

**CITY OF FRESNO
ADDENDUM TO THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
PREPARED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO.
SCH #2017041061**

(As filed with the Fresno County Clerk on April 21, 2017)

*Addendum prepared in accordance with Section 15164 of the California
Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines*

The full Initial Study/Supplemental Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH #2017041061) and the Master Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2013091021) are on file in the Planning and Development Department, Fresno City Hall, 3rd Floor, 2600 Fresno Street, Fresno, California 93721 (559) 621-8277

PROJECT TITLE:

City of Fresno Northeast Surface Water Treatment Facility Solar Power Project

This addendum was not circulated for public review pursuant to Section 15162(c) of the CEQA Guidelines.

APPLICANT:
City of Fresno
2600 Fresno Street
Fresno, CA 93721

PROJECT LOCATION:

10120 North Chestnut Avenue, Fresno, CA 93730

Located on the northeast corner of North Chestnut Avenue and East Behymer Avenue in the City of Fresno, California (±16.21 acres)

Latitude: 36°52'54.0" N & Longitude: 119°44'17.2" W

Assessor's Parcel Number(s): 578-020-06T

Mount Diablo Base & Meridian, Township 12S, Range 20E, Section 13

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The subject property is the location of the City of Fresno Northeast Surface Water Treatment Facility (NESWTF), the development of which dates back to 1998. Several revisions have been proposed and approved for further development of the subject property since 1998, which have included subsequent and additional environmental analyses and respective findings. These revisions have included but are not limited to approval of Conditional Use Permit No. C-12-154, which was a proposal to augment the facility through the installation of a two megawatt diesel emergency generator with acoustical treatment; a hydroelectric generator on the water intake pipe; a 3,825 square-foot storage building; a 5 million gallon water storage tank (partially below-ground); a clarifier; security cameras mounted on 20-foot high poles; a 7-foot high block wall with wrought iron security topping; and solar panels (two megawatt capacity) proposed to be located on an approximately 5 acre portion of the subject property adjacent to the East Behymer Avenue frontage. Rights related to approval of Conditional Use Permit No. C12-154 were exercised excepting installation of the solar facilities.

Further subsequent modifications to the facility included a proposal to install a new 6 million gallon (MG) tank to provide a total 7.5 MG of storage capacity at the NESWTF. Potential environmental impacts for purposes of CEQA were again analyzed in the Supplemental Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH #2017041061).

The proposed project for purposes of this Addendum is the construction and operation of a 1.08 MWac solar photovoltaic power generation facility ("solar facility"), 1 MWac energy storage system (ESS), and associated electrical equipment on the same approximately 5 acre portion of the subject property for which the original two megawatt solar generation facility was previously approved. The solar facility would consist of a ground-mounted solar field (4.5 acres), a rooftop solar facility on a water tank (0.5 acre), and an ESS container located within the Northeast Surface Water Treatment Facility (NESWTF) site. Interconnection with the power grid would occur within the NESWTF at existing switchgear.

The solar facility would include single-axis trackers, arrays of solar panels, string inverters, transformers, underground conduits, and associated electrical equipment. New perimeter fencing to be installed would consist of 2,060 linear feet around the facility.

After construction, the facilities would be automated to allow operation with no staffing present. Production and system health data, as well as onsite weather data, would be collected and monitored electronically. Washing of the solar panels, which would be necessary to maintain efficiency, is anticipated to occur approximately two times per year. Such maintenance would require temporary staffing onsite and use of a water truck. Additionally, maintenance staff would visit the site on an as-needed basis when dispatched by the offsite operations center.

Power generated by the project would serve the power demand of the NESWTF. The solar facility and ESS will interconnect with the Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) grid via approximately 500 feet of underground and aboveground power lines connecting the solar facility and the ESS to existing switchgear within the water treatment facility.

