SMUD®

NOTICE OF PREPARATION
OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Date: September 5, 2024

To: Agencies and Interested Parties

Lead Agency: Sacramento Municipal Utility District
Environmental Services Department
6201 S Street, MS B209
Sacramento, CA 95817
Contact: Kim Crawford

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Proposed Oveja Ranch Solar Project

Review Period: September 5, 2024 to October 6, 2024

Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) is proposing the Oveja Ranch Solar Project which would include installation, operation, and maintenance of a photovoltaic (PV) solar power and battery storage renewable energy generation facility interconnected to SMUD's distribution grid in southeastern unincorporated Sacramento County. SMUD plans to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the project to satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.) and will serve as the lead agency for CEQA compliance. Throughout the CEQA process, SMUD will work closely with Sacramento County because the County will play a role in the project to amend the existing Williamson Act contracts on the site and authorize encroachment permit(s).

Purpose of Notice: In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15082), SMUD has prepared this notice of preparation (NOP) to inform agencies and interested parties that an EIR will be prepared for the above-referenced project. The purpose of an NOP is to provide sufficient information about the project and its potential environmental impacts to allow agencies and interested parties the opportunity to provide a meaningful response related to the scope and content of the EIR, including mitigation measures that should be considered and alternatives that should be addressed (State CEQA Guidelines 14 CCR Section 15082[b]).

Project Location: The project is located in unincorporated southeastern Sacramento County, south of the City of Rancho Cordova and north of Wilton (Figure 1). The project site is approximately 520 acres; the northern area (80 acres total) and the southern area (436 acres total) which are not directly adjoining properties, but would be connected by a 0.5 mile long connector line (Figure 1). The solar panels and associated infrastructure would be located on approximately 400 acres of leased land within the project site and the proposed overhead distribution line route would encompass up to 3.5 miles of new overhead distribution lines and reconductoring of up to 4 miles of existing lines outside of the 400 acres. The project would be bound to the north by Florin Road and to the east by Eagles Nest Road. Primary access to the project site would be provided by entry roads from Eagles Nest and Florin roads.

