

DOCKETED	
Docket Number:	23-OPT-02
Project Title:	Darden Clean Energy Project
TN #:	260269
Document Title:	Fresno County Dept of Public Works and Planning Response to Notice of Preparation
Description:	Emailed to CEC staff Nov. 1, 2024
Filer:	Lisa Worrall
Organization:	County of Fresno, Department of Public Works and Planning
Submitter Role:	Commission Staff
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County of Fresno

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING
STEVEN E. WHITE, DIRECTOR

November 1, 2024

Lisa Worrall, Senior Environmental Planner
California Energy Commission
715 P Street, MS-40
Sacramento CA, 95814

SUBJECT: California Energy Commission 23-OPT-02 Darden Energy Project

Dear Ms. Worrall,

The County of Fresno appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed 1,150-megawatt (MW) solar photovoltaic facility, 4,600 megawatt-hour (MWh) battery energy storage system, 800MW green hydrogen facility, 34.5-500 kilovolt (kV) grid strp-up substation, 10–15-mile 500kV generation intertie (gen-tie) line, and 500kV utility switching station. This project to be located south of the community of Cantua Creek.

The documents received for this review were circulated to our various Fresno County Public Works and Planning divisions. See comments below.

Fresno County Policy Planning:

The proposed solar electrical generation facility encompasses approximately 9,000-acres of land currently designated and zoned in the County of Fresno for farming and other agriculturally related uses. Upon reviewing the 9000 acres that would be converted into the proposed solar facility, staff identified approximately 2,700 acres are actively farmed. Moreover, there are lands within the 9,000-acre area that are capable of being farmed. The proposed facility would interconnect to the existing Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) Los Banos-Midway #2 500 kV transmission line. The 500 kV gen-tie line would be sited within an approximate 200-foot-wide easement on private lands.

The EIR must identify the acreage of agricultural land that is being actively farmed as well as land that is capable of being farmed within the 9000-acre area that would be converted to a solar facility. The impact of the proposed project on the Fresno County's agricultural resources appears to be a significant impact.

Additionally, the EIR must identify lands within the 9000-acre area as well as parcels that will be traversed by the proposed 500 kV gen-tie line that would connect the solar facility to the PG&E transmission line that are privately owned and are under the Williamson Act Contract. The EIR must address how the proposed project would impact lands that are restricted by the Williamson Act contact.

County staff request that the CEC staff provides the draft EIR to the County of Fresno during the public review period. If you have any questions, please Contact Mohammad Khorsand at mkhorsand@fresnocountyca.gov or Dominique Navarrette at dnavarrette@fresnocountyca.gov or call (559) 600-9668.

Fresno County Roads and Operation

- 1) Cerini Avenue currently has County Road right-of-way within the project limits, which is not a county maintained road. Applicant should contact Design Division to apply for vacation of the County right-of-way on Cerini Avenue within the project limits.
- 2) A designated construction traffic route, including schedule of equipment and material load deliveries, shall be required. RMO will have additional comments on the roads designated in the route once it is submitted.
- 3) Existing County maintained roads in the area will be negatively impacted by the construction phase of this project. Improvements, such as road widenings, chip seal, or overlay, to the roads used for access will be required but cannot be determined until the construction route and schedule of deliveries is provided.
- 4) An encroachment permit shall be required for any crossings of County maintained roads. There appear to be proposed gen-tie crossings, an engineered plan must be submitted for review and approval prior to permit issuance.
- 5) Once improvements anticipated by Condition #2 are determined, an engineered plan must be submitted for review and approval prior to permit issuance for any improvements to County maintained roads.
- 6) All driveway access points to the subject parcels, both temporary and permanent, shall be identified. Additional conditions may be imposed once driveway access point locations are submitted.
- 7) The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is currently working on the replacement of Bridge 02-018 on Clarkson Avenue, schedule for construction currently unknown. DWR may be contacted for further information on that bridge.
- 8) There is an existing low water crossing/culvert located 0.02 miles north of the intersection of Mount Whitney Avenue and Stanislaus Avenue that is in poor condition and not recommended for construction traffic. If this is designated as part of the construction haul route, applicant will be required to evaluate the structure and may be required to improve it prior to start of deliveries.

Sincerely,

Arianna Brown

Arianna Brown, Planner -- Development Services and Capital Projects Division

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