Planning and
Environmental Review
Leighann Moffitt, Director

County Executive
Ann Edwards

COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
NOTICE OF PREPARATION

OCTOBER 22, 2021

TO: ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR SLOUGHHOUSE SOLAR FACILITY (PLNP2021-00011)

Sacramento County will be the CEQA Lead Agency for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a project known as Sloughhouse Solar Facility. This Notice of Preparation has been sent to responsible and trustee agencies and involved federal agencies pursuant to Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines. Agencies should comment on the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agencies' statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Due to the time 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.

The project description, location, and the probable environmental effects are contained in the attached materials and may also be viewed online at:

https://planningdocuments.saccounty.net/ViewProjectDetails.aspx?ControlNum=PLNP2021-00011

Please send your Agency's response to this Notice to:

Joelle Inman, Environmental Coordinator
Planning and Environmental Review
827 7th Street, Room 225, Sacramento, CA 95814
or via e-mail at: CEQA@saccounty.net.

Your response should include the name of a contact person in your agency.

An Agency Scoping Meeting consistent with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines is scheduled for November 3, 2021, at 11am. The Meeting will be held virtually via Zoom and proper noticing will be sent to public agencies, responsible agencies, bordering jurisdictions, and to any organization or individual who has requested such a notice.

A Public Scoping Meeting consistent with Section 15083 of the CEQA Guidelines will also occur. The Meeting will be scheduled for the week of November 8-12, 2021 in the evening and the specific date and time has yet to be determined; however, the meeting will be held virtually via Zoom and proper noticing will be sent out to interested parties.

Agencies with specific questions about the project should contact Alison Little, Project Manager, at (916) 874-8620 or littlea@saccounty.net for further information.

PROJECT TITLE: SLOUGHHOUSE SOLAR FACILITY

CONTROL NUMBER: PLNP2021-00011

PROJECT PROPONENT(S):

Owner: Wanlass QTIP Trust, C/O: Julie Avary, Mechanic's Bank

Applicant: Sloughhouse Solar, LLC, Attn. Daniel Menahem

Consultants: Gillum Consulting, Attn. Jim Gillum

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION:

Sloughhouse Solar, LLC is requesting a use permit to construct a new 50 megawatt, alternating current, solar photovoltaic (PV) energy-generating facility on approximately 400 acres in the Cosumnes community of unincorporated Sacramento County. The project is generally located south of Jackson Highway, southeast of the Cosumnes River, west of Dillard Road, and south of Meiss Road. Specifically, it is located at the southwest corner of Meiss Road and Dillard Road, adjacent to an existing solar energy facility located at 7794 Dillard Road. The geographic center of the project site is at 38.469825° North and -121.180041° West, at an elevation of 145 feet above sea level. Assessor parcel numbers are 126-0110-001 and -003. Reference Plate NOP-1 for project location.

The applicant is proposing to construct, operate, and eventually decommission a solar generation and energy storage facility. The development area will include the solar field, energy storage, project substation(s), internal roads, and retention basins. Energy storage will help balance supply and demand by capturing and storing renewable energy generated during daylight hours for peak evening demand. Reference Plate NOP-2a and Plate NOP-2b for project site plans.

Project Facilities

The project will use photovoltaic (PV) technology to convert sunlight directly into direct current (DC) electricity. Groups of PV modules (environmentally sealed collections of PV cells) are wired together to form a PV array. The arrays will be mounted to fixed-tilt or tracker structures that will be grouped in one- to two-megawatt arrays. In each array, the DC produced by the array is collected at inverters (power conversion devices) where the DC is converted to alternating current (AC). The voltage of the electricity is increased by a transformer at each power conversion station to a medium voltage level (typically 34.5 kilovolts (kV)). Medium voltage electric lines (underground and/or overhead) are used to collect the electricity from each medium voltage transformer and transmit it to the facility substation, where the voltage is further increased by a high voltage transformer to match the electric grid for export to the point of interconnection along Dillard Road, (69kv transmission system operated by the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD)). In addition to direct transmission of energy, the project will likely incorporate battery storage detailed below.