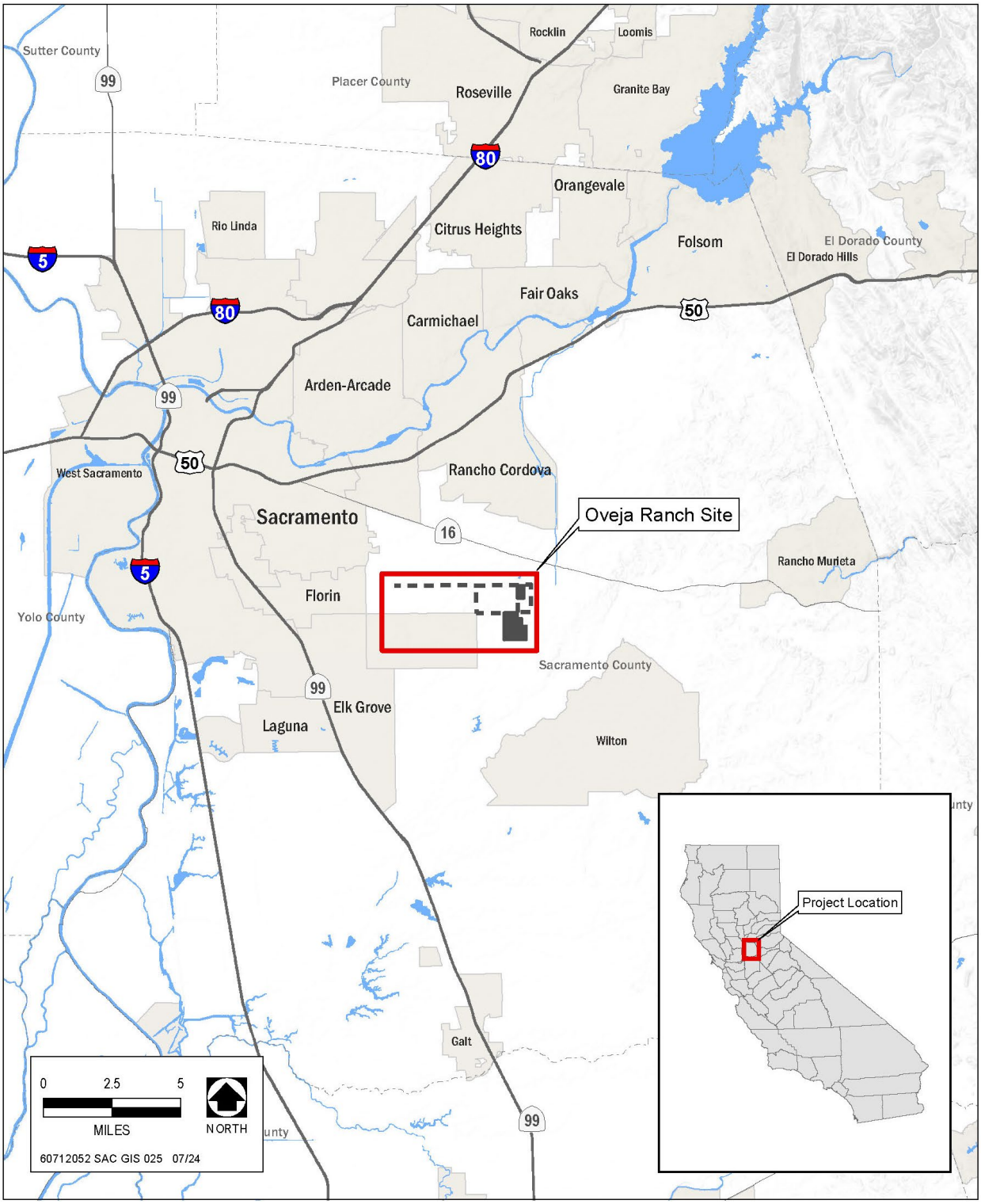
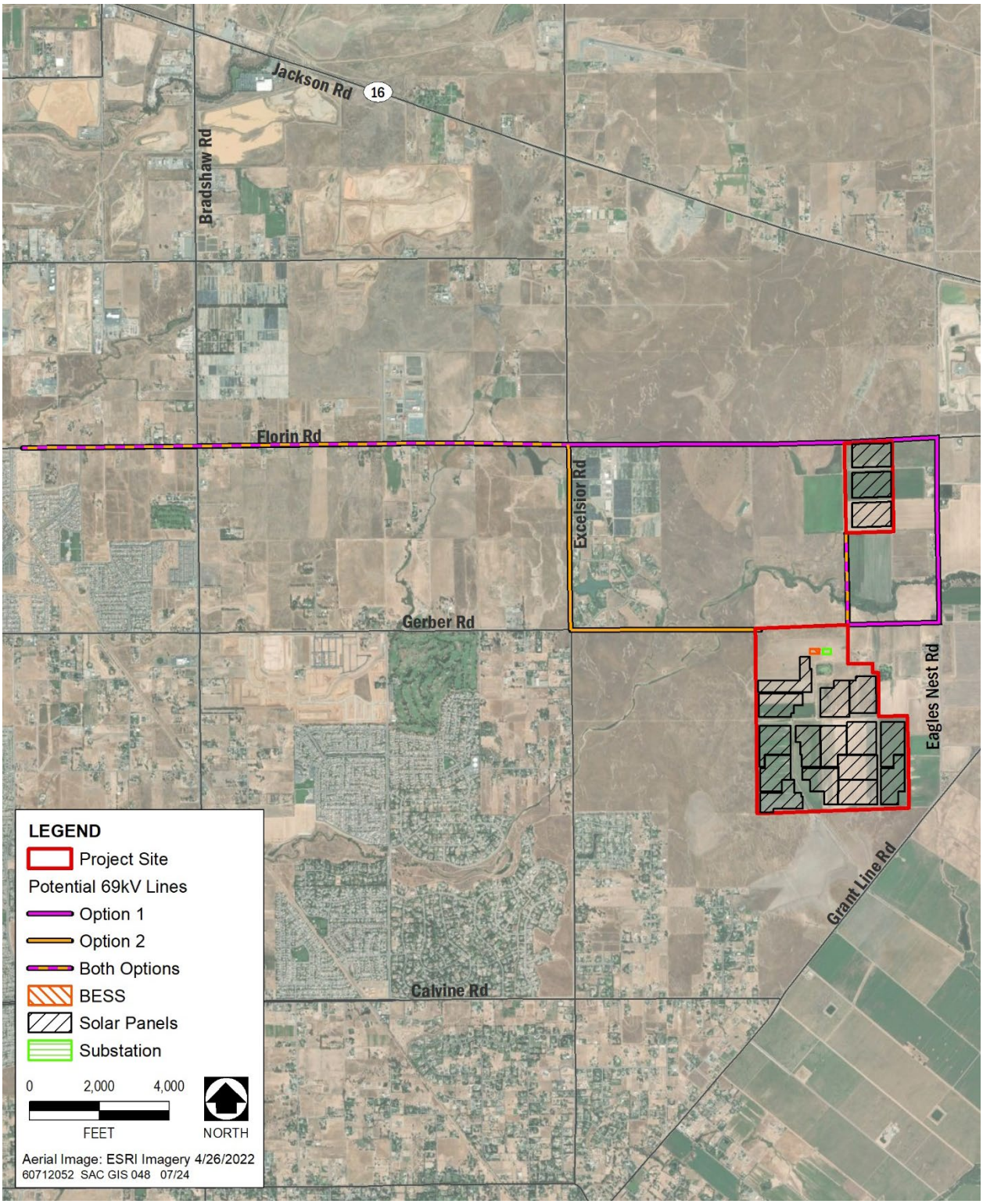


Figure 1. Regional Location Map



Source: SMUD 2024, AECOM 2024

Figure 2. Site Location Map with Proposed Project Elements

Project Objectives: SMUD is committed to developing carbon free renewable energy in a manner that supports the community, protects the environment, and respects human rights. SMUD's key objectives for the project include the following:

- Contribute to a diversified energy portfolio that will aid in the continued improvement of air quality in the Sacramento Valley Air Basin by decreasing reliance on fossil fuel combustion for the generation of electricity and reduce SMUD's exposure to price volatility associated with electricity and natural gas.
- Provide a renewable power resource to support the SMUD Board of Directors' 2030 Zero Carbon Plan, approved in 2021, which establishes a flexible pathway for SMUD to eliminate carbon emissions from its power supply by 2030 by developing and procuring dependable renewable resources.
- Develop a project that will deliver a reliable, long-term supply of economically feasible solar and battery storage for up to 75 MW of electrical capacity at a point of interconnection with the grid managed by SMUD.
- Site the project to avoid natural wetlands and other sensitive habitats.
- Develop an agrivoltaics project that integrates agricultural irrigation production including sheep grazing.
- Optimize the delivery of solar-produced and stored energy and minimize the geographic extent of impacts by locating the facility near existing electrical infrastructure with available capacity.
- Design a flexible PV solar energy and battery storage facility that is capable of utilizing the best available, efficient, cost-effective, and proven PV solar and storage technology.
- Construct the facility in a location that is readily accessible from existing roads and that would not require the construction of major new roadway improvements.

