

PREFACE

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

This final environmental impact report (FEIR) has been prepared by Sacramento County (County), as lead agency, in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15132). The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors will use the FEIR as one of the informational sources to determine whether to approve or deny the project.

This FEIR contains comments and responses to comments received on the draft environmental impact report (DEIR) for the Coyote Creek Agrivoltaic Ranch Project, along with the entire body of the DEIR showing revisions to the DEIR made in response to comments. See Chapter 20 for comments and responses to comments.

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the proposed project was published on January 19, 2022. Agency and public scoping meetings (held virtually via Zoom) were held in February 2022. Along with a Notice of Completion, the DEIR was released and circulated for public review period consistent with the directives in Public Resources Code Section 21161. Concurrent with the Notice of Completion, the County also provided public notice of the availability of the DEIR for public review through publication in a local newspaper of general circulation, and with notices which were sent to individuals who had requested such notification. The written comment period began on March 3, 2025, and closed on May 5, 2025.¹

Where changes to the text of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) were made to reflect revisions to the proposed project or are required as a result of the comments received, those changes are shown with **bold underline for text added** and ~~striketrough for text deleted~~ within the pertinent chapter(s). Corrections to errors in pagination or format, spelling corrections, grammatical corrections, and other such editorial changes that are unrelated to the substantive content of the EIR are not highlighted. It should be noted that the revisions do not change the intent or content of the analysis or effectiveness of mitigation measures presented in the DEIR.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5 requires a lead agency to recirculate a DEIR or portions of a DEIR when “significant new information” is added to the EIR after the lead agency gives public notice of the availability of the DEIR but before certification. “Information” may include project changes, changes to the environmental setting, or

¹ The State Clearinghouse circulated the Notice of Completion and DEIR among state agencies with a review period of March 3rd, 2025 to April 18th, 2025. The County circulated and published a Notice of Availability with a public review period of March 5th, 2025 to April 21st, 2025. The County formally extended the comment period to May 5. This was communicated via email to those persons requesting extension and on the County’s Project Webpage. The County has collected and provided responses to all comments received.

additional data or other information. The CEQA Guidelines do not consider new information to be significant unless the lead agency changes the EIR in a way that deprives the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment on a substantial adverse environmental effect or a feasible way to mitigate the impact that the agency or project proponent has declined to implement.

Section 15088.5 states “significant new information” requiring recirculation may include:

- A new significant environmental impact that had not previously been disclosed in the DEIR would result from the project or from a new mitigation measure;
- A substantial increase in the severity of an environmental impact that had already been identified unless mitigation measures would be adopted to reduce the impact to a level of insignificance;
- A feasible project alternative or mitigation measure would considerably lessen the significant environmental impacts of the project, but the proponents will not adopt it; or
- The DEIR was so inadequate and conclusory that meaningful public review and comment were precluded.

In response to comments from the public, public agencies, and consulting tribes on the DEIR, the County has incorporated minor revisions to the text of the DEIR into the FEIR including modifications of mitigation measures. The revisions to the text of the DEIR outlined below present minor corrections, additions, and revisions. The FEIR includes modifications to the original proposed project to reduce impacts to biological resources, including oak woodlands and Special Status Wildlife Species, such that the revised proposed project (referred to herein as the “Reduced Footprint Project”) feasibly accomplishes the project objectives. As described below, the Reduced Footprint Project incorporates a reduced solar development area and preserves at least 1,150 acres of oak woodlands, wildlife corridors, and habitat of Special Status Wildlife Species in perpetuity through grants of conservation easements approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The Reduced Footprint Project is described in greater detail below. None of the information added to the DEIR alters the significance conclusions. Rather, the new information amplifies and clarifies the information provided in the DEIR. None of the revisions or updates to the DEIR’s analyses represents “significant new information” as that term is defined by the CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5. Thus, recirculation is not necessary as the changes do not constitute significant new information under CEQA.

The DEIR, FEIR, and all appended materials are available electronically on Sacramento County’s website. Visit <https://planning.sacounty.gov/Pages/Coyote-Creek-Agrivoltaic-Ranch.aspx> or <https://planningdocuments.sacounty.net/>; within the “Application No.” search field type PLNP2021-00191 and click “search”.

