

**CITY OF FRESNO
ADDENDUM TO THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
PREPARED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. C-12-113
SCH #2012061089**

(As filed with the Fresno County Clerk on February 14, 2014)

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

The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH #2012061089) is on file in the Planning and Development Department,
Fresno City Hall, 3rd Floor
2600 Fresno Street, Room 3043
Fresno, California 93721
(559) 621-8277

PROJECT TITLE:
Fresno-Clovis Regional Wastewater Reclamation 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:
5607 West Jensen Avenue, Fresno, CA 93706
Located near the southwest corner of West Jensen Avenue and South Cornelia Avenue in the City of Fresno, California (±82 acres)
Latitude: 36°42'05.71" N & Longitude: 119°53'06.55" W
Assessor's Parcel Number(s): 327-030-41T & -38T
Mount Diablo Base & Meridian, Township 14S, Range 19E, Section 22

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The project is the construction and operation of a 14.25 MWac solar photovoltaic power generation facility ("solar facility"), 2.5 MWac energy storage system (ESS), and associated electrical equipment on approximately 80 acres, located within Assessor's Parcel Numbers 327-030-41T and 327-030-38T. The solar facility would be located within the Fresno-Clovis Regional Wastewater Reclamation Facility (RWRF) site. Interconnection with the power grid would occur within the RWRF 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 7,800 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 monitored and gathered 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, which would continuously monitor the system.

Power generated by the project would serve the power demand of the RWRF. The solar facility and ESS will interconnect with the Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) grid via underground or aboveground power lines connecting the solar facility and the ESS to existing switchgear adjacent to the project site, within the RWRF.

Construction

Construction of the project is anticipated to last approximately 10 months. Construction activities include mobilization (estimated 10 total working days), site preparation and grading (estimated 30 total working days), construction and panel installation (estimated 170 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 RWRF. 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 Assessment No. C-12-113 (SCH #2012061089); (2) No substantial changes are proposed in the project which require major revisions to the previous environmental finding 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 the environmental finding for Environmental Assessment No. C-12-113 (SCH #2012061089) was adopted, has become available.

Therefore, the City of Fresno has determined that an addendum to Environmental Assessment No. C-12-113 (SCH #2012061089) is appropriate given that none of the conditions described in Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines calling for preparation of a subsequent mitigated negative declaration have occurred; and, new information added is only for the purposes of providing minor changes or additions, in accordance with Sections 15162 and 15164 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):

An Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND), approved in 2014, analyzed the environmental impacts to construct and operate a tertiary treatment and disinfection system at the RWRP to include a new five million gallon per day membrane bioreactor system, ultraviolet disinfection system, recycled water storage basin, new recycled water pipelines, and a 2-megawatt solar energy facility (i.e., solar panels, transmission lines, and electrical building). The purpose of the project analyzed in the IS/MND was to conserve valuable drinking water resources by enabling the City to use tertiary treated recycled water for landscape irrigation as well as for commercial and industrial uses; improve the quality of groundwater with high quality recycled water; and offset energy consumption at the treatment plant via an onsite solar energy generation facility.

The tertiary treatment and disinfection facility was proposed to be constructed westerly abutting the existing treatment plant within an unused existing percolation pond, and the solar energy facility was proposed to be located at either of two potential sites. The first location was on approximately 12 acres at Pond 9 Area, a vacant percolation pond site along West Jensen Avenue west of the existing plant that has been historically used for dumping and burning of trash and other inert debris. The second location was south of the existing plant, north of West North Avenue, on approximately 12 acres of the 22.4 acres at Plant 2 (Plant 2 is a functional wastewater treatment plant with an 8 million gallon per day capacity). Existing structures at Plant 2 would remain in place apart from two inverted clarifiers and the former headworks building. An existing switchgear building would serve as the electrical building, and the existing concrete channel and earthen channel onsite would be removed by the City. The solar energy facility was proposed to consist of solar panels that would produce electrical energy that would be distributed through power lines and transformers to ensure an adequate level of onsite usage.

Construction impacts of the solar energy facility was also analyzed in the approved IS/MND. Construction would require site clearing, grading, fill, compaction and trenching for utilities. Solar panels would be supported by small diameter driven piles such as pipe piles, U-shaped channel piles and wide flange H-piles. It was expected that appurtenant power equipment and other structures would be supported on mat foundations and shallow spread footings. Grading would include only minor cuts and fills to establish finish site grades. Both sites would require the use of fill material which would be obtained from within City property at the RWRP.

Both options would include solar mounting structures, with two inverters and a transformer to convert energy from the solar panels to a voltage level that would be used onsite. Solar mounting structures would be installed on concrete pads with foundations that may extend below the ground surface. In addition to the solar array, the facility would also include power poles, power lines and underground conduit to transmit energy to the RWRP. For utility

trenching, an excavation depth of 4 feet was assumed. A 16-foot wide internal access road through the solar array would be constructed of crushed aggregate (no paving). Night lighting and a security system would be installed; both sites would be fenced. No additional parking spaces would be required or provided. Construction vehicles and equipment will be staged onsite within City property at the RWRF and would not require street closures.

The IS/MND analysis determined that no potentially significant impacts would result that cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level. Potentially significant impacts that required mitigation measures were identified for biological resources and cultural resources. Potential impacts related to the balance of the environmental categories analyzed in the IS/MND in compliance with CEQA were determined to be less than significant without the need for mitigation. Mitigation measures required of the tertiary treatment and disinfection facility and solar energy facility project addressed construction-related impacts; specifically, mitigation measures for biological resources included pre-construction surveys for burrowing owl and nesting birds as well as avoidance of these special status species, and mitigation measures for cultural resources included the protocol for inadvertent discoveries of archaeological or paleontological resources or human remains as well as paleontological resource monitoring during construction.

