

CITY OF FRESNO

**ADDENDUM TO THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
PREPARED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. C-14-041**

(As filed with the Fresno County Clerk on August 14, 2015)

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

The full Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH #2015081062), Metro Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2013091021), and the Fresno General Plan Master Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2012111015) 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 Southeast 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:

Department of Public Utilities

City of Fresno

2600 Fresno Street

Fresno, CA 93721

PROJECT LOCATION:

6369 East Floradora Avenue, Fresno, CA 93727

Located west of North Armstrong Avenue between East Floradora Avenue to the north and East Olive Avenue to the south in the City of Fresno, California (±8.5 acres)

Latitude: 36°45'36.89" N & Longitude: 119°40'26.73" W

Assessor's Parcel Number(s): 310-083-04T

Mount Diablo Base & Meridian, Township 13S, Range 21E, Section 34

June 16, 2020

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The project is the construction and operation of a 1.2 MWac solar photovoltaic power generation facility ("solar facility"), 1 MWac energy storage system (ESS), and associated electrical equipment on approximately 8.5 acres of a 37.8-acre parcel. The solar facility would consist of three solar fields and an ESS container located on vacant portions of the Southeast Surface Water Treatment Facility (SESWTF) site. Interconnection with the power grid would occur within the SESWTF at existing switchgear.

The three solar fields are located at the southwest, northwest, and northeast corners of the SESWTF, and are approximately 0.9, 2.1, and 4.5 acres, respectively.

Each of the solar fields would include single-axis trackers, arrays of solar panels, string inverters, transformers, underground conduits, and associated electrical equipment. New perimeter chain link fencing would be installed, totaling 4,000 linear feet around the three solar fields.

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 SESWTF. The subareas will interconnect with the Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) grid via an approximately 2,000-foot underground power line connecting the three solar fields and the ESS to existing switchgear within the water treatment facility.

Construction

Construction of the project is anticipated to last a total of 6 months. Construction activities include mobilization (estimated 10 total working days), site preparation and grading (estimated 30 total working

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days), construction and panel installation (estimated 110 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 SESWTF. 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-14-041; (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-14-041 was adopted, has become available.

Therefore, the City of Fresno has determined that an addendum to Environmental Assessment No. C-14-041 is appropriate given that none of the conditions described in Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines calling for preparation of a subsequent finding of conformity 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):	<p>The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH #2015081062), which was approved in 2015 ("2015 MND"), tiers off of the Metropolitan Water Resources Management Plan Update EIR (SCH #2013091021) that was certified in 2014 ("Metro Plan Update EIR") as well as the Fresno General Plan and Development Code Update Master EIR certified in 2014 (SCH #2012111015). The 2015 MND served as an implementation measure to develop the SESWTF as a subsequent project identified in the Metro Plan Update EIR and a facility critical to optimizing the conjunctive use of the City's available water resources to provide a sustainable, reliable, and safe drinking water supply. The two parcels analyzed in the 2015 MND encompassed approximately 56.92 total acres with the SESWTF located on approximately 37 acres of that total area. The 2015 MND analyzed the SESWTF with an ultimate capacity of 80 million gallons per day, walls, fencing, landscaping, appurtenant infrastructure such as roadway/sidewalk improvements and installation of water pipelines and power, drainage, and communication facilities. Future project phases identified in the 2015 MND included a Water Division administration site with corporation yard and photovoltaic arrays (i.e., solar panels).</p>
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Solar panel locations analyzed in the 2015 MND and that are proposed in the current solar power project are generally similar. The 2015 MND analyzed onsite solar power plant proposed for use by the SESWTF. The areas of installation included the northeast section of the SESWTF site and both atop the partially buried treated water reservoirs and north of these reservoirs. The total area of solar panel module installation was approximately 7.4 acres. This proposed solar power project would similarly site solar panels in the northeast

section of the SESWTF site and would site solar panels north of the treated water reservoirs. Instead of siting solar panels atop the partially buried treated water reservoirs, they would be sited in the southwestern section of the SESWTF site generally between the electrical substation and detention basin. The total solar panel area proposed by this solar power project is approximately 7.45 acres, a minor increase from 7.4 acres in the 2015 MND. Moreover, the ESS would be located north of the standby generators near the center of the SESWTF site. The facilities proposed by this solar power project are located within the existing SESWTF site and thereby within the same area of disturbance analyzed in the approved 2015 MND, which tiers off of the Metro Plan Update EIR and Fresno General Plan Master EIR. No existing or planned facility would need to be relocated to accommodate the solar panels in the southwestern area. Accordingly, this addendum has been prepared as the proposed solar power project constitutes a minor technical revision to an existing and approved CEQA analysis.

Furthermore, this addendum for the proposed solar power project would not alter the conclusions of the 2015 MND, 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 SESWTF, 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.

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 2015 MND or Metro Plan Update EIR or Fresno General Plan Master EIR. The preparation of a subsequent or supplemental MND is not required for the proposed solar power project pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162 and 15164.

- (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 discussed above for Finding (1), the solar power project proposes minor changes to the previously approved CEQA analyses for the site, which include project boundaries coterminous with this proposed solar facility. The SESWTF was initially proposed as a facility critical to optimizing the conjunctive use of the City's available water resources to provide a sustainable, reliable, and safe drinking water supply. The two parcels analyzed in the 2015 MND encompassed approximately 56.92 total acres with the SESWTF located on approximately 37 acres of that total area. The 2015 MND analyzed the SESWTF with an ultimately capacity of 80 million gallons per day, walls, fencing, landscaping, appurtenant infrastructure such as roadway/sidewalk improvements and installation of water pipelines and power, drainage, and communication facilities. Future project phases identified in the 2015 MND included a Water Division administration site with corporation yard and photovoltaic arrays (i.e., solar panels). The purpose, need, and circumstances for the SESWTF remain the same.

The construction of a solar facility, ESS, and associated infrastructure does not result in a change with respect to the circumstances of the 2015 SMND. Solar power generation has already been analyzed as a component of the SESWTF. Moreover, the proposed solar facility project would result in beneficial environmental effects as it would produce emissions-free renewable energy toward the operation of the SESWTF, 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.

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 2015 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 and 15164.

- (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 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.

**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 2015 MND. Significant effects previously examined in the 2015 MND and by extension the Metro Plan Update EIR and Fresno General Plan Master EIR will not be substantially more severe from implementation of this project. 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 and 15164.

ADDENDUM PREPARED BY:

Will Tackett, Planning Manager

DATE:

June 16, 2020

SUBMITTED BY:



Will Tackett, Planning Manager

CITY OF FRESNO