REDUCED FOOTPRINT PROJECT AS STAFF RECOMMENDED PROJECT

As projects move through environmental review and discretionary approval to permitting and construction, it is common for a project to be refined to address comments from the public, consulting tribes, and responsible and other public agencies. As the applicant has coordinated with the County during the environmental review process, the applicant has reviewed potential modifications to the project to determine whether they could reduce impacts to biological resources, including oak woodlands and special-status wildlife species, while also feasibly accomplishing the project objectives. As a result of this coordination process, County staff recommends consideration of a revised version of the proposed project known as the “Reduced Footprint Project.”

The Reduced Footprint Project is very similar to the original proposed project described in the County’s NOP and evaluated in detail throughout the DEIR. The potential impacts of the Reduced Footprint Project are also very similar to the original proposed project, as detailed in Chapter 20 of this FEIR. As noted in Chapters 3 through 15, the impacts of the Reduced Footprint Project are similar or reduced when compared with the original proposed project. The Reduced Footprint Project reduces the solar development area compared to the original proposed project, but is otherwise essentially the same as the original proposed project.

Both the original proposed project contemplated in the DEIR and the Reduced Footprint Project would construct and operate a 200-megawatt (MW) solar photovoltaic energy-generating facility for a period of approximately 35 years. Compared with the original proposed project, the Reduced Footprint Project would remove 55 acres from the solar development area in the southern portion of the project site to increase preservation of oak woodlands and habitat for special-status wildlife species. The area to be removed from the solar development area is shown in Plate PF-1. Since the original proposed project in 2021, modest gains in technology have allowed for improvements in panel wattages that can be procured. Thus, the project can reduce its footprint while maintaining the same overall capacity.

The reduction in solar development area embodied in the Reduced Footprint Project would reduce the impact to blue oak forest by 26.2 acres (26 percent), would reduce the impact to blue oak woodland by 18.5 acres (10 percent), and would reduce the impact to riparian forest by 1.1 acres (26 percent). The impact to valley and foothill grassland would be reduced by 9.2 acres (approximately 1 percent).

Compared to the original proposed project, the Reduced Footprint Project would also reduce the impacts to individual trees and oak canopy cover. The Reduced Footprint Project would avoid impacting 1,294 individual trees (27 percent) and would reduce the impact to oak canopy cover by 13.25 acres (24 percent). The reduction in solar development area under the Reduced Footprint Project would also reduce grading and blasting-related impacts. With the Reduced Footprint Project, approximately 27.9 acres that would have required grading or blasting would no longer require grading or blasting to prepare the site for installation of the solar arrays and ancillary improvements. Reductions in grading and blasting activities would in turn reduce air pollutant emissions

and overall soil disturbance during construction, as well as the total number of blasts required for the project.

No new areas outside of the study areas analyzed in the technical reports used for the original proposed project would be affected, and the Reduced Footprint Project would not result in any new or increased impacts compared to that evaluated in the DEIR.