Fixed-Tilt and Tracker Structures

Depending on the selected manufacturer for the PV modules, the modules will be mounted on fixed-tilt, single or dual-axis tracking structures. The modules will be grouped in nominal 1 to 2MW-AC arrays. Fixed tilt arrays will be oriented in east-west rows and will face in a generally southern orientation with a tilt angle between 10 and 35 degrees to maximize the amount of incidental solar radiation absorbed over the year. Single-axis trackers typically rotate ±60 degrees (0 degrees is horizontal) along a nominally north-south axis to track the sun's movement throughout the day. Structural support elements will be constructed of corrosion-resistant steel, aluminum, or equivalent members that are attached to circular piers or I-beam posts that will be driven into the prepared base grade of the site.

Inverters and Pad-mounted Transformers

At the center of each array is a power conversion station where inverters take the DC power output from the PV modules and convert it to AC power. Typical inverter stations are shown in Example 4 in Appendix A. The adjacent pad-mounted transformer steps the voltage up to a medium voltage level. The medium voltage outputs from each of the pad-mounted transformers are collected together in combining switchgear located at discrete locations on the Project site. The medium voltage output from the combining switchgear will be connected to the Project substation where it will then be stepped up to 69 kV for export to the grid.

Substation and Switchyard

An onsite substation will step-up the voltage from the collection level voltage to 69 kV. Breakers, buswork, protective relaying, Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA), and associated substation equipment will be constructed on the Project site. The communication system may include above or below ground fiber optic cable or microwave tower. The Project will be interconnected to the regional transmission system from the onsite substation/switchyard via the gen-tie facilities described in this project description.

Energy Storage

The Project will likely incorporate a battery energy storage facility as well as energy storage being housed within the inverters. The field of energy storage is rapidly advancing, thus a single technology or provider has not been selected for the energy storage portion of the Project. The storage component may be centralized and located adjacent to the substation or switchgear, or alternatively, the energy storage component may be distributed throughout the plant adjacent to individual power conversion centers. The storage component would be housed in a warehouse type building or alternatively in smaller modular structures such as cargo shipping containers.

Construction and Operation

Project construction is expected to take eight months, with an average of 150 workers per day. Delivery of equipment and supplies will range from 5-40 trips per day. Grading of the site will be minimized to the extent feasible and will focus on hydrological design; however, fill of seasonal wetlands is proposed. PV panels will be placed on top of driven piles and soil compaction may be required to support these panels, buildings, and traffic loads.

Upon completion of construction, the operation of the site is expected to generate 4 to 10 trips per day for maintenance and security personnel. The project site will be fenced and security lighting (if installed) will be placed in strategic areas and reduced to minimize light pollution. A landscape corridor will be installed and maintained along Dillard Road.

Decommissioning Plan

The planned operational life of the facility is approximately 35 years. However, if the facility continues to be economically viable, it could be operated for a longer period. A draft decommissioning plan has been prepared, describing measures to remove the facility and all appurtenances and activities necessary to restore the site to its previous condition.

Sacramento County Planning Entitlement Requests:

1. A **Use Permit** to allow an approximately 50 megawatt solar photovoltaic generating facility (Commercial Solar Facility, Level II) on approximately 400 acres of two properties totaling approximately 796 acres, in the AG-20 (Agricultural) and AG-20(f)(Flood Combining) zones.
2. A Special Development Permit to allow:
    a. Reduced setbacks of zero (0) feet from internal property boundaries for solar arrays.
    b. Internal access roadways to be dirt rather than constructed with a dust-free surface.

c. Alternate landscape buffering area, design, and material, as permitted by Sacramento Zoning Code (SZC) Section 3.6.6.C.3.f.

