Planning and Environmental Review
Leighann Moffitt, Director

County Executive
Ann Edwards

COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
NOTICE OF PREPARATION

January 19, 2022

TO: **ALL INTERESTED PARTIES**

SUBJECT: **NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND SCOPING MEETINGS FOR COYOTE CREEK AGRIVOLTAIC RANCH PROJECT (PLNP2021-00191)**

Sacramento County will be the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a project known as Coyote Creek Agrivoltaic Ranch. This Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been sent to responsible and trustee agencies and involved federal agencies pursuant to Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines. Agencies should comment on the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agencies' statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

The project description, location, and the probable environmental effects are contained in the attached materials and may also be viewed online at:

https://planningdocuments.saccounty.net/ViewProjectDetails.aspx?ControlNum=PLNP2021-00191

Please send your Agency's response to this Notice to:

Joelle Inman, Environmental Coordinator
Planning and Environmental Review
827 7th Street, Room 225, Sacramento, CA 95814
or via e-mail at: CEQA@saccounty.net

Your response should include the name of a contact person in your agency.

An Agency Scoping Meeting consistent with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines is scheduled for February 8, 2022, at 1:30pm. The Meeting will be held virtually via Zoom and can be accessed with the following link:

https://saccounty-net.zoomgov.com/j/1604403417?pwd=eWU0Z3lEeGxVRlNDSWh6S0xaWm1Wdz09

A Public Scoping Meeting consistent with Section 15083 of the CEQA Guidelines will also occur. The Meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2022 at 5:30pm via Zoom and can be accessed with the following link:

https://saccounty-net.zoomgov.com/j/1619024419?pwd=cVExMkY5NWF1WFZ5bHRXYUhwYmx0Zz09

Agencies with specific questions about the project should contact Alison Little, Environmental Project Manager, at littlea@saccounty.net for further information.

PROJECT TITLE: Coyote Creek Agrivoltaic Ranch Project

CONTROL NUMBER: PLNP2021-00191

PROJECT PROPONENT(S):

Owner: Barton Ranch, LLC, C/O: Forest Halford

Applicant: Sacramento Valley Energy Center, LLC, Attn. Daniel Menahem

Consultants: Gillum Consulting, Attn. Jim Gillum

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION:

Sacramento Valley Energy Center, LLC is requesting a use permit to construct and operate a 200-megawatt (MW), alternating current, photovoltaic (PV) solar energy facility on parcels that total approximately 2,555 acres in the Cosumnes community of unincorporated Sacramento County. The project is generally located south of U.S. Route 50, northwest of Rancho Murieta, southeast of the Prairie City State Vehicle Recreation Area (PCSVRA), and south of White Rock Road in the Cosumnes community. Specifically, it is located on what is known as the "Barton Ranch" adjacent to 3830 Scott Road. The geographic center of the project site is at 38.576278° North - 121.132944° West, at an elevation of 196 feet above sea level. The assessor parcel numbers for the project site are 072-0110-066 through -076, 073-0020-018, 073-0020-029, 073-0020-034 through -035, 073-0020-037, 073-0020-039 through -045, 073-0020-049 through -054, and 073-0020-056 through -077.

A dedicated transmission line called a generation tie (gen-tie) line would extend approximately 1.3 miles west to provide an interconnection to the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) 230 kilovolt (kV) powerline which runs through PCSVRA. The assessor parcel numbers for the gen-tie alignment are 072-3160-002, 072-0100-027, 072-0100-018, 072-0110-031, and 072-0110-068. Reference Plate NOP-1 for project location.

The applicant is proposing to construct, operate, and at the end of the project's life, decommission a solar generation and energy storage facility. The development area will include an on-site substation, inverters, fencing, roads, and supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system. Energy storage facilities would be developed at a centralized location or distributed throughout the project site. Reference Plate NOP-2 project site plans.

<u>Project Facilities</u>

The Project will consist of the following components: Solar PV modules mounted on tracking systems and power conversion stations including inverters and transformers; on-site substation; energy storage system with capacity to store approximately 100MW AC/400MWh of energy; two meteorological towers up to 15 feet in height; diesel, propane, or battery powered backup generators; temporary water storage (during construction); private access roads, perimeter roads, and fencing; and a gen-tie line and switchyard. The fenced solar facility would house all structures, including solar panels, tracking support structures, inverters, transformers, SCADA, and interconnection facilities (on-site substation).