Project Description: The Oveja Ranch Solar Project includes construction and operation of a PV solar power and battery storage facility and interconnection facilities, including a generation substation, and interconnection lines, that would provide new power production capacity of up to 75 MW delivered at the point of interconnection with the electrical grid managed by SMUD. The project site would generally comprise PV solar modules, foundation piles, racking, direct current (DC) collection, AC to DC inverters, alternative current (AC) collection, fencing, roads, inverters, medium voltage transformers, an interconnection line between the generation substation, BESS equipment, and interconnection lines to the existing SMUD distribution system. During construction, a temporary construction trailer/office complex and staging areas would be established. During operation, the proposed project would likely include a small structure or storage container that would provide space for an onsite office for the site operator, equipment storage, and portable sanitary facilities. At the end of the project's life (anticipated to be 34 years and 11 months), the project and its assets would be decommissioned.

Figure 2 provides a conceptual site layout for the solar and battery storage facility and supporting infrastructure based on currently available 10% design drawings. Based on analysis in this Draft EIR and advanced design engineering, the area ultimately developed by the project could differ slightly from what is shown in Figure 2. For example, the solar arrays could be arranged differently, the collection line layout altered, the battery storage may be in one yard

area or may be dispersed within the solar arrays, the generation substation location could be modified, or the access roadway or fencing alignments could change. However, the project footprint would not be larger than that shown in Figure 2 which therefore represents the largest potential development footprint. Furthermore, development of the current layout presented in Figure 2 has been guided by resource inventories for natural and cultural resources, and the layout has been sited to avoid sensitive resources. These siting constraints would be carried forward into future engineering design.

Williamson Act Contract Amendments

Under the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, local governments can enter into contracts with private property owners to permanently protect land (within agricultural preserves) for agricultural and open space purposes.

All of the project site is within active Williamson Act contracted properties. As outlined in Table 1, there are three Williamson Act contracts associated with the project site in which those Williamson Act contracts include additional land and parcels outside of the project site.

Table 1. Williamson Act Contracts in the Proposed Project Study Area

Contract Number	Total Contracted Acreage	Contracted Acreage within Project Site
69-AP-023.2 (Northern Area)	316.3	80.5
69-AP-023.5 (Southern Area)	318.8	263.8
69-AP-023.6 (Southern Area)	396.9	190.8
Total	**1,032.0**	**535.1**

Source: Sacramento County 2023

The Williamson Act contracts for these parcels do not currently include PV solar development as a compatible use. As such, the property owners intend to amend their contracts to allow for solar PV facilities and BESS in conjunction with their ongoing agricultural activities. PV solar was not a foreseeable activity at the time most Williamson Act contracts were executed; however, it is quickly becoming a frequent co-use of agricultural and grazing uses throughout California and elsewhere. As part of the project, the contracts would be amended to allow for solar PV facilities and battery energy storage as compatible uses, consistent with the agricultural zoning of the site.

Solar Modules, Collection Systems, and Inverters

The project would install solar PV module arrays that would convert solar energy directly to electrical power to supply the electrical grid. The solar PV modules would convert the sunlight striking the modules directly into DC power, which would be transformed to AC power via an inverter. The precise configuration of the arrays within the project site may vary to avoid constraints identified over the course of environmental review and further design development.

The project would include PV modules mounted on a single-axis horizontal tracking system or a fixed tilt system, or a combination of both. The infrastructure described herein would be similar for either a single-axis tracking system or a fixed-tilt system.

A single-axis horizontal tracking system, shown in Figure 3, includes the installation of PV modules mounted on a rack with a torque tube, which would be designed to track the sun's path through the sky along a single axis. When the sun is directly overhead, the modules would be at a zero-degree angle (level to the ground). The modules would tilt in either direction (east or west), tracking the sun through the course of the day. At a horizontal position, the modules would be approximately 6 to 12 feet off the ground. The tracking system would be fixed to the ground via driven piles. Solar panels would be washed occasionally, using water from existing onsite sources.

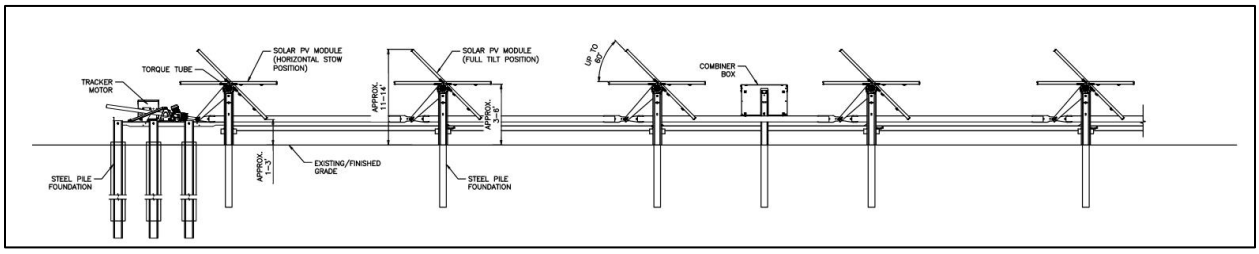


Figure 3. Single-Axis Tracker Solar PV Typical Elevation View

In addition to a single-axis horizontal tracking system, two types of fixed-tilt systems are being considered, horizontal and vertical fixed-tilt systems. If a horizontal fixed-tilt system were used, as shown in Figure 4, the modules would be fixed at an angle of approximately 15 to 25 degrees to the south. If a vertical fixed-tilt system were used, as shown in Figure 5, the modules would be mounted on two sides of the posts (bifacial) and fixed at an angle of approximately 90 degrees pointing east-west. The mounting system for both types of fixed-tilt modules would include posts driven into the ground, with table frames bolted to the driven posts. The modules would be mechanically fastened to the tables. These fixed-tilt modules would typically be up to 8 feet off the ground surface at the highest point of the array and 1 to 2 feet off the ground at the lowest point of the array depending on the terrain.