3. **Design Review** to comply with the Countywide Design Guidelines.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE:

The primary objectives of the project proponent are to:

- Provide a local supply of solar energy for the Sacramento County region to implement the County of Sacramento General Plan policies applicable to renewable energy.
- Cost-effective commencement of delivery of local utility-scale solar energy to support attainment of SMUD (a) 2030 Zero Net Carbon Plan targets, and (b) Integrated Resource Plan targets.
- Support SMUD region in attainment of state 2030 Renewable Portfolio Standards.
- Comply with SMUD Integrated Resource Plan siting and size criteria for local utility-scale solar facilities.
- Optimize use of existing electrical transmission and other infrastructure with existing capacity to minimize environmental impacts of new construction.
- Provide local employment and training opportunities for a variety of building trades.

ENVIRONMENTAL/LAND USE SETTING:

The project is located between the Cosumnes River and Dillard Road in southeast Sacramento County. General topography is gently rolling with elevations ranging from 100 feet above sea level at the river to 150 feet upland. The majority of the site is open grassland that has been historically used for grazing. Seasonal wetlands, vernal pools, and ephemeral drainages are scattered throughout the property.

There are existing buildings/infrastructure on the properties. In the northern portion of the project site (Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 126-0110-001 and -003), there is an existing farmstead consisting of a home, multiple barns, and equipment storage areas. There is an existing solar field comprised of approximately 73 acres in the southern portion of the project site. This existing facility is operated by another entity and has completely separate utility from the proposed project. Reference Plate NOP-3 for aerial photo of project site.

The surrounding land uses are all agricultural. There are agricultural (AG-20) homes to the south and west, which are on 20 acre parcels. Further south, there are agricultural-residential (A-2 and A-5) properties consisting of parcels of two- to five-acres in area. Across Dillard Road, to the east, are general agricultural properties (AG-80) of 80 acres or more. Northwest of the project site is a mitigation bank for a variety of wetland resources. The Cosumnes River borders the property to the northwest and is approximately 150 feet from the nearest proposed project development area. The unincorporated Sacramento County community of Rancho Murieta is located approximately 3.5 miles to the northeast. Reference Plate NOP-4 for surrounding land uses and zoning.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS/EIR FOCUS:

Preliminary review of the project, the site, and the location indicates that potentially significant impacts may be associated with, but not limited to, the following topical areas: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Climate Change, Cultural Resources, Land Use, Noise/Vibration, Transportation, and Tribal Cultural Resources. A brief discussion is provided below.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

This chapter will describe the potential impacts associated with glint and glare and visual change. Technical analyses have been completed for the proposed project, including visual simulations and a glare analysis. Information in these analyses will be presented in this chapter.

Agricultural Resources

The proposed project is located in eastern Sacramento County on lands identified as grazing land, prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, farmland of local importance, unique farmland, urban and other land (reference Plate NOP-5 Department of Conservation 2018 Important Farmland Map). The proposed project will temporarily convert approximately 400 acres of various farmland for the proposed solar field. Analysis will focus on the potential impact to temporary loss of farmland and proposed reclamation of the land.

Air Quality

This chapter will describe the potential of the project to result in the emission of recognized air pollutants such as particulate matter and ozone precursors. The analysis will examine both emissions related to construction and emissions related to operation.

Biological Resources

The project is located in the area of Sacramento County where the Sierra foothills begin. The topography is gently rolling hills and there are natural ephemeral drainages, scattered seasonal wetlands, and vernal pools throughout. The Cosumnes River borders the project site along the northwestern property line. Mature vegetation, is located primarily on the western portion of the properties, along the banks of the Cosumnes River and around the existing and historical homesteads. The vast majority of the land is open grassland. Vegetation removal is anticipated around the existing homestead and fill within wetlands and vernal pool features is proposed to accommodate the new solar field. The project site also contains suitable habitat for special status species including raptors, tricolored blackbirds, vernal pool crustaceans and plants. Impacts to these sensitive habitats and species will be analyzed in this chapter.