The project will use photovoltaic (PV) technology to convert sunlight directly into direct current (DC) electricity. These PV modules would be mounted to a tracker system that would be grouped in 1 to 4 MW arrays. These solar array fields would be arranged in groups called blocks, and each array block would be connected to an inverter and transformer station to convert the current from DC to alternating current (AC) and step up the voltage to a higher voltage, which is more efficient for transmitting power to the project substation. Medium-voltage electric lines (underground and/or overhead) are used to collect the electricity from each medium-voltage transformer and transmit it to the facility substation, where the voltage is further increased by a high-voltage transformer to match the electric grid for export to the point of interconnection (230 kV transmission system operated by the Sacramento Municipal

Utility District [SMUD]). In addition to direct transmission of energy, the project would likely incorporate battery storage, as detailed below.

Solar Energy Generation System

The proposed project includes installation of approximately 200 MW of solar power facilities. The proposed site plan is shown on Plate NOP-2. Solar energy would be captured by PV panels. Depending on the selected manufacturer for the PV modules, the modules would be mounted on fixed-tilt, single or dual-axis tracking structures. The modules would be grouped in nominal 1 to 4MW-AC arrays. Fixed tilt arrays would be oriented in east-west rows and will face in a generally southern orientation with a tilt angle between 10 and 40 degrees to maximize the amount of incidental solar radiation absorbed over the year. Single-axis trackers typically rotate ±60 degrees (0 degrees is horizontal) along a nominally north-south axis to track the sun's movement throughout the day. Structural support elements would be constructed of corrosion-resistant steel, aluminum, or equivalent members that are attached to circular piers or I-beam posts that would be driven into the prepared base grade of the site.

The entire array block is connected to an inverter and transformer station to convert the current from DC to AC and step up the voltage to a higher voltage, which is more efficient for transmitting power to the project substation. The racking system that would hold the panels would have a maximum height of approximately 12 feet above grade.

At the center of each array is a power conversion station where inverters take the DC power output from the PV modules and convert it to AC power. The adjacent pad-mounted transformer steps the voltage up to a medium-voltage level. The medium-voltage outputs from each of the pad-mounted transformers would be collected in combining switchgear located at discrete locations on the project site. The medium-voltage output from the combining switchgear would be connected to the substation where it would then be stepped up to 230 kV for export to the grid.

On-Site Substation

The on-site substation would be an open-air facility on the western limits of the project site (see Plate NOP-2) and the termination point of the collection system for 34.5 kV electricity. The output of the entire field would be passed through a final interconnection step-up transformer to convert it to 230 kV. The ancillary communication system may include an above- or below-ground fiber optic cable. The project output would be interconnected to the regional electrical transmission system from the on-site substation/switchyard via the gen-tie facilities described below. Additionally, the on-site substation would host the grid intertie safety equipment and switches required to interconnect to the high-voltage transmission system.

Energy Storage System

The project will likely incorporate a battery energy storage facility in addition to the energy storage housed within the inverters. The energy storage system is proposed to provide a capacity of approximately 400 megawatt hours and may be centralized and located adjacent to the substation or switchgear, or alternatively, the energy storage component may be distributed throughout the plant adjacent to individual power conversion centers. The storage component may be housed in a warehouse type building or alternatively in smaller modular structures such as cargo shipping containers.

Generation Tie Line

The energy from the solar energy generation and energy storage systems would be transported from the on-site substation to SMUD's 230 kV powerlines. The final route of the gen-tie line is subject to refinement based on easement discussions with SMUD and PCSVRA, but generally would extend approximately 1.3 miles west from the facility's on-site substation where it would interconnect into the existing SMUD facilities (see Plate NOP-2). The 230 kV gen-tie line would consist of one or two single-circuit structures, which would be constructed with up to 150-foot-tall wood, concrete, or steel poles. The

number, composition, and height of the poles, as well as the type of conductor, would be finalized during detailed project design. A new 230 kV switchyard approximately 400 feet by 600 feet in size would be constructed at the point of interconnection with SMUD's existing 230 kV power line. Additionally, a retention basin would be located on the south side of the switchyard to control stormwater runoff. The area for the switchyard and interconnection improvements may require modification of the current easement or a new easement to be granted over PCSVRA property. The switchyard is proposed to be located in an area where Aerojet is performing groundwater remediation and will be designed to avoid or require any relocation of existing groundwater monitoring wells. Construction of the gen-tie may require relocation of some facilities or improvements to those facilities within PCSVRA's boundaries, including but not limited to the go-kart track, barn, office, bleachers, camera system, restrooms, and parking lot. The modifications and improvements would be completed in conjunction with PCSVRA staff.