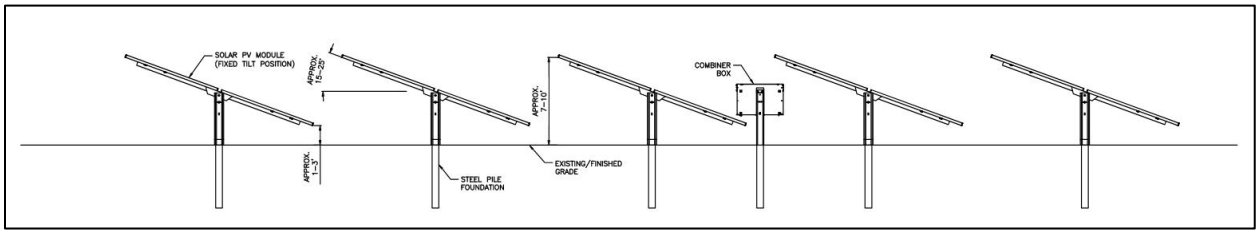


Figure 4. Horizontal Fixed-Tilt Racking Solar PV Typical Elevation View

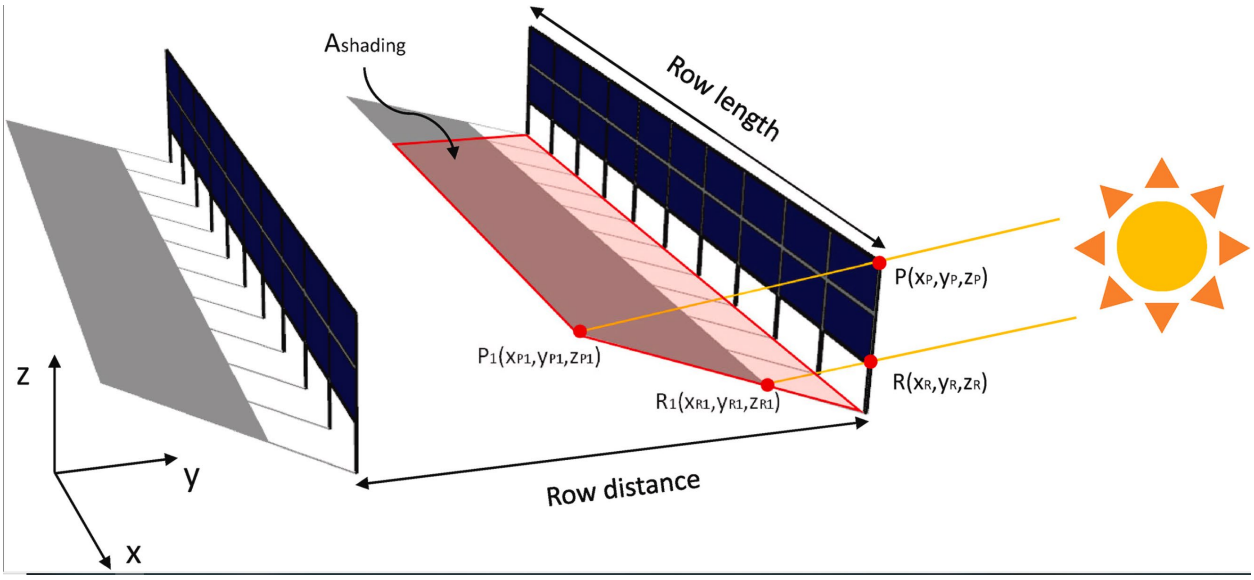


Figure 5. Vertical Fixed-Tilt Racking Solar PV Example

Depending on soil and hydrologic conditions, steel posts would be driven into the soil to a depth of approximately 3 to 11 feet. If the results of detailed geotechnical investigations indicate that driven steel posts are not an optimal foundation, other embedded foundation designs may be utilized.

The project would have an underground network of AC power cables and communication lines that would connect the array transformers to a medium voltage combining switchgear and communication equipment. The cables would typically be located in trenches up to 4 feet in depth backfilled with native soils or engineered material. This switchgear would connect, via an overhead or underground collection system, to the proposed generation substation. As discussed above, the project site would include a northern area that would include solar panels and a southern area that would include solar panels, the substation, the battery energy storage system, and other operational components. Since there would not be a substation or battery energy storage system in the northern portion of the site, the project would also include a 0.5-mile-long collector line that would run north-south between the northern part of the site to the southern part of the site and would connect both areas of the project site. Where an overhead line is used, it would be supported by wooden or steel poles approximately 30 to 40 feet tall. These lines would follow existing infrastructure easements or access roads when feasible. The onsite substation would then transform the final voltage to connect the project power to the existing SMUD distribution system.

Battery Energy Storage System

A battery energy storage system (BESS) is proposed to be constructed within the project footprint (see Figure 6 and Figure 7). Two main types of BESSs are being considered for the project: a DC-coupled and an AC-coupled system. A DC-coupled system would consist of multiple small battery units located on concrete skids or metal posts adjacent to the solar arrays. An AC-coupled system would consist of one or more metal containers similar in size to a shipping container likely located on a concrete pad in the battery storage area. The BESS would be connected to the proposed generation substation via an overhead or underground collection system similar to the solar component of the project.

The BESS storage system would follow the latest national fire protection safety codes. The codes include fire prevention, and mitigation and suppression system requirements.