This solar power project addendum proposes to essentially relocate the already-analyzed solar energy facility to be instead to the east of the existing plant on disturbed but undeveloped land. This relocation will provide sufficient area to provide enough solar energy to offset approximately 75 percent of the RWRF's energy demand. This relocation also avoids the Pond 9 Area that has been historically used for dumping and burning of trash and debris, and removing existing structures at Plant 2. No structures would need to be demolished at the relocated site. Construction and operation of the solar power project would be like that already analyzed in the IS/MND. The same construction-related mitigation measures to biological and cultural resources would be equally applicable to this solar power project, and likewise, would result in the same effectiveness of mitigating potential impacts to a less than significant level as the changes proposed by this addendum are technically minor revisions to the already-analyzed and approved 2014 project that included a similar solar energy facility.

Thus, this addendum for the proposed solar power project would not alter the conclusions of the IS/MND, 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, as the revision to the solar energy facility would offset a greater amount of energy consumption at RWRF with the potential for excess electricity to be delivered into the PG&E system, this project further advances the City's progress towards its state mandates for renewable energy.

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 IS/MND. 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,*

**Finding
(2):**

As discussing above for Finding (1), the solar facility project proposes minor changes to the previously approved CEQA analyses for the site that also included a solar energy facility, albeit in a different location adjacent to the existing plant. The purpose and need of the 2014 project remain the same. The construction of a solar facility, ESS, and associated infrastructure in a different location adjacent to the existing plant does not result in a change with respect to the circumstances of the IS/MND. In fact, as the revision to the solar energy facility would offset a greater amount of energy consumption at RWRF with the potential for excess electricity to be delivered into the PG&E system, this project further advances the City's progress towards its state mandates for renewable energy.

On December 18, 2014, the City of Fresno adopted a new General Plan, which replaced the 2025 Fresno General Plan cited in the IS/MND as being applicable at that time. The new General plan lays out policies and implementation strategies from the date of its adoption to 2035 and beyond. The boundaries designated by the 2035 Fresno General Plan update are consistent with those adopted in the previous 2025 Fresno General Plan. The current Fresno General Plan designates the area of land within the RWTF which is proposed for development with the solar energy generation facility for Public Facility and Employment-Heavy Industrial uses. Accordingly, this area of land is currently zoned PI (Public and Institutional) and IH (Heavy Industrial) within the City of Fresno.

Following adoption of the new Fresno General Plan, the City of Fresno also adopted a new Development Code/Zoning Ordinance and redefined all zone districts for purposes of implementing the goals, objectives and policies of the new General Plan. These provisions are now contained in Chapter 15 of the Fresno Municipal Code of the City of Fresno and continue to provide conditions and provisions for permitted and prohibited uses in zoning districts. Both RWTF and solar energy generation facilities are uses listed as permissible "by-right" in the PI and IH zone districts.

While adoption of a new General Plan and Development Code/Zoning Ordinance could be considered to constitute changes with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken, the changes are not considered substantial and would not require major revisions of the previous IS/MND due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects. The proposed project would not conflict with the current Fresno General Plan (including its respective goals, objectives, and policies). Respective goals, objectives, and policies contained within the Fresno General Plan comprise, in part, strategies for achieving sustainability. This includes providing direction for achieving a sustainable future through green conservation efforts such as the Solar Valley initiative, which envisions Fresno as becoming a leader in renewable energy use by maximizing new renewable sources; and, increasing use of renewable energy to meet 50 percent of annual electrical consumption for City operations. Implementation of the objectives and policies within the 2035 Fresno General Plan are considered mitigation relative to the findings of the Master Environmental Impact Report (SCH: 2012111015) which was adopted for purposes of the 2035 Fresno


General Plan. The certified MEIR found that with implementation of the objectives and policies of the 2035 General Plan, no impacts related to inefficient, wasteful and unnecessary consumption of energy (cumulative or otherwise) would result. The project is consistent and contributes to implementation as it is being proposed for purposes of constructing solar photovoltaic energy generation facilities that would produce emissions-free renewable energy and reduce annual electrical consumption. Furthermore, the proposed project would not conflict with regulations of the Zoning Ordinance. Finally, changes to thresholds which have been adopted in the new General Plan and Zoning Ordinance for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental effects would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects. Therefore, impacts to local land use, zoning and other CEQA required criteria previously identified as less than significant in the IS/MND would still be considered less than significant.

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 IS/MND 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.

(3) 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 certified, shows any of the following: (A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous Mitigated Negative Declaration; (B) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous Mitigated 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.

**Finding
(3):**

There is no new information of substantial importance that shows the project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the approved IS/MND. Significant effects previously examined in the IS/MND would not be substantially more severe from implementation of this project. Conversely, the solar power project would better achieve the purpose of offsetting energy consumption at the RWRF than originally proposed. 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 IS/MND is not required for the proposed solar power project pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162.

<p>ADDENDUM PREPARED BY: Will Tackett, Planning Manager CITY OF FRESNO</p>	<p>SUBMITTED BY:  Will Tackett, Planning Manager CITY OF FRESNO</p>
<p>DATE: <i>June 16, 2020</i></p>	