Ancillary Facilities

The project activities will include the construction and maintenance of ancillary facilities such as access roads and security features. Project access roads would be 20 feet wide and composed of compacted native material. These access roads would connect to existing paved roads located on the perimeter of the project site. Security features will include a fence lining the perimeter of the project site, security lighting, and signs on all gates and doors.

Construction

Project construction is expected to take approximately 12 months. The number of workers on-site during construction would vary over the construction period and will likely average up to 250 workers per day. The daily number of trips required to deliver equipment and supplies will range from 5 to 40, with an average of approximately 10 trips per day. Grading activities will disturb a significant portion of the project site; however, grading is anticipated to be implemented by moving the least amount of dirt feasible to soften the steepness of the slopes to less than 10 percent grade. The on-site drainage patterns will be maintained to the greatest extent possible, though it may be necessary to remove, relocate, and/or fill in portions of the land. Minor cut or fill may be required to install transmission pole and tracker foundations. PV panels will be placed on top of driven piles and soil compaction may be required to support these panels, as well as buildings and traffic loads.

Operation

Operation of the site would be expected to generate approximately 4 to 10 trips per day for maintenance and security personnel. The project site will be fenced, and any security lighting will be shielded as necessary to reduce light pollution. Landscaping and entry monumentation will be maintained at the entrance to the project site and along Scott Road.

The solar energy component would be unmanned and monitored remotely through the SCADA system, with the exception of periodic inspections and maintenance activities. Expected maintenance personnel would consist of up to 10 individuals to assist in the washing of the solar panels, one to four times a year, depending on site conditions. Panel washing would require 14 days to complete per wash cycle.

Decommissioning Plan

The planned operational life of the facility is approximately 35 years. However, if the facility continues to be economically viable, it could be operated for a longer period. The project will include implementation of a decommissioning plan at the end of the project's life. The decommissioning plan will describe the proposed decommissioning measures for the facility and for all appurtenances constructed as part of the facility, the activities necessary to restore the site to its previous condition, the costs associated with the proposed decommissioning measures, and the conformance with applicable regulations and with local and regional plans.

SACRAMENTO COUNTY PLANNING ENTITLEMENT REQUESTS:

1. A **Use Permit** to allow an approximately 200-megawatt solar photovoltaic solar energy generating facility (Commercial Solar Facility, Level II) on multiple parcels totaling approximately 2,555 acres, in the AG-80, AG-80 (F) (Flood Combining), M-2, and SPA (Aerojet Special Planning Area, *Sacramento County Zoning Code* Section 508-300).
2. A **Special Development Permit** to allow:
    a. Reduced setbacks of zero (0) feet from internal property boundaries for solar arrays
    b. Internal access roadways to be dirt rather than constructed with a dust free surface
    c. Alternative landscape buffering materials
3. A **Design Review** to determine compliance with the Sacramento County Countywide Design Guidelines.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The primary objectives of the proposed project include:

- Provide a local supply of solar energy for the Sacramento County region to implement the County of Sacramento General Plan policies applicable to renewable energy.
- Cost-effective commencement of delivery of local utility-scale solar energy to support attainment of SMUD (a) 2030 Zero Net Carbon Plan targets, and (b) Integrated Resource Plan targets.
- Support SMUD region in attainment of state 2030 Renewable Portfolio Standards.
- Comply with SMUD Integrated Resource Plan siting and size criteria for local utility-scale solar facilities.
- Optimize use of existing electrical transmission and other infrastructure with existing capacity to minimize environmental impacts of new construction.
- Provide local employment and training opportunities for a variety of building trades.