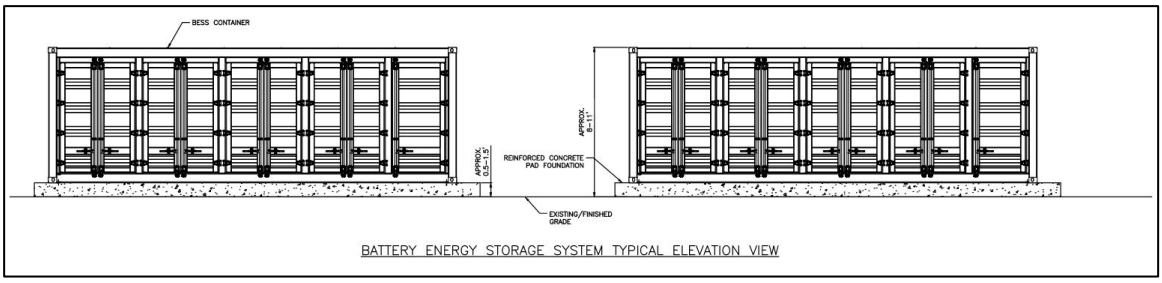


Figure 6. Battery Energy Storage System Typical Elevation View

Figure 7. Battery Energy Storage System

Substation

The proposed onsite substation would be a minimum of 350 feet by 350 feet and include three generation step-up transformers, breakers, buswork, protective relaying, meters, a site control center building, switchgear, backup power provided from the local utility, associated substation equipment, and a dedicated perimeter fence. The substation would be constructed and operated to step up the voltage of the electricity generated from the PV arrays or stored in the BESS. The substation site would be improved with compacted materials and foundations to support electrical equipment and supporting infrastructure. The substation structures would range in height from approximately 20 to 60 feet. Ten (10) foot security fencing consisting of chain link topped by barbed wire would be placed around the perimeter of the new substation.

Station service is planned to be provided via the new overhead distribution lines. Emergency generators may be needed in the event of loss of station service.

The substation may include a site control center building. The building would be less than 3,600 square feet in size and designed to meet federal, state and local building, electrical and fire

codes, and may include adjacent parking for employees. During construction and operations, portable sanitary facilities would be utilized.

Interconnection Lines

The project would interconnect to SMUD's distribution system through new and reconductored distribution facilities. The project would include up to 3.5 miles of new offsite 69 kilovolt (kV) lines and up to 4 miles of reconductored existing overhead 69kV lines. Reconductoring is the process of replacing wires on an existing electric circuit to update them to meet capacity needs; reconductoring often requires the existing poles to be replaced. There are two options to connect the project gen-tie lines to the SMUD 69kV system, as shown in Figure 2:

- Option 1: install 69kV along Florin Road, Eagles Nest Road to the property line to the Oveja Ranch property site. There is existing overhead 12kV along the majority of the route; plans call for installing a double-circuit 69kV with an 12kV underbuild.
- Option 2: install new 69kV along non-public road/property line to the west of the Oveja Ranch property site. There are no existing facilities along the route. This new line would connect to existing 69kV lines along Excelsior Road between Florin Road and Gerber Road which would require reconductoring of 69kV existing single-circuit 69kV with 12kV underbuild.

Both options include utilizing the existing 69kV line along Florin Road between approximately 300 feet east of Arroyo Willow Drive and Excelsior Road, which would require reconductoring existing single-circuit 69kV with a 12kV underbuild; the 12kV would also be reconductored since the pole line would have to be rebuilt.

The overhead lines (including the overhead distribution lines and 0.5-mile long collector line that connects the northern and southern portions of the project site) would be designed to reduce raptor and other bird collisions and electrocutions in compliance with SMUD's current Avian Protection Plan (APP) standards (SMUD 2016). Avian protection design standards and mortality reduction measures in the SMUD APP include installing flight diverters to increase overhead wire visibility in high-risk collision areas and using 60-inch clearance (minimum vertical separation of 36 inches from phase to ground on single-phase structures or 43 inches between energized conductors and ground on three-phase structures) pole design in eagle/raptor use areas. In addition, the APP requires that avian injuries and mortalities be reported to the SMUD APP Coordinator and that corrective actions be implemented if high mortality rates or avian caused power outages are recorded. Observations of injured or deceased birds during routine inspections are reported to SMUD's APP Coordinator.

Access and Internal Road Improvements

Primary access to the project site during construction and operation would be provided by existing, or newly constructed, paved, graveled, or dirt roads and/or driveways extending to the project site from Eagles Nest and Florin roads. To the extent possible, the existing earthen farm roads within the project site would be improved and utilized to provide access to the solar and BESS equipment to accommodate ongoing maintenance of these facilities and to accommodate emergency vehicles. Improved (earthen or graveled) roads, approximately 12 to 20 feet wide, would be constructed throughout the site and between arrays where existing farm roads cannot be utilized or new roads are needed. Internal roads within the site would be improved with a gravel overlay to minimize air quality impacts during construction and reduce dust accumulation on future solar panels.

Utilities

Existing overhead distribution lines adjacent to and within the project site may be used to provide energy to project infrastructure and personnel during construction and operation of the project. Some existing distribution lines may need to be removed, reconfigured, and/or placed underground.

Fencing and Lighting

The entire project site would be fenced to restrict access to authorized personnel only, improve safety, isolate electrical equipment, protect onsite improvements from theft and vandalism, and minimize potential conflicts with surrounding land use. The new security fencing would be chain link and typically six feet in height topped with three-strand security wire. A small gap at the bottom would allow small wildlife (e.g., small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians) passage under the fence. The final location and design of the fencing would depend on the final design of the project site. Additional fencing within the project site would be installed to protect sensitive resources (such as vernal pools and seasonal wetlands and adjacent buffers) and would remain in place during construction of the project. The fencing would be checked periodically, including after storms, and any debris build up removed by maintenance personnel.

The project would include external dark sky compliant safety lighting and permanent lighting on the substation, entrances to the arrays, and certain array or BESS-related equipment such as medium voltage combining switchgear. Temporary construction lighting also may be necessary. Construction lighting would be shielded and angled downwards. Mobile lighting would be used for nighttime construction activities and would also be shielded and angled downwards. No bright white lights, such as metal halide, halogen, fluorescent, mercury vapor, and incandescent lighting would be used during construction or for long-term operations. Lighting at the inverters medium voltage combining switchgear, and substation would generally be switched off and only switched on if maintenance is required outside of daylight hours. Lighting at entrances would be on motion sensors or on from dusk until dawn and some motion sensor lights would be installed along perimeters for security. These lights would be similar to flood lighting on the front of a home.