Climate Change

This chapter will describe the potential of the project to result in the emission of recognized greenhouse gas emissions. The analysis will examine both emissions related to construction and emissions related to operation.

Cultural/Tribal Resources

The project is located in an area that is sensitive for cultural/archeological and tribal cultural resources. The proximity of the Cosumnes River and presence of a historic-era farm and homestead increase the potential to encounter cultural or archeological resources. Pursuant to AB 52, consultation with tribal entities will be initiated to determine potential impacts to tribal cultural resources. A project specific cultural resources report was completed and the information in the report along with the information obtained through the AB 52 consultation process will be presented in these chapters.

Drainage and Hydrology

The project is located adjacent to the Cosumnes River and the northwestern portion of the project site is within an identified 100-year floodplain. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Rate Map the area is mapped in the AE flood zone (AE flood zones are areas subject to a one percent annual chance flood where base flood elevations have been determined.). The proposed solar panels will not be placed within the identified floodplain; however, there will be grading outside of the floodplain within the proposed solar array area. This chapter will evaluate the impacts of the proposed project to local and federal floodplains and surface water quality associated with soil disturbance.

Land Use

This chapter will evaluate the impacts of the proposed project on the existing and surrounding land uses. The analysis will evaluate conflicts with land use plans, policies or regulations intended to avoid or mitigate environmental impacts.

Noise and Vibration

This chapter will describe the potential of the project to result in new noise or vibration impacts. The analysis will include temporary construction impacts, including pile driving and grading, and operational impacts, including the solar array tracking system.

Transportation

This chapter will describe the potential of the project to result in new transportation impacts. The proposed trip generation rates during construction and operation will be compared to the County of Sacramento Transportation Guidelines to determine if there are significant Vehicle Mile Traveled impacts or impacts to local roadway circulation or safety hazards.

INTENDED USES OF THE EIR:

The Sacramento County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors will use the information contained in the EIR in evaluating the proposed project and rendering a decision to approve or deny the requested entitlements. The EIR will serve as an information document for the general public as well. Responsible agencies may also use the EIR as needed for subsequent discretionary actions. Responsible agencies may include but not be limited to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento Municipal Utility District and/or Pacific Gas and Electric.

Table NOP-1 below includes information required by Section 15124 of the CEQA Guidelines and summarizes the following intended used of the EIR:

- A list of agencies that are expected to use the EIR in their decision making.
- A list of permits and other approvals required to implement the project.
- A list of related environmental review and consultation requirements required by federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or polices.

Table NOP-1: Subsequent Permits, Approvals, Review, and Consultation Requirements

Agency	Approval
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors	Final Environmental Impact Report Certification
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors	Use Permit, Special Development Permit and Design Review
Sacramento County Planning Commission	Recommendation to the Board of Supervisors regarding Use Permit, Special Development Permit, and Design Review
County of Sacramento Site Improvement Section	Grading Permit or Improvement Plans
County of Sacramento Department of Transportation	Encroachment Permit
Sacramento County Environmental Management Department	On-site Wastewater Disposal Permit or Well Certification
Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District	Fugitive Dust Prevention and Control Plan
Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Valley Region	Section 402 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit Compliance
Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Valley Region	Waste Discharge Permit
Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Valley Region	Section 401 Certification
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Streambed Alteration Agreement, California Endangered Species Act Take Permit
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Section 404 Permit
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Federal Endangered Species Act Take Permit