ENVIRONMENTAL/LAND USE SETTING:

The project site is located along Scott Road in eastern Sacramento County. The topography at this site is generally downward sloping toward the south-southeast with elevations ranging from approximately 200 feet above mean sea level in the south to 320 feet above mean sea level in the north, and elevations as low as 180 feet above mean sea level in the washes/creekbeds. The majority of the site is characterized by rangeland/grassland and has historically been used for sheep grazing and apiary facilities.

Coyote Creek and Carson Creek intersect the project site from north to south. Within the subject property, Carson Creek primarily flows east of Scott Road, crossing under this road approximately 0.6 miles north of the southern boundary. Coyote Creek runs nearly parallel to Scott Road on the west side. Ephemeral drainages and creeks are scattered throughout the property. One perennial spring was identified near the upper reach of Coyote Creek within the subject property. A groundwater extraction and treatment system was installed at this spring and is assumed to be associated with the Aerojet Superfund Site.

There are existing buildings and infrastructure within the project area, including an active ranch house along Scott Road with accompanying facilities (barn, storage shed, wells), a Verizon cell-phone tower, evidence of abandoned homesteads (e.g., wells, foundations), numerous dammed cattle ponds, and historical evidence of placer mining. Additionally, the northwest section of the project site (within Assessor's Parcel Numbers 072-0100-018, 072-0100-27, and 072-0110-031) is occupied by the

PCSVRA. Reference Plate NOP-1 for aerial photo of project site.

The project site is primarily bounded by foothill rangeland (zoned Agricultural-80 acres [AG-80]), with the exception of the northwest section being surrounded by the PCSVRA (zoned Heavy Industrial [M-2] and AG-80), numerous wells associated with an Aerojet Superfund Site (zoned Special Planning Area [SPA]), and a large historical placer mining operation adjacent to an existing aggregate operation on Grant Line Road (zoned M-2 [SM]). Additionally, a vacant Sacramento County youth correctional facility (The Boys Ranch) (zoned A-20) is located within 1,000 feet of the southwest corner of the project area.

The unincorporated Sacramento County community of Rancho Murieta is located approximately 6 miles south of the southern boundary. Reference Plate NOP-3 for surrounding land uses and zoning.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS/EIR FOCUS:

Preliminary review of the project, the site, and the location indicates that potentially significant impacts may be associated with, but not limited to, the following topical areas: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Climate Change, Cultural Resources, Hydrology and Water Quality, Water Supply, Land Use, Noise/Vibration, Transportation, and Tribal Cultural Resources. A brief discussion is provided below.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

The EIR will describe the potential impacts associated with glint and glare and visual change based, in part, on technical analyses that have been commissioned for the proposed project, including visual simulations and a glare analysis.

Agricultural Resources

The proposed project is located in eastern Sacramento County on lands identified as grazing land, urban and other land (reference Plate NOP-4). The land underlying the site is subject to Williamson Act contracts 70-AP-044, 69-AP-004, 69-AP-005, 69-AP-006, and 69-AP-008. On March 24, 2021 the County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution finding that solar photovoltaic facilities and battery storage operated in conjunction with agricultural activities is a compatible use with the existing Williamson Act contracts. While the proposed project will occupy land used for agricultural purposes for the proposed solar field, remaining portions of the project site would continue to be used as dryland pasture to provide sheep grazing. Project decommissioning is expected to occur in approximately 35 years, which will restore the site to conditions substantially similar to existing conditions. The EIR will address the potential impacts on agricultural lands, including the use of lands subject to Williamson Act contracts.

Air Quality

The EIR will describe the potential of the project to generate air pollutant emissions during construction and operation of the proposed project based, in part, on an Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emission Calculations Technical Memorandum.

Biological Resources

The project site is on the eastern side of the San Joaquin Valley at the western edge of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range foothills in the east-central portion of Sacramento County. The topography consists of rolling hills intersected by the generally north to south flowing Carson and Coyote Creeks. The vegetative cover is dominated by short vegetation (grasses) and thinly scattered medium sized trees. Vegetation removal is anticipated for grading and other construction activities though areas that are subject to vegetation removal will be re-seeded where feasible. Small wetland systems were identified using the USFWS National Wetland Inventory mapper; these systems will be confirmed in a Jurisdictional Delineation. Project impacts on sensitive habitats and species and the South Sacramento

Habitat Conservation Plan will be comprehensively addressed in the EIR.

Climate Change

The EIR will describe the potential of the project to generate greenhouse gas emissions during construction and operation of the proposed project based, in part, on an Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emission Calculations Technical Memorandum.