Meteorological Station and Telecommunications

Meteorological stations, approximately 10 to 15 feet in height, would be installed within the PV solar field. Telecommunications would be provided from a local provider or a microwave/satellite communications tower. Underground and/or overhead fiber optic cables would be installed onsite and along the interconnection and collection between the solar areas, BESS yard, and the generation substation.

Setbacks

A 250-foot setback would be established from onsite vernal pools and a 25-foot setback would be established from onsite seasonal wetlands. Wildlife friendly fencing would be used to demarcate the buffer and protect the seasonal wetlands and vernal pools during construction.

Construction Activities

Construction of the project would take approximately eighteen months to two years and is proposed to begin as early as the third quarter of 2026 and conclude in 2028. Preconstruction activities would include permitting, any required preconstruction resource surveys, geotechnical and other surveying, and installation of fencing. Additionally, the contractor would begin to

mobilize for construction. Construction mobilization would include preparing and constructing site access road improvements, establishing temporary construction trailers and sanitary facilities, preparing initial construction staging areas, and preparing water access areas near existing onsite wells. The project would utilize two onsite groundwater wells for construction and operations.

Construction staging and the temporary construction office would be located within the project site. Temporary lighting may be installed to facilitate deliveries and construction management. Construction staging areas would be used to store construction materials, worker parking, and provide a designated area for receiving construction deliveries, including temporary parking for delivery trucks waiting to unload. The staging areas would be cleared of vegetation during construction and may be graveled. Upon completion of construction, staging areas would be restored consistent with the rest of the site to post-construction conditions. Other temporary staging/laydown areas would also be established within the main project site during construction.

After establishment of the staging area(s), project construction would begin with initial site preparation work. Grading would be minimized to the extent feasible within the solar array areas and would be consistent with the setback requirements. Within the solar array area, limited and localized grading may be used to prepare the site for post and PV modules installation and to enhance or construct new access roads. Grading would likely be required for the proposed BESS yard and substation.

Following site preparation, vertical support posts would be driven into the ground and capped after installation. These posts would hold the support structures, or tables, on which PV modules would be mounted. Trenches for the underground AC and DC cabling and collection, and the foundations for the inverter enclosures and transformers, would be prepared. Trenching would occur within each array to place the AC and DC electrical cables underground. Upon placing the cables in the trenches, the trenches would be backfilled, and previous contours restored to the maximum extent feasible. The trenches for these cables are typically between 3 and 3.5 feet deep. During construction the trenches would be covered when not in active construction or ramps provided to ensure wildlife would be able to escape. Concrete foundations would be prepared for the BESS and generation substation components as well as for the interconnection and connector poles.

Once the foundations are complete, the BESS and generation substation equipment would be delivered, placed, and mounted on foundations. The BESS and generation substation components would be connected and prepared for commissioning and energization. Interconnection poles would be set at their foundation sites and conductor would be strung between the different facilities prior to commissioning and energization.

Typical construction equipment such as scrapers, dozers, dump trucks, watering trucks, motor graders, vibratory compactors, sheepsfoot, trenching and cable installation equipment, and backhoes would be used during construction. Other construction equipment that may be used would include generators, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), pickup trucks, loaders, excavators, skid loaders, directional and other drilling equipment, road reclaimers, post drivers, forklifts, a mobile crane, and a boom lift.

Post-construction, the majority of the site would be vegetated with grazing and pollinator friendly vegetation, with the exception of the footprints for the substation, BESS yard, the solar panel support posts, the foundations for the inverters, switchgear, and transformers and roadways.

Fuel may be stored onsite during peak construction activities and would be stored consistent with standard construction best management practices. Self-contained concrete washout stations may be needed on the project site to support concrete foundation installation.

Construction Workforce

The expected number of construction workers onsite daily would vary by construction phase, with an expected daily average of 13 workers and a peak of 15 daily workers for the initial construction phase (site preparation) to up to a daily average of 219 workers and a maximum of 263 daily workers during the final construction phase (building/infrastructure construction). The construction workforce is expected to arrive at the project site between approximately 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. and leave the site between approximately 4:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday for most of the project construction period. During hotter weather, construction crews may arrive earlier or leave later in the evening. Some earlier or later hours and weekend work may also be required to maintain the project construction schedule, complete critical activities, and accommodate deliveries. The number of personnel onsite during nighttime construction would depend upon the nature of the construction activity or materials being delivered to the site. As needed, mobile lighting units would be used to accommodate temporary construction activities.

Access and Traffic

Most of the traffic generated during project construction would be for employee commuting and the delivery of components and equipment. Primary access to the project site during both construction and operation would be provided from Eagles Nest and Florin roads. This could involve a temporary turn lane from Eagles Nest and/or Florin roads onto the project site (likely access would be from Florin Road for the northern area, and from Eagles Nest Road for the southern area) for construction, which could require road widening at that location and temporary construction access improvements.

In addition to construction workforce trips, project construction would require the following types of vehicle trips (all heavy vehicles):

- equipment and material deliveries;
- excavation, debris, and material hauling; and
- visitors, inspectors, management.

Most of the construction traffic would likely originate from Jackson Road (State Route 16) via Highway 50 or Grant Line Road via Highway 99. Materials would generally be delivered outside of the peak morning and afternoon traffic hours to the extent feasible and would be delivered to the designated receiving area. The materials would then be distributed within the site as needed.

Grading and Vegetation Removal

Grading and vegetation removal is proposed along the access roads, at the location of the inverters and transformers, at the BESS yard, and the generation substation. Aside from these areas, vegetation removal and site clearing would generally occur where solar panels would be installed. Tree removal is not anticipated. However, if tree removal is required, any applicable County tree ordinances would be adhered to. Following project construction, the majority of the site occupied by solar panels would be vegetated with grazing and pollinator friendly vegetation.

