

DOCKETED

Docket Number:	23-OPT-02
Project Title:	Darden Clean Energy Project
TN #:	252931
Document Title:	CEC App_Chapter 5_Environmental Analysis_Darden Clean Energy
Description:	This section provides an introduction to the seventeen (17) individual environmental impact assessments required for the certification of the Darden Clean Energy Project as well as Cumulative Project details.
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Submission Date:	11/3/2023 3:45:37 PM
Docketed Date:	11/3/2023

5 Environmental Analysis

Document Organization

This chapter includes 17 individual sections containing information specified by the California Energy Commission (CEC) as required for Opt-In Applications (Title 20, California Code of Regulations, Section 1704, Appendix B). All of the resource sections use a standardized format containing the following headings and associated content:

- **Environmental Setting** includes an examination of the existing physical setting (baseline conditions as determined pursuant to section 15125(a) of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines) that may be impacted by the Darden Clean Energy Project.
- **Regulatory Setting and Laws, Ordinances, Regulations, and Standards** include federal, state, and local laws, ordinances, regulations and standards that pertain to the Project.
- **Impact Analysis** identifies the methodology used to analyze potential environmental impacts for each resource area. Impact evaluations are quantitative or qualitative, as appropriate.

This section also includes the analysis of potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts associated with each resource area. The impacts are compared to significance criteria to determine the level of significance. The impact sections focus on those impacts that are considered potentially significant per the requirements of CEQA. An impact is considered significant if it leads to a “substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment.” Impacts from the Proposed Project fall within one of the following categories:

- **No Impact.** The Project would have no effect on environmental conditions or would reduce existing environmental problems or hazards. The section begins with a list of the criteria used to determine whether environmental effects of the Project qualify as significant adverse environmental impacts.
- **Less than Significant.** An impact that may be adverse but does not exceed the threshold levels and does not require mitigation measures.
- **Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** An impact that can be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures.
- **Significant and Unavoidable.** An impact that cannot be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures.

Where applicable, each impact section includes a discussion of mitigation measures necessary to reduce potential impacts below the level of significance and states the level of significance after mitigation.

- **Cumulative Impacts** discusses whether the Project’s contribution to a cumulative effect would be considerable when viewed in connection with the incremental impacts of past projects, the impacts of other current projects, and the impacts of reasonably foreseeable probable future projects (as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15130).
- **Agencies and Agency Contacts** includes the contact information for any federal, state, or local agency with responsibility or jurisdiction in regards to regulations that the Project would comply or conform with.
- **Permits and Permit Schedules** identifies applicable permits and their schedules.

Cumulative Projects

Review of the Fresno County Planning Commission’s Open Applications and Planning Commission Log webpage, and the Fresno County Division of Public Works and Planning’s Photovoltaic Facilities Processing webpage provided several past, present, or probable future projects located within 15 miles of the Project that would potentially be constructed within one year before or after the Project. In addition, Westlands Water District projects in the vicinity of the Project were evaluated for inclusion in the analysis. A list of these projects is shown in Table 5-1 along with an identification number, a brief description, distance from the Project site, and status. These projects are shown on Figure 5-1. Although Table 5-1 lists only those cumulative projects located within a 15-mile radius of the Project site, the cumulative impact analysis for each resource area included in Chapter 5 considers a geographic area appropriate for each resource area; for example, in Section 5.7, *Air Quality*, the geographic area considered for the cumulative analysis is the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin due the nature of air pollutants.

As stated in Sections 15144, 15145, and 15146(b) of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, the lead agency is not required to, nor should it, engage in speculation or conjecture. While Table 5-1 includes the Valley Clean Infrastructure Plan (WWD-2), a plan that would allow for the construction of solar facilities and electric transmission infrastructure with the potential to provide 20,000 megawatts of solar energy and energy storage within Westlands Water District, the location and ultimate size of this potential cumulative project is not currently known as Westlands Water District is in the process of soliciting input from landowners to develop the plan (Golden State Clean Energy 2023). It is speculative to complete analysis of this potential cumulative project because of the multiple unknown variables and data involved. In addition, the California Energy Commission has developed the 2023 Land-Use Screens for Electric System Planning, which are geospatial land-use screens intended to inform high-level estimates of technical renewable resources potential for electric system planning (CEC 2023). This CEC tool identifies potential areas within the San Joaquin Valley that may be developed for solar energy generation as agricultural lands are retired to comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act by 2035. While the areas identified in the CEC tool have the potential to be developed for solar energy generation, it would be speculative to include the area as a cumulative project because the extent and location of development within that planning area is not currently known.