Cultural/Tribal Resources

The project site is in an area that is sensitive for cultural/archeological and tribal cultural resources.The proximity of the Cosumnes River and historical evidence of placer mining throughout the project area increase thepotential to encounter cultural or archeological resources. Pursuant to AB 52, consultation with tribal entities will be initiated to determine potential impacts to inform the tribal cultural resources analysis. Information obtained through the AB 52 consultation process will be summarized in the EIR.

Hazards

The proposed gen-tie facilities in the northwest portion of the project site would be constructed in proximity to an area that is subject to ongoing groundwater remediation activities. A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment has been prepared that addressed known hazardous materials in proximity to the project site. The forthcoming EIR will provide a summary of the findings of that assessment, and an analysis of any potential significant impacts related to hazards or hazardous materials, including the provision of recommended mitigation measures (as warranted) to avoid or reduce potentially significant effects to a less-than-significant level.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Most of the project site is subject to minimal flood hazards (Zone X). Limited areas within streambeds or other low spots, primarily located in the southern portion of the subject property, are mapped as areas of special flood hazard without a base flood elevation (Zone A). There will be grading outside of the floodplain within the proposed solar array area. A detention based in proposed at the south side of the switchyard to control stormwater runoff. The EIR will evaluate the impacts of the proposed project to local and federal floodplains and surface water quality associated with soil disturbance. In addition, the analysis will summarize the pertinent findings of the Water Supply Assessment that provides the estimated water demand during the project lifetime in relation to available water supplies.

Land Use

The EIR will evaluate the impacts of the proposed project to cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with land use plans, policies, or regulations that were adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental impacts. This will include addressing any potential impacts on the adjacent PCSVRA that would require partial relocation of certain recreation facilities consistent with an existing easement through that area.

Noise and Vibration

The EIR will describe the potential of the project to cause significant noise or vibration impacts. The analysis will include temporary construction impacts, including pile driving and grading, and operational impacts, including the solar array tracking system.

Transportation

The EIR will describe the potential of the project to result in transportation impacts related to conflicts with applicable transportation programs, plans, ordinances, and policies; increases in vehicular travel demand; hazardous design features; or inadequate emergency access.

Wildfire

The potential for the project to cause or exacerbate wildfire hazards will be addressed in the EIR. The analysis will analyze the potential for fire hazards based on documented fire severity zones at or near the project site, and describe the relevant jurisdictional responsibilities for addressing wildfire in the project vicinity. An analysis of the project construction and operation activities will be provided to determine the potential for significant wildfire impacts; if warranted mitigation measures will be recommended to avoid or reduce potentially significant effects.

INTENDED USES OF THE EIR:

The Sacramento County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors will use the information contained in the EIR in evaluating the proposed project and rendering a decision to approve or deny the requested entitlements. The EIR will serve as an information document for the general public as well. Responsible agencies may also use the EIR as needed for subsequent discretionary actions. Responsible agencies may include but not be limited to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento Municipal Utility District and/or Pacific Gas and Electric.

Table NOP-1, below, includes information required by Section 15124 of the CEQA Guidelines and summarizes the following intended used of the EIR:

- A list of agencies that are expected to use the EIR in their decision making.
- A list of permits and other approvals required to implement the project.
- A list of related environmental review and consultation requirements required by federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or polices.

Table NOP-1: Subsequent Permits, Approvals, Review, and Consultation Requirements

Agency	Approval
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors	Final Environmental Impact Report Certification
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors	Use Permit, Special Development Permit and Design Review
Sacramento County Planning Commission	Recommendation to the Board of Supervisors regarding Use Permit, Special Development Permit, and Design Review
South Sacramento Conservation Agency	Consultation with the Agency to ensure no impacts to existing South Sacramento Habitation Conservation Plan preserves.
Sacramento Municipal Utility District	Various Agreements
County of Sacramento Site Improvement Section	Grading Permit or Improvement Plans
County of Sacramento Department of Transportation	Encroachment Permit
Sacramento County Environmental Management Department	On-site Wastewater Disposal Permit or Well Certification
Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District	Fugitive Dust Prevention and Control Plan, Air Quality Permits
Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Valley Region	Section 402 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit Compliance
Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Valley Region	Waste Discharge Permit
California Regional Water Quality Control Board	Section 401 Certification, Gen-tie Easement and related facilities including land use covenant related to Aerojet's remediation activities
California State Public Works Board	Gen-tie Easement and related facilities