Plate NOP-1: Project Location Exhibit

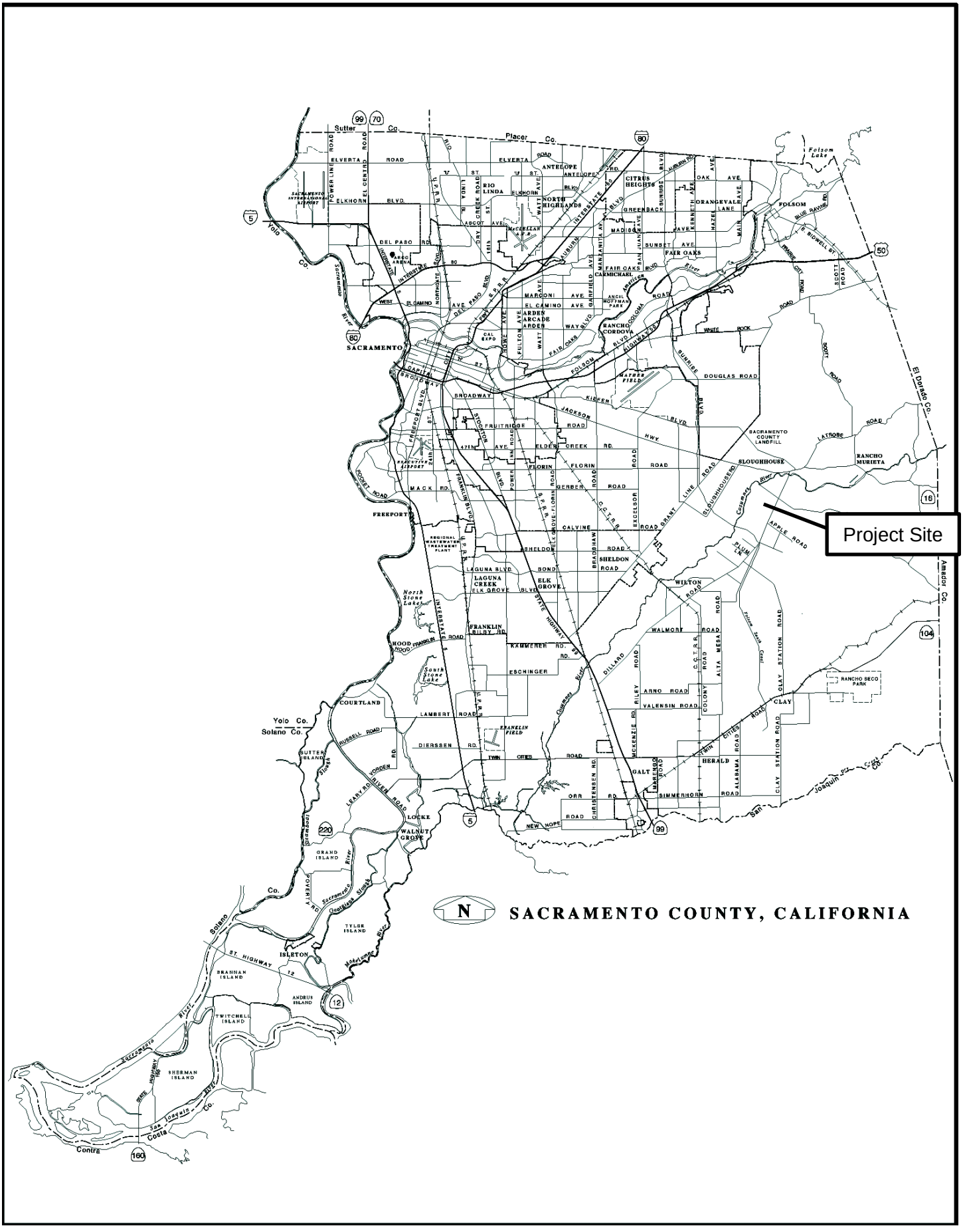

Plate NOP-2a: Propose