Table 5-1 Cumulative Projects List

Project Name	Description	Location	Distance to Project Site	Status
FC-1: Akhavi LLC Project	GPA 560: Rezone	20866 Lassen Avenue, Five Points	3.6 miles southeast of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-2: Arroyo Pasajero Bridge Replacement Geotechnical	Bridge replacement	Intersection of Fresno Coalinga Road and S. El Dorado Avenue	6.3 miles south of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-3: Sentry Ag Services Project	CUP 3768: CUP for increase cow-head size + building of 3 additional barns	13695 West Elkhorn Avenue, Riverdale	7.2 miles east of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-4: Kamm Avenue Pistachio	CUP 3685: Pistachio processing facility with a variance request for building height more than 35 feet	On the south side of Kamm Avenue, approximately 1 mile west of State Route 33, and approximately 4 miles east of I-5 in unincorporated Fresno County (Fresno County 2021a)	7.1 miles north of the utility switchyard	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-5: WTC Riverdale, LLC Project	CUP 3679 EXT 1: Dairy Digester/Connection to Existing Pipeline for renewable natural gas	12840 West Kamm Avenue, Riverdale	8.7 miles east of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-6: Seneca Resources Corporation Project	CUP 3548: Oil and Gas Exploration/ Production	West of Coalinga Mendota Road	9.4 miles southwest of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-7: Landfill Gas Conditioning System & Pipeline	CUP 3762: Landfill Gas Conditioning System & Pipeline	18950 West American Avenue, Kerman	10.6 miles northeast of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-8: Gas Station and Convenience Store	CUP 3758: Gas Station and Convenience Store	25014 W Dorris Ave, Coalinga	12.2 miles south of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-9: Heartland Hydrogen Project	CUP 3630/3631; Development of an electrolytic hydrogen fuel generation facility using treated wastewater and on-site generation of solar PV energy; project would be capable of producing approximately 30,000 kg/day of renewable hydrogen for zero-emission transportation fuel	State Route 33 and West American Avenue, second location at Bass Avenue in the city of Mendota	12.3 miles northwest of the solar facility	Environmental Review in Progress. ¹

Darden Clean Energy Project

Project Name	Description	Location	Distance to Project Site	Status
FC-10: Agricultural Commercial Center	CUP 3697: Agricultural Commercial Center	32899 Lassen Avenue, Huron	13.8 miles southeast	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-11: Multi use/Freeway commercial development	Multi use/Freeway commercial development	25203 West Dorris Avenue, Coalinga	12.2 miles southwest	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-12: Scarlet Solar	400 MW PV solar facility with 400 MW energy storage system on 4,089 acres	3.5 miles west-southwest of the community of Tranquility and approximately 6.5 miles east of I-5 along State Route 33 at W South Avenue in unincorporated Fresno County	10.4 miles northwest	Project is currently under construction. ^{1, 5}
FC-13: Sonrisa Solar Project	CUP 3677: 200 MW PV solar facility with battery storage capacity of 100 megawatts on approximately 2,000 acres	Approximately 1.9 miles east of State Route 33 at West Adams Avenue	10.4 miles northwest of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ¹
FC-14: Tranquility Solar Project	CUP 3451-58: 200 MW solar facility on 3,732 acres	Intersection of West Floral Avenue and State Route 33	10.1 miles north of the utility switchyard	Under construction, not completed. ²
FC-15: Luna Valley Solar	CUP 3671: 200 MW solar facility and energy storage on 1,252 acres	0.90-mile northwest of the intersection of Manning Avenue and South Derrick Avenue	12.7 miles north of the utility switchyard	Approved; Construction permits not yet obtained. ^{2, 3}
FC-16: H2B2 USA, LLC, Project	CUP 3738: Solar and battery storage facility on 60 acres	24387 West Whitesbridge Avenue, Kerman	14.4 miles north of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ¹
FC-18: Five Points Pipeline, LLC, Project	CUP 3735: Construction of a dairy gas digester facility and pipeline	0.95-mile southeast of South Madera Avenue and West Elkhorn Avenue	6.5 miles east of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-20: Agricultural Operations Facility Project	CUP 3756: Construction of three agricultural operations buildings totaling approximately 7.3 acres	2725 South Sycamore Avenue, Kerman	14.3 miles northeast of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-21: Plug Project Holdings Co. Project	VA 4122: Variance Application	0.40-mile northwest of the intersection of State Route 33 and West Adams Avenue	12.4 miles northwest of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
FC-23: Microwave Tower Project	DRA 4739: Microwave Tower	Adjacent to Janetski Field along West Morton Avenue	8.5 miles north of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²