Construction

Construction of the project is anticipated to last a total of 5 months. Construction activities include mobilization (estimated 10 total working days), site preparation and grading (estimated 30 total working days), construction and panel installation (estimated 85 total working days), and paving. The site preparation process would include the clearing of vegetation and minimal grading. Thereafter, shallow trenching would occur to install cable conduit that would run between the solar units and connect the output of each unit to inverters and from the inverters to the step-up transformer. The arrays would be installed with pile driven foundation systems that would extend 5 to 15 feet below the ground surface and would limit soil disturbance in the project area.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to construct solar photovoltaic energy generation facilities that would produce emissions-free renewable energy for the state's power grid. The project aids in the reduction of criteria air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions from power generation by displacing polluting non-renewable sources of electricity generation, primarily natural gas. The project also aids in meeting renewable energy mandates established by the state's Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS). Originally established in 2002, and most recently updated in 2018 by Senate Bill 100, the RPS requires retail sellers and publicly owned utilities to procure 60 percent of their electricity from eligible renewable energy resources by 2030. The state has also established a target of 100 percent carbon-free electricity generation by 2045.

Electricity generated by the project is contracted for use at the NESWTF. Excess electricity would be

delivered to the power grid via onsite interconnections with the PG&E system.

Determination

The proposed project will not have a significant impact. It may be determined that: (1) The project does not significantly exceed the scope of environmental analyses previously conducted for respective portions of the subject property in accordance with CEQA; (2) No substantial changes are proposed in the project which require major revisions to previous environmental findings due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; (3) No substantial changes will occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken; and, (4) No new information, which was not known and could not have been known, at the time previous environmental findings for CEQA purposes were adopted, has become available.

Therefore, the City of Fresno has determined that an addendum to Environmental Assessment SCH #2017041061 is appropriate given that none of the conditions described in Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR, mitigated or negative declaration have occurred; and, new information added is only for the purposes of providing minor changes or additions, in accordance with Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines.

CEQA Section 15162 provides that when a negative declaration has been adopted for a project, no subsequent negative declaration shall be prepared for that project unless the lead agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in the light of the whole record, one or more of the following:

FINDINGS PURSUANT TO SECTION 15162 OF THE CEQA GUIDELINES.

- (1) *Substantial changes are proposed in the project which would require major revisions of the previous Mitigated Negative Declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;*

Finding (1):	The Supplemental Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH #2017041061), approved in 2017 ("2017 SMND"), tiers off of the Metropolitan Water Resources Management Plan Update EIR (SCH #2013091021) that was certified in 2014 and amended in 2016 ("Metro Plan Update EIR"). The 2017 SMND analyzed the reconfiguration of an existing overflow basin from an east-west alignment to a north-south alignment and the construction of a 6 million-gallon (MG) water storage tank immediately to the east of the overflow basin in the southern portion of the existing NESWTF site near the northeast corner of North Chestnut Avenue and East Behymer Avenue. As part of the 2017 SMND analysis, a 500-foot buffer area was analyzed around the proposed facility alterations (i.e., the new configuration of the overflow basin, new water storage tank, and onsite construction staging area to the east of the proposed water storage tank site), which includes the area of disturbance that would occur with implementation of this proposed solar power project. Moreover, after the approval of the 2017 SMND, an addendum was prepared and approved to the 2017 SMND which included additional refinements to said proposed facility alterations. Specifically, the overflow basin will instead remain in its current location and configuration, and the proposed 6 MG water storage tank and associated infrastructure will be located immediately south of the overflow basin extending farther into the onsite grove and include a new 10-foot high earthen berm to be constructed along the perimeter of the grove surrounding the amended tank site. Accordingly, the approved addendum to the 2017 SMND analyzed the complete
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removal of the existing onsite grove, which encompasses the location of the proposed solar facility. The proposed ESS would be immediately to the north of the solar facility westerly adjacent to existing electrical substation and south of the pump building near the North Chestnut Avenue right-of-way.