Project Site Plan

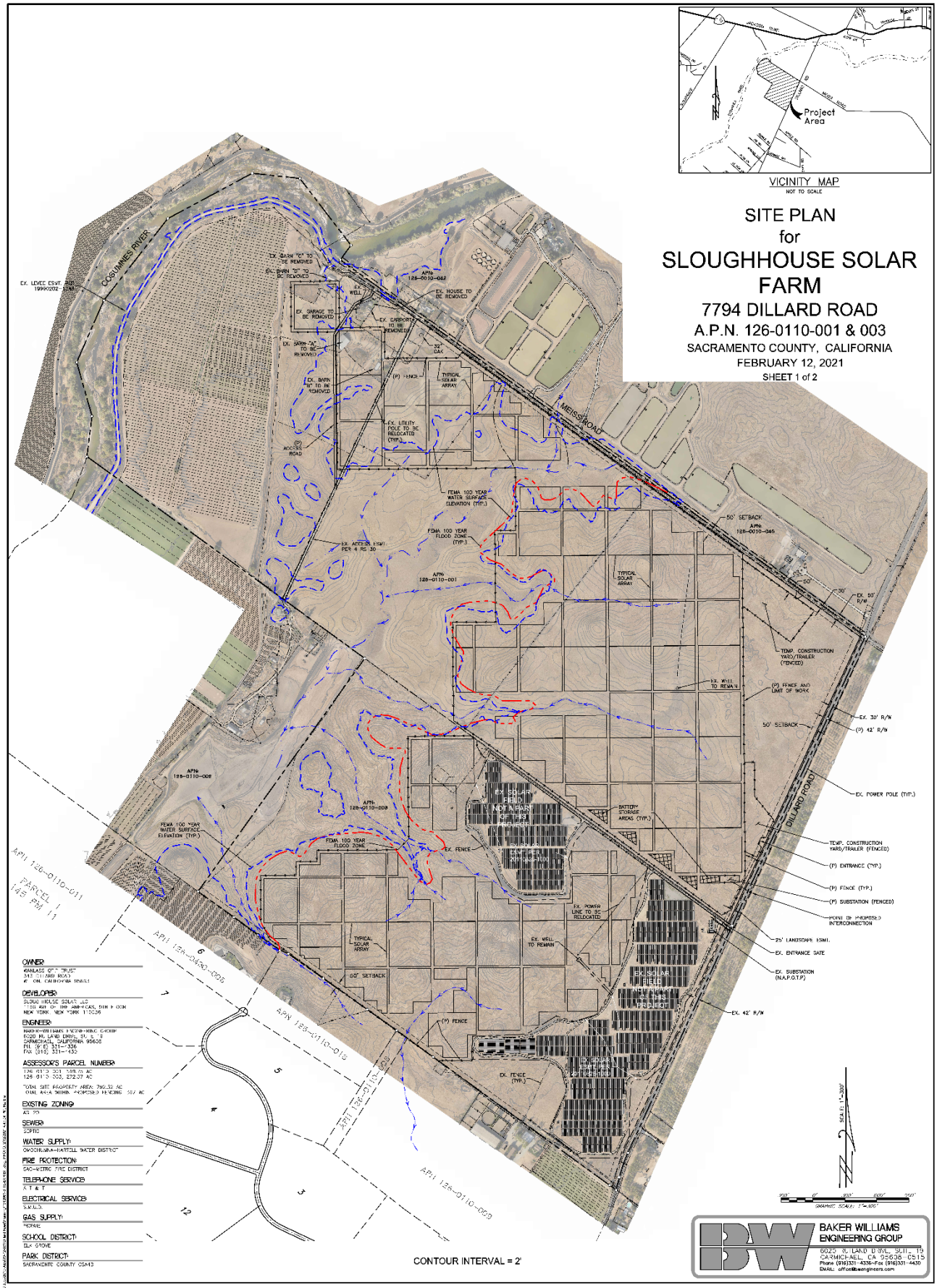

Plate NOP-2b: Proposed Project Site Plan