Project Name	Description	Location	Distance to Project Site	Status
FC-24: Tranquility Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvement Project	This planning project will assess the condition of the sewer collection system pipelines, correct existing deficiencies, and prioritize the replacement of sewer lines based on their estimated remaining useful life.	0.30-mile south of the intersection of South Levee Road and South Sonoma Avenue	9 miles north of the solar facility	Under Fresno County Planning Commission Review. ²
WWD-1: Westlands Solar Park (WSP) ⁷	A series of utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) energy generating facilities on about 21,000 acres which would produce 2,000 MW through the implementation of individual solar projects in 12 subareas which are all adjacent to each other.	West-central Kings County, generally located south of SR-198, west of SR-41 and the Kings River, and east of the Fresno County Line	22.8 miles southeast of the solar facility	Environmental review completed. Individual solar operations as part of this project are in various stages. Some are operational with others expected to come online in 2023-2024. ⁶
WWD-2: Valley Clean Infrastructure Plan (VCIP) ⁸	A plan that would allow for the construction of solar facilities and electric transmission infrastructure with the potential to provide 20,000 MWs of solar energy and energy storage	Throughout Westlands Water District; specific location undetermined	Specific location undetermined	Project is currently soliciting input from landowners in Westlands Water District. ⁴

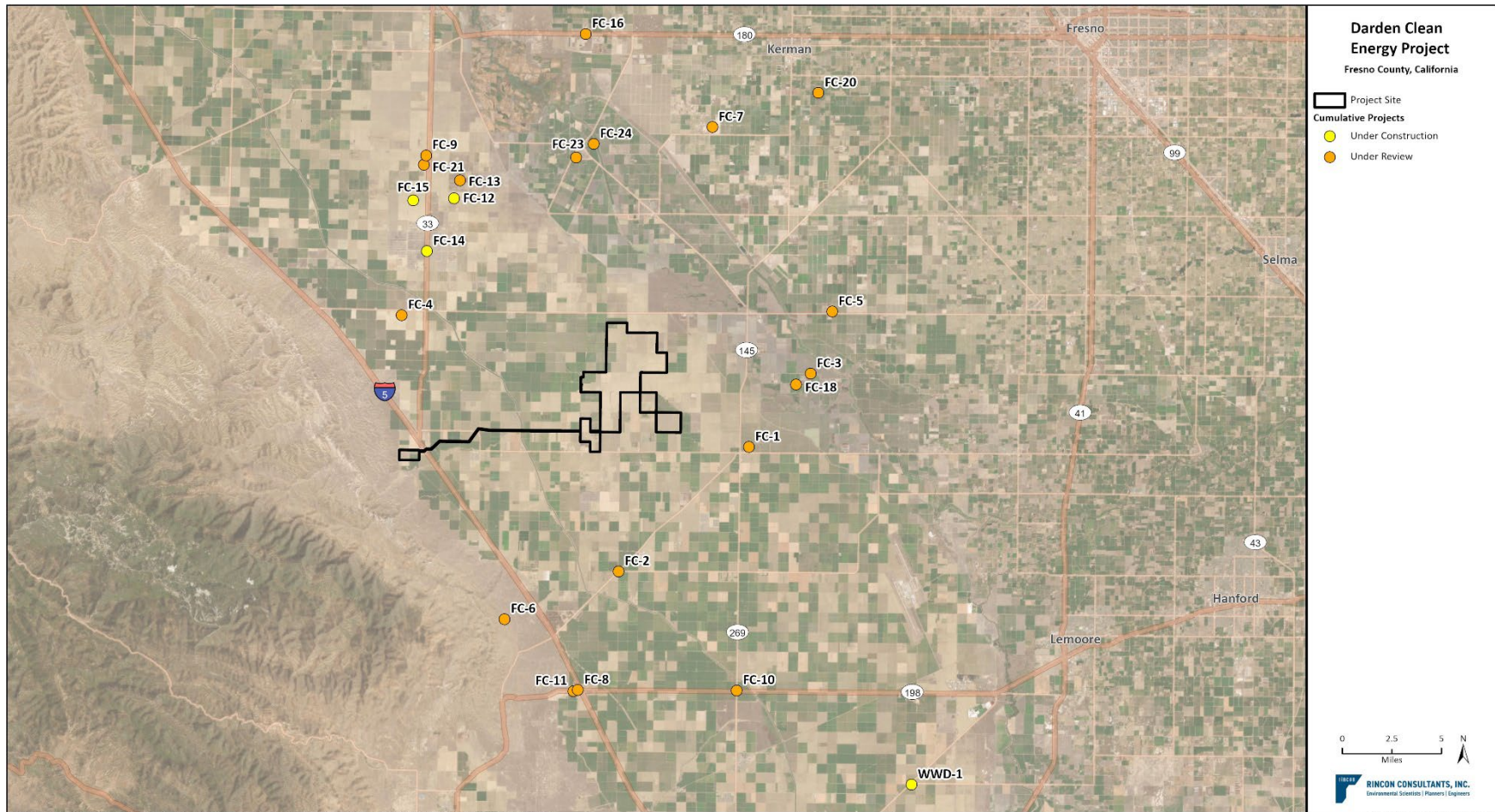
Sources: ¹County of Fresno 2023a; ²County of Fresno 2023b; ³County of Fresno 2023c; ⁴Golden State Clean Energy 2023; ⁵WWD 2023; ⁶WWD 2017

⁷Although greater than 15 miles from the Project site, the Westlands Solar Park is included within the cumulative projects list due to the size and regional significance.