ADDITIONAL MITIGATION

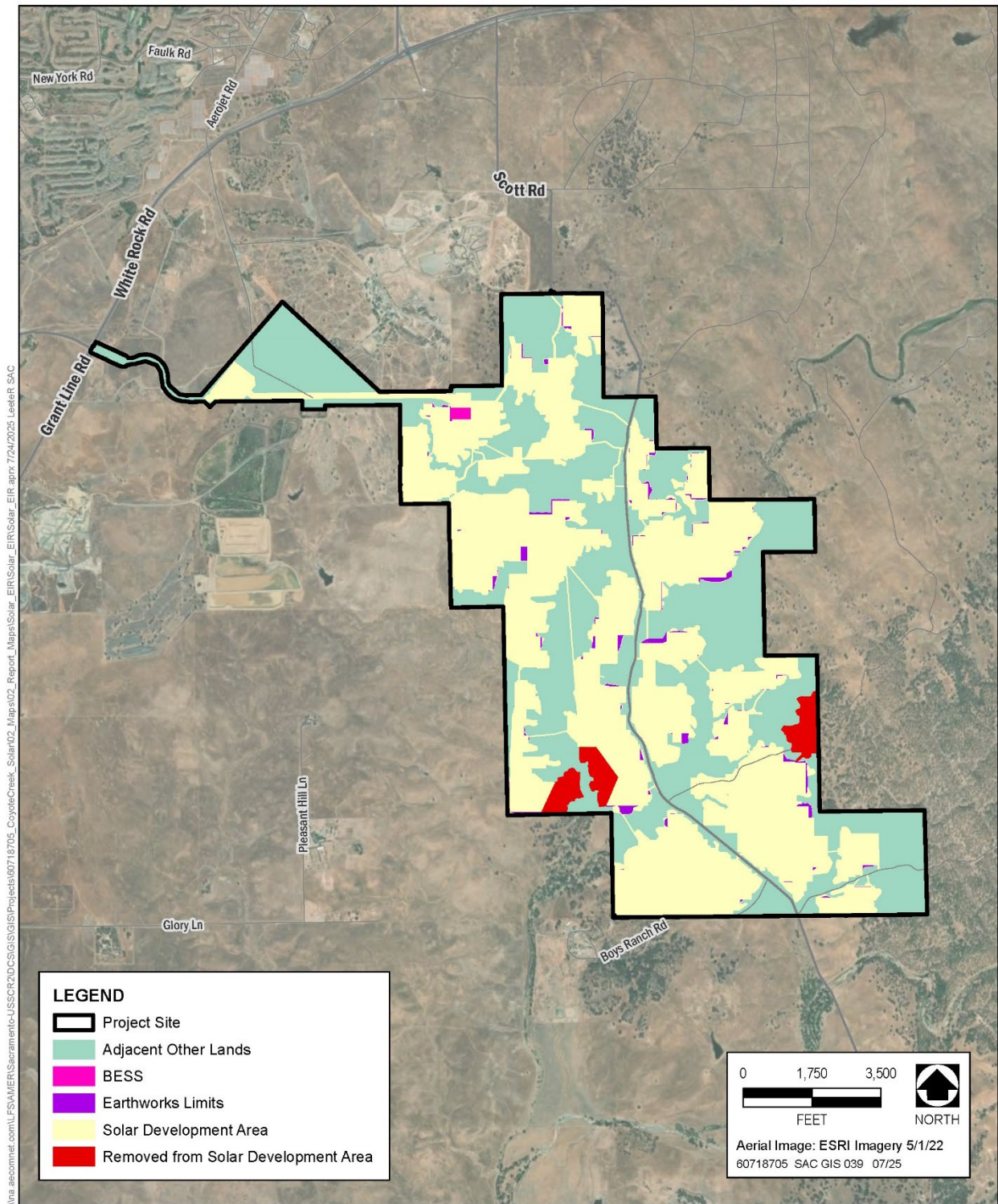
In addition to the changes to the original proposed project represented in the Reduced Footprint Project, there have been modifications to mitigation measures that would be required by the County as a condition of approval of the Reduced Footprint Project and included in a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program. Each of the changes to mitigation language is shown in **bold underline for text added** and ~~striethrough for text deleted~~ in Chapters 3 through 15 of the Final EIR. Revisions to mitigation language are primarily focused on mitigation for potential biological resources impacts, and as detailed in Chapter 20, has involved coordination with representatives from the CDFW.

Most of the changes do not substantively affect the nature of required mitigation, but instead involve clarifying language with respect to the intent of the mitigation. None of the changes to mitigation would in any way increase the impact of the Reduced Footprint Project compared to the impacts attributable to the original proposed project addressed in the DEIR.

One additional mitigation measure has been added as a part of the FEIR: Mitigation Measure BR-2b, Preserve Oak Woodlands and Special Status Wildlife Habitat. This new mitigation, added as a part of the FEIR, requires preservation of at least 1,150 acres of for long-term preservation of oak woodlands and/or habitat for the Swainson's hawk and/or other special status wildlife species, subject to approval by the CDFW, the final acreages to be preserved and terms of the legal instruments governing long-term preservation to be determined. The preservation is to occur through a conservation easement, deed restriction or similar mechanism. Additional detail on this change to required mitigation is included in Chapter 6 of the Final EIR, Biological Resources (see pages 6-104 and 6-105 in particular) and in Chapter 20, Responses to Comments.

All mitigation measures described within this FEIR would be a required condition of the Reduced Footprint Project, should it be approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Plate PF-1: Reduced Solar Development Area



Source: Dudek 2025

Plate PF-2: Reduced Footprint Project Site Plan