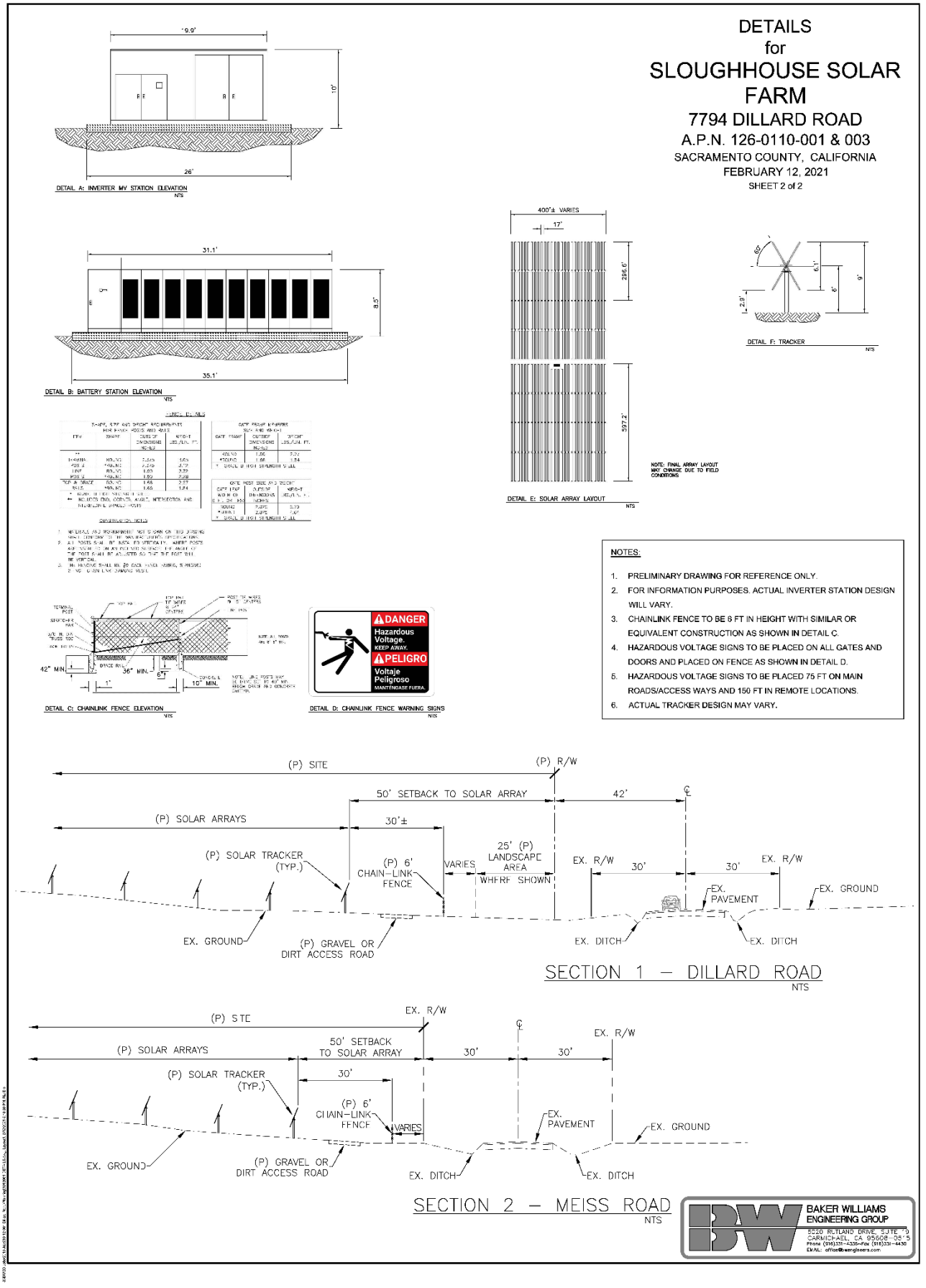

Plate NOP-3: Aerial Photo (2018) of Project Site

Plate NOP-4: Surrounding