California State Department of General Services	Gen-tie Easement and related facilities
California State Department of Parks and Recreation	Gen-tie Easement and related facilities
California Department of Toxic Substances Control	Gen-tie Easement and related facilities including land use covenant related to Aerojet's remediation activities
United States Environmental Protection Agency	Gen-tie Easement and related facilities including land use covenant related to Aerojet's remediation activities
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Streambed Alteration Agreement, California Endangered Species Act Take Permit
California Public Utility Commission	Authority to Enter into Power Purchase Agreement
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Section 404 Permit
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Federal Endangered Species Act Take Permit, Section 7 Consultation

Plate NOP-1: Project Location Exhibit

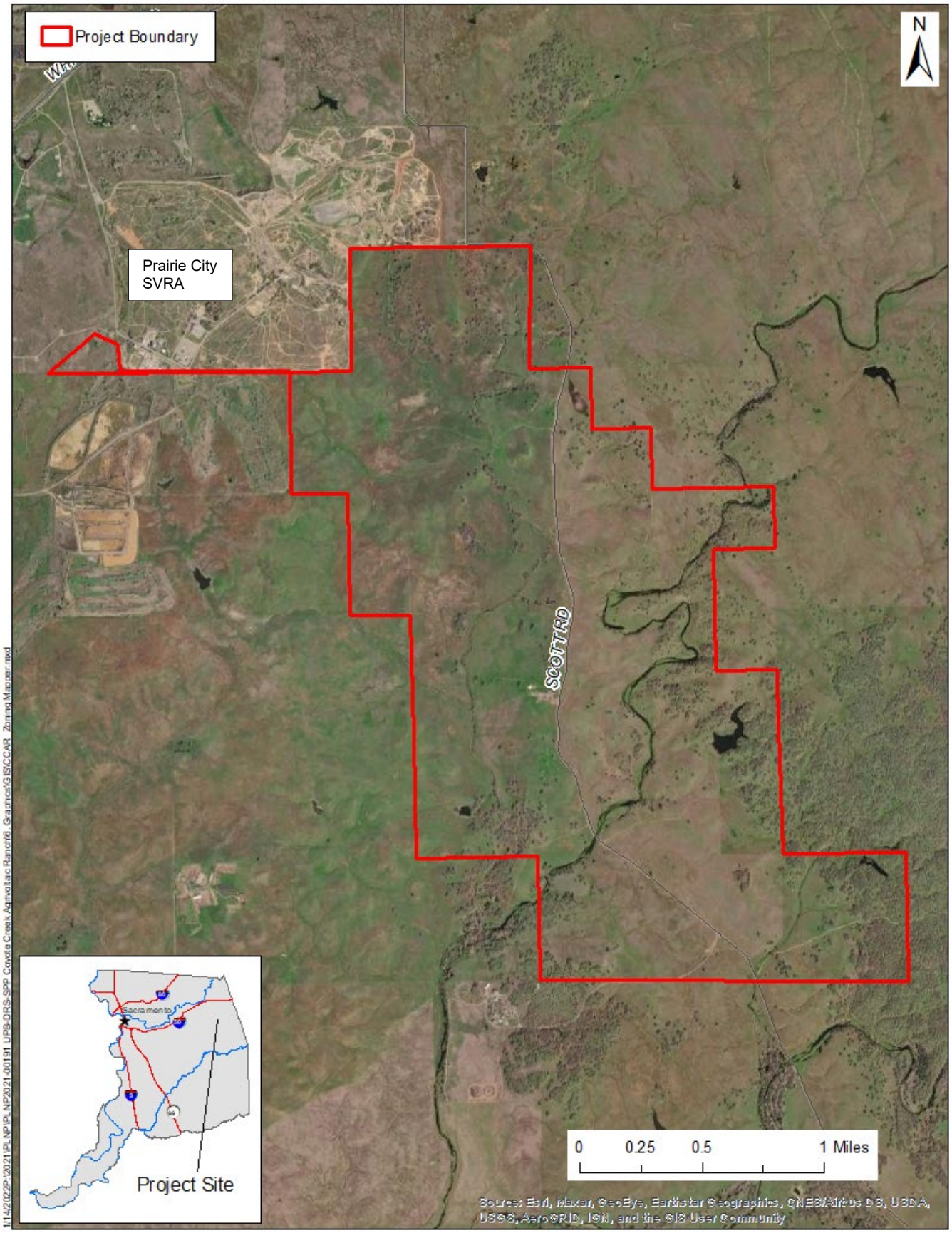
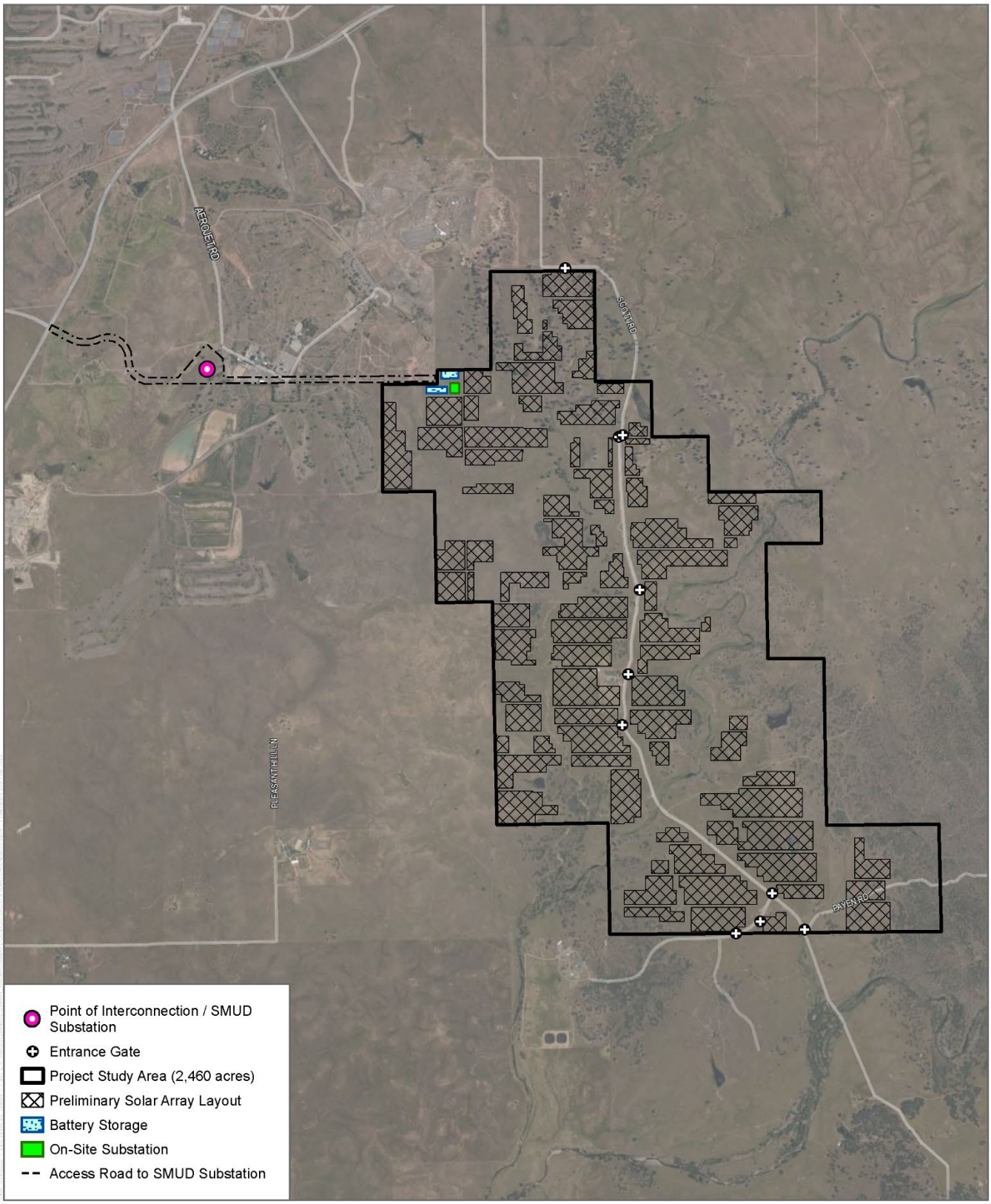