Other Site Improvements

To help prepare the project site for development of the project, the following site improvements would be completed:

- installation of a temporary 12kV line to provide power at staging yards;
- relocating existing 12kV lines providing power to wells.

Construction Waste Management and Recycling

Construction activities would generate waste and recyclables that in some cases may require offsite disposal. The California Green Building Code requires that 65 percent of construction and demolition waste be diverted from landfills.

Waste generated from the proposed project during site preparation and construction activities may consist of the following types of waste: scrap metal (copper wire, iron, steel, and aluminum); solid waste (trash, cardboard, wood products, inert organics, and concrete); and minimal hazardous waste (fuel, lubricants, and oils used by construction equipment).

All waste shipped offsite would be transported in accordance with the Department of Transportation, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 49, Subtitle B, Chapter I and California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 13, Division 2.

Hazardous waste generated would be properly stored and disposed of in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations. No hazardous waste is expected to be generated during construction; however, construction equipment uses various hazardous materials (diesel fuel, oil, solvents, etc.). If disposal of these materials would be needed, they would be disposed of offsite in accordance with all applicable laws pertaining to the handling and disposal of hazardous waste.

Operation and Maintenance Activities

The project would operate seven days per week. One regular onsite employee may be required for approximately half the work week, and some personnel may visit the site to monitor, maintain, and if needed, repair the system. PV panels may be periodically washed with water during project operation, as needed. To conservatively estimate potential panel washing operational water use, it is estimated that solar panels would be washed once per year in case of excessive soiling. The project may also require occasional repair or replacement of project components. Inverters may require replacement every 10 years, while PV panels generally last 30 to 40 years. Thus, infrastructure replacement is expected to be rare. Other operational activities would include BESS equipment maintenance, interconnection equipment maintenance, production reporting, equipment inspecting and testing, and similar activities. General site maintenance would include vegetation management, road maintenance, removal of debris from fences, and general upkeep of the facility. Vegetation management would predominantly be accomplished by the landowner’s sheep grazing operations.

After construction is complete, the project would continue to use the land for agricultural activities through continued irrigation of the pastures within the project site for grazing and possible crop production and the potential installation of pollinator friendly vegetation. Vegetation would grow under and between the modules to prevent erosion and provide forage for sheep to graze. The grazing lands would be irrigated using the existing flood irrigation system, which would be preserved to ensure that it remains functional during project operations.

Pickup trucks and flatbeds, forklifts, and loaders may be used for normal maintenance. Large, heavy-haul, transport equipment would be occasionally used to repair or replace equipment. Non-hazardous waste would be collected in designated locations and picked up/disposed of by a local waste disposal or recycling company. Oil, electronic equipment, and other potentially hazardous waste would be collected, stored, and disposed of in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Preventive maintenance kits and certain critical spare equipment would be stored onsite in a small structure or storage container, while all other components would be readily available from a remote warehouse facility.

A Pest Management Plan (PMP) would be prepared for the project prior to approval of improvement/grading plans for operations and maintenance that would identify the methods and frequency for management of weeds, insects, disease and vertebrate pests that may impact the project and adjacent sites.

Safety Controls

Health and safety plans would be developed for the construction and operational phases of the project. While project-specific plans have not yet been prepared, the plans would call for implementation of various measures including safety signage in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements.

Decommissioning and Site Restoration

At the end of the project's useful life (anticipated to be 34 years and 11 months), the solar panels and associated infrastructure would be decommissioned. Given the project's operating life cycle and distant timeframe for decommissioning activities, it would be too speculative to describe the specific decommissioning activities in this Draft EIR. Currently, standard decommissioning practices include dismantling and repurposing, salvaging/recycling, or disposing of the solar energy improvements, and site stabilization. The project would prepare a decommissioning and reclamation plan prior to decommissioning that would detail the timeline for removal of the project components.

Actual decommissioning and site restoration activities for the project would be conducted in accordance with all applicable requirements in effect at the time of project termination, and a final decommissioning plan, based on then-current technology, site conditions, and regulations, would be prepared prior to actual decommissioning.

Under current standard decommissioning practices, solar modules are removed, collected, and recycled or disposed of at a properly licensed landfill. Some or all components (i.e., aluminum and steel components) are salvaged and/or recycled, as feasible. Components that cannot be salvaged are removed and disposed of in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

All components of the underground system would be removed down to six feet below ground surface as part of decommissioning activities. Similarly, access roads that would conflict with other land uses would be removed and the aggregate recycled, and roads that are compatible with other land uses would be left in place. Overhead electrical collection lines, poles, and associated components would be disassembled and removed, and reprocessed, sold, salvaged, or otherwise disposed of in an appropriate manner.

Substation components including steel, conductors, switches, transformers, fencing, control houses, and other materials, typically would be removed from a site and would be repurposed, salvaged, or recycled, or disposed of in an appropriate manner.

Some grading may be required to re-contour access road areas or address erosion. Future site restoration activities are assumed to be similar to the procedures used during construction to restore temporarily disturbed areas.

The above information is provided for context only. Additional CEQA analysis would be conducted prior to decommissioning, at the time when further details are known and the decommissioning plan has been prepared.