Land Uses

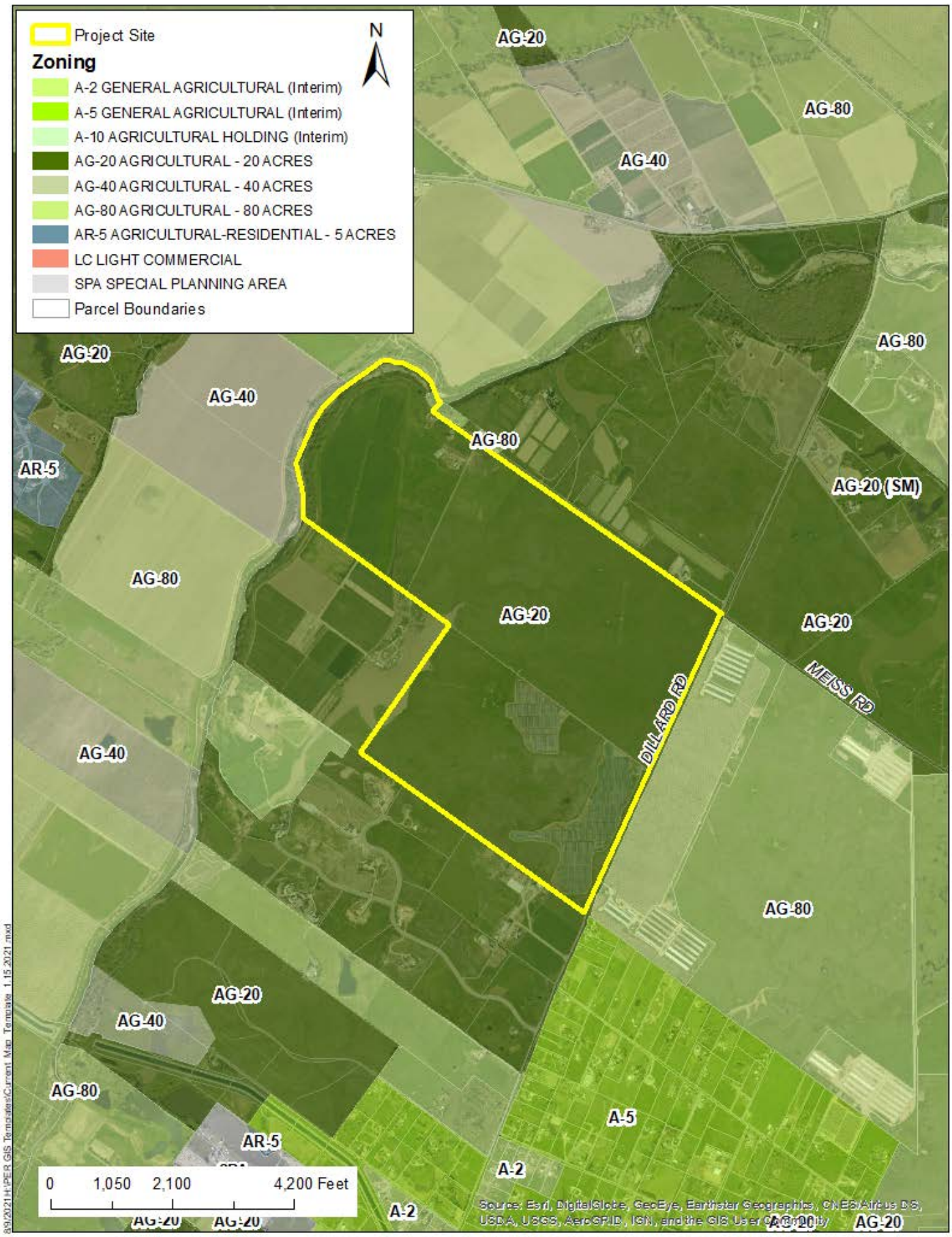

Plate NOP-5: Sacramento County 2018 Farmland Map