Plate NOP-2: Project Site Plan



SOURCE: USGS 2018; SSHCP

DUDEK

0 1,000 2,000 Feet

NAD1983, CA State Plane Zone II

FIGURE 1

Preliminary Site Plan

Coyote Creek Agrivoltaic Project

Plate NOP-3: Surrounding Land Uses

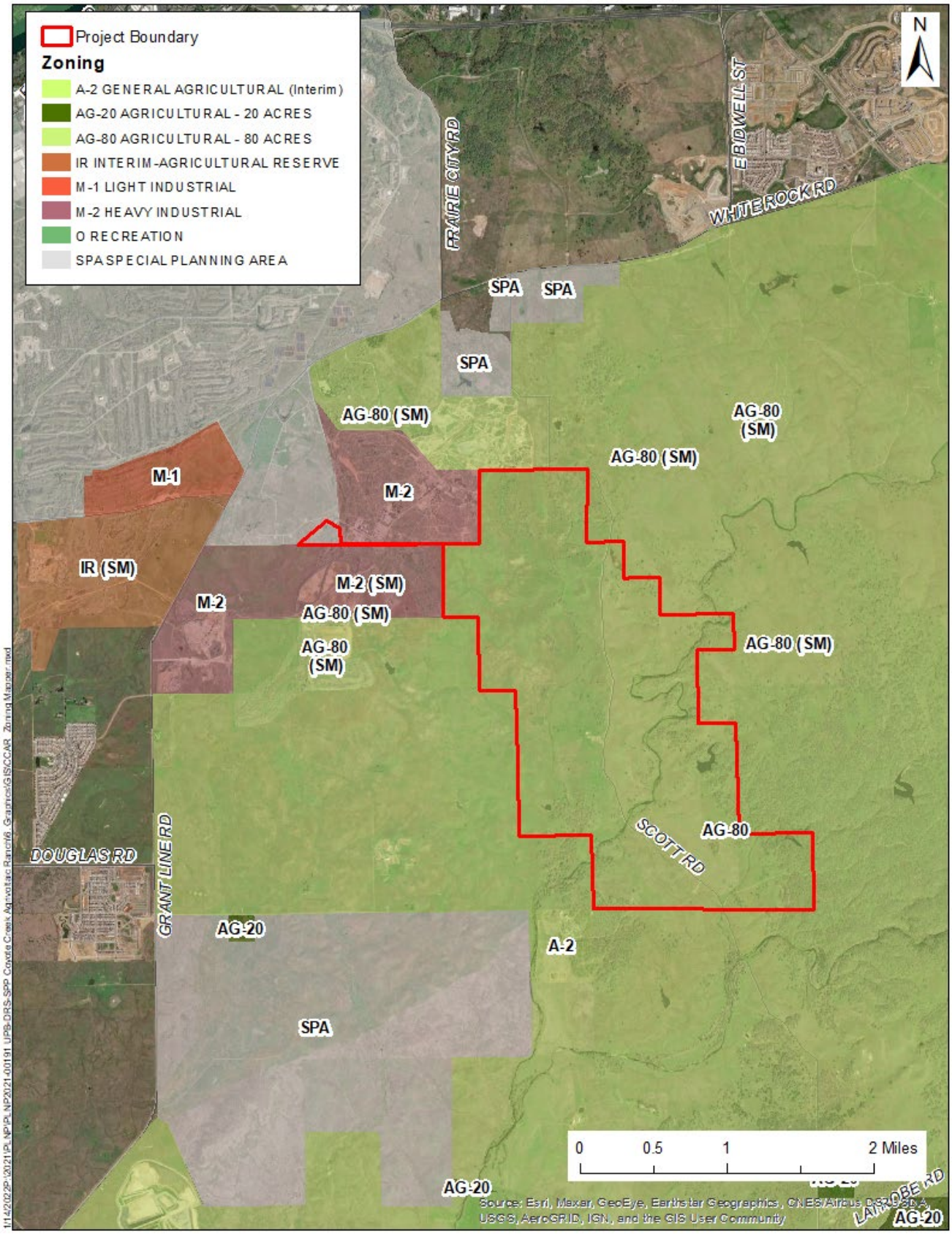