Potential Environmental Effects: The EIR will describe the significant direct and indirect environmental impacts of the project. The EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of the project, defined as impacts that could be exacerbated when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. SMUD anticipates that the project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts in the following resource areas, which will be further evaluated in the EIR:

- **Aesthetics:** Temporary and long-term changes in scenic views or visual character of the project site as viewed by motorists on Florin Road, Gerber Road, and Grant Line Road and recreationalists, along with the potential for glare.
- **Agriculture:** Temporary or long-term changes to existing environment and conversion of important farmland to non-agricultural use.
- **Air Quality:** Temporary increases in air pollutant emissions associated with construction and operation associated with mobile-source emissions from maintenance worker trips and operation of the emergency backup generator.
- **Biological Resources:** Temporary disturbances or permanent losses of habitats and wildlife corridors; temporary disturbances or permanent losses of state or federally protected wetlands; temporary disturbances or permanent losses of special-status plant species; and construction disturbances or take of special-status terrestrial and aquatic species.
- **Cultural Resources:** Temporary or permanent disturbances of known or unknown historical or archaeological resources.
- **Environmental Justice:** Potential to create or worsen existing adverse conditions that would negatively impact communities within SMUD's service area, especially those identified as having a high sensitivity on the Sustainable Communities Resources Priorities Map.
- **Geology and Soils:** Potential soil erosion or loss of topsoil during construction; and potential impacts related to unstable soils, earthquakes, unique geological features, and expansive soils at the project site.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Temporary increases in greenhouse gas emissions associated with mobile-source exhaust from construction worker commute trips, truck haul trips, and equipment (e.g., excavators, graders), with much greater long-term decreases in greenhouse gas emissions due to replacement of electrical generation by fossil fuel power plants.

- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** Potential spills of hazardous materials during construction; potential exposure of workers to hazardous materials during construction; and increased exposure to wildland fire risk during construction.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality:** Potential temporary and permanent alterations of local drainage patterns and increases in stormwater peak flow and volumes and potential downstream runoff effects; temporary effects on water quality during construction, including spills of fuel or other hazardous materials; and potential impacts to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplains along the 69 kV powerlines.
- **Land Use and Planning:** Compliance with local and regional adopted plans.
- **Noise:** Temporary increases in noise (including off-site, truck traffic noise) and vibration levels during construction
- **Transportation and Traffic:** Temporary increases in traffic and traffic hazards on local roadways (including Florin Road and Werber Road) during construction.
- **Tribal Cultural Resources:** Potential substantial adverse changes to tribal cultural resources.
- **Utilities and Service Systems:** Potential increase in demand for additional water, wastewater, or solid waste treatment or disposal facilities, and its potential impacts on utility services. This section will also discuss the addition of the local interconnection facilities to the local grid.
- **Wildfire:** Potential increased exposure to wildland fire risk during construction.

These potential impacts will be assessed and discussed in detail in the EIR, and feasible and practicable mitigation measures will be recommended to reduce any identified significant or potentially significant impacts. The discussion in the EIR will also include an alternatives analysis.

SMUD anticipates that the project will not result in significant environmental impacts in the following resource areas, which will not be further evaluated in the EIR: energy, geology and soils, mineral resources, population and housing, and recreation.

Potential Approvals and Permits Required: Elements of the project could be subject to permitting and/or approval authority of other agencies. As the lead agency pursuant to CEQA, SMUD is responsible for considering the adequacy of the EIR. Other potential permits required from other agencies could include:

Federal

- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:** Compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) for discharge of fill to Waters of the U.S, if required.
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:** Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Consultation, if required.
- **State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO):** Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (required in support of CWA Section 404 permit, if required).

- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**: Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR/LOMR) for floodplain boundary, if required.

State

- **State Water Resources Control Board**: Clean Water Act Section 402, construction general permit, if required.
- **Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board:** Clean Water Act Section 401, water quality certification; and/or waste discharge permit for waters of the state, if applicable.
- **California Department of Fish and Wildlife:** Compliance with California Endangered Species Act (CESA), potential permits under Section 2081 of the Fish and Game Code if take of listed species is likely to occur; and Section 1602 streambed alteration agreement for construction activities that occur within the bed, bank or channel of waterways, if required.
- **California Department of Transportation:** Encroachment permit and/or transportation management plan for any oversized equipment, such as transformers, if required.

Local

- **Sacramento County:** Williamson Act, i.e. California Land Conservation Act of 1965, contract amendments to allow solar panels as a compatible use.
- **Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD):** Authority to Construct/Permit to Operate pursuant to SMAQMD Regulation 2 (Rule 201 et seq.), and Air Quality Management Plan consistency determination.

Document Availability: the NOP is available for public review on SMUD's website: www.smud.org/ceqa. Printed copies of the NOP are also available for public review at the following locations:

Sacramento Municipal Utility District
Customer Service Center
6301 S Street
Sacramento, CA 95817

Sacramento Municipal Utility District
East Campus Operations Center
4401 Bradshaw Road
Sacramento, CA 95827

Public Scoping Meeting: An in-person public scoping meeting will be conducted by SMUD to inform interested parties about the project, and to provide agencies and the public with an opportunity to provide comments on the scope and content of the EIR. The public scoping meeting is an opportunity for interested parties to provide input on the project, though no decisions will be made. Anyone wishing to make formal comments on the scope or content in the EIR should also do so in writing. The meeting time and location are as follows:

Wednesday, September 18, 2024
Time: 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Location: Sheldon High School, 8333 Kingsbridge Drive, Sacramento, CA 95829

Comment Period: Agencies and interested parties may provide SMUD with written comments on topics to be addressed in the EIR for the project. Comments can be provided anytime during the NOP review period, but must be received by 5:00 p.m. on October 6, 2024. Please send all comments, with appropriate contact information, to the following address via hard copy or email:

Kim Crawford
Sacramento Municipal Utility District
Environmental Services Department
6201 S Street, MS B209
Sacramento, CA 95817
OvejaRanchSolar@smud.org

Project Updates: SMUD is committed to keeping the community informed about this project. We'll update our website - smud.org/OvejaRanch - with schedule information, construction impacts, and progress updates.

For environmental process questions, contact Kim Crawford at kim.crawford@smud.org or 916-732-5063

All comments on environmental issues received during the public comment period will be considered and addressed in the Draft EIR, which is anticipated to be available for public review in early 2025.