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Energy
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities/Service Systems
- Wildfire

This list is not intended to be all-inclusive or to imply a predetermination of impacts. Yolo County invites interested stakeholders to suggest specific issues, including possible mitigation measures, within these general categories, or other categories not included above, to be considered in the EIR.

Public Scoping

Pursuant to CEQA, scoping is the process of soliciting input from affected governmental agencies, organizations, and the public on the scope and content of the environmental document. Public scoping

helps to identify the range of actions, alternatives, environmental effects, and mitigation measures to be analyzed in depth in the EIR, and helps to identify those issues that can be eliminated from detailed study.

Members of the public, affected Federal, State, and local agencies, interest groups, and other interested parties may participate in the scoping process by providing written comments or recommendations concerning the issues to be analyzed in the EIR. Interested parties may also provide oral comments during the public scoping meeting discussed below.

Project Scoping Meeting

A virtual public scoping meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 26th, 2021 (see specific date, time and access in the table below). The purpose of the scoping meetings is to provide information about the proposed Gibson Solar Farm Project, answer questions, and take oral and written comments from interested parties.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be one virtual scoping meeting via Zoom Webinar consistent with statewide restrictions with in-person meetings.

Scoping Comments

Meeting Dates and Times	Meeting Access Information
<p>Virtual Meeting #1 Tuesday, October 26th, 2021 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM</p>	<p>Zoom Webinar: https://yolocounty.zoom.us/j/82958552917?pwd=azJMYzdxTlpXMWIKS0grRmtMNG94UT09 By Phone: 1-408-638-0968 Webinar ID: 829 5855 2917 Passcode: 660379</p>

At this time, Yolo County is soliciting comments regarding any issues and alternatives that should be considered in the preparation of the EIR. Suggestions for submitting scoping comments are presented at the end of this section.

Written comments must be postmarked no later than close of business, Friday, **November 12, 2021**. Written comments may be submitted: (1) by mail, or (2) by electronic mail (email). You can also present oral comments by attending the Public Scoping Meeting (see times and locations above). Instructions for submitting written comments are provided below.

By Mail: If you send comments by mail, please use first-class mail and be sure to include your name, return address, and email address (please write legibly). All written comments on the scope of the Gibson Solar Farm Project EIR must be sent to:

Tracy Gonzalez
 Junior Planner
 Yolo County
 292 West Beamer Street
 Woodland, CA 95695

By Electronic Mail: E-mail communications are the preferred method; however, please remember to include your name and return address (i.e., your mailing address) in the email message. Email messages must be sent to tracy.gonzalez@yolocounty.org.

Suggestions for Effective Participation in Scoping. Following are some suggestions for preparing and providing the most useful information for the Gibson Solar Farm Project EIR scoping process:

- Review the description of the proposed Project.
- Review the potential environmental effects discussed in the Initial Study.
- Participate in the virtual scoping meetings.
- Submit written comments; explain important issues that the EIR should address.
- Suggest specific mitigation measures that could reduce impacts from the proposed Project.
- Suggest possible alternatives that could avoid or reduce significant environmental impacts.

Agency Comments

We are seeking comments from all Responsible and Trustee Agencies and all other public agencies with jurisdiction by law with respect to the Project as to the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. Agency responses should identify the issues to be considered in the EIR, including significant environmental issues, alternatives, mitigation measures, and whether the responding agency will be a responsible or trustee agency, and the basis for that determination. Your response should be sent at the earliest possible date but must be postmarked by no later than Friday, **November 12, 2021**. Please send your comments to the electronic mail or mailing addresses above.

Additional Project Information

Project Website: Information about the environmental review process will be posted on the Project website at: <https://www.yolocounty.org/government/general-government-departments/community-services/planning-division/current-projects>

This site will be used to post all public documents during the environmental review process and to announce upcoming document releases and public meetings.