⁸The location and ultimate size of this potential cumulative project is not currently known; therefore, while it is included in this Cumulative Projects List, it would be speculative to complete analysis of this potential cumulative project because of the multiple unknown variables and data involved.

CUP – conditional use permit; DRA – Director Review and Approval; FC – Fresno County; GPA – General Plan Amendment; MW – megawatts; VA – Variance Application; WWD – Westlands Water District

Figure 5-1 Cumulative Projects within 15 Miles of the Project Site



References

- California Energy Commission. 2023. CEC 2023 Land-Use Screens for Electric System Planning. <https://www.energy.ca.gov/data-reports/california-energy-planning-library/land-use-screens/cec-2023-land-use-screens-electric>. Accessed September 2023.
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- _____. 2023b. Open Applications. <https://www.fresnocountyca.gov/Departments/Public-Works-and-Planning/divisions-of-public-works-and-planning/development-services-division/planning-and-land-use/planning-commission/open-applications>. Accessed August 2023.
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- Golden State Clean Energy. 2023. Valley Clean Infrastructure Plan (VCIP). <https://goldenstatecleanenergy.com/project/valley-clean-infrastructure/>. Accessed August 2023.
- Westlands Water District (WWD). 2017. Final Program Environmental Impact Report Westland Solar Park Master Plan and WSP Gen-Tie Corridors Plan. <https://wwd.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/westlands-solar-park.pdf>. Accessed August 2023.
- _____. 2023. Farming the Sun Solar Power in Westlands. <https://wwd.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/farming-the-sun.pdf>. Accessed August 2023.

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