The proposed solar facility includes the above-described amended location of the 6 MG water storage tank site, as the tank site was subsequently relocated from immediately south of the overflow basin to the west, closer to the North Chestnut Avenue right-of-way, near the southwest corner of the NESWTF site. The final siting location of the 6 MG water storage tank, which is currently under construction, provides sufficient area for the solar facility in the balance of the southern portion of the NESWTF site. Solar panels would also be constructed atop the under-construction water storage tank. The approved addendum to the 2017 SMND, which similarly tiers off the certified and amended Metro Plan Update EIR, fully analyzed the removal of the onsite grove within a project boundary (i.e., the area of disturbance) that encompasses the boundary for the proposed solar facility (the grove has since been removed from the site). Thus, this addendum for the proposed solar power project would not alter the conclusions of the 2017 SMND, and by extension its approved addendum, nor would this proposed solar power project result in any new significant impacts, including cumulative impacts, or the need for additional mitigation measures. In fact, the solar facility project would result in beneficial environmental effects as it would produce emissions-free renewable energy toward the operation of the NESWTF, including the potential for excess electricity to be delivered into the PG&E system; reduce criteria air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions compared to conventional power generation; and advance the City's progress towards its state mandates for renewable energy.

Furthermore, and as described herein above, the City previously approved the construction of solar power generation facility in the southern portion of the NESWTF site in 2013 (CUP No. C-12-154) in a schematic very similar to the one proposed in this addendum, prior to the Metro Plan Update EIR and 2017 SMND. The 2013 City approval determined at the time the proposed solar facility was fully within the scope of the Master EIR (SCH #2001071097) prepared for the 2025 Fresno General Plan and the MND prepared for Plan Amendment No. A-09-02 (SCH# 2009051016). Therefore, for the above-stated reasons, this project does not constitute a substantial change that requires major revisions due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in severity of previously identified significant effect in the approved 2017 SMND or Metro Plan Update EIR, as amended respectively. The preparation of a subsequent or supplemental MND is not required for the proposed solar power project pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162.

- (2) *Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous Mitigated Negative Declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or,*

<p>Finding (2):</p>	<p>As discussing above for Finding (1), the solar facility project proposes minor changes to the previously approved CEQA analyses for the site, which include project boundaries coterminous with this proposed solar facility. The approved 6 MG water storage tank was initially proposed to augment the existing 1.5 MG water storage tank in order to provide for a total of 7.5 MG storage capacity at NESWTF, which is needed in order to meet water quality requirements, customer demands, and reduce the use of groundwater. The purpose and need for that project remains the same. The 6 MG water storage tank is currently under construction at its final siting location near the southwest corner of the NESWTF site, which provides sufficient area for the solar facility in the balance of the southern portion of the NESWTF site. The construction of a solar facility, ESS, and associated infrastructure does not result in a change with respect to the circumstances of the 2017 SMND and its approved addendum. In fact, the proposed solar facility project would result in beneficial environmental effects as it would produce emissions-free renewable energy toward the operation of the NESWTF, including the potential for excess electricity to be delivered into the PG&E system; reduce criteria air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions compared to conventional power generation; and advance the City’s progress towards its state mandates for renewable energy.</p> <p>Therefore, for the above-stated reasons, this project does not result in a substantial change to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous 2017 SMND due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or substantial increase in severity of previously identified significant effects. The preparation of a subsequent or supplemental MND is not required for the proposed solar power project pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162.</p>
<p>(3)</p>	<p><i>New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted, shows any of the following: (A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous Negative Declaration; (B) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous Negative Declaration; (C) Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project; and, (D) Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous Mitigated Negative Declaration, would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment.</i></p>
<p>Finding (3):</p>	<p>There is no new information of substantial importance that shows the project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the amended 2017 SMND. Significant effects previously examined in the amended 2017 SMND and by extension the amended Metro Plan Update EIR will not be substantially more severe from implementation of this project. In addition, the Metropolitan Water Resources Management Plan Update EIR (SCH #2013091021) that was certified in 2014 and amended in 2016 (“Metro Plan Update EIR”) and from which Supplemental Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH #2017041061) was tiered, acknowledged that the boundaries designated by the 2035 General Plan Update are consistent with those adopted in the previous 2025 General Plan; and therefore, the proposed project area considered in the Metro Plan Update did not change with the City’s adoption of the 2035 General Plan.</p>

There is no new information that mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, nor is there new information that mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous CEQA analyses would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment. The preparation of a subsequent or supplemental MND is not required for the proposed solar power project pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162.

ADDENDUM PREPARED BY:
Will Tackett, Planning Manager
CITY OF FRESNO

SUBMITTED BY:



Will Tackett, Planning Manager
CITY OF FRESNO

DATE: *June 16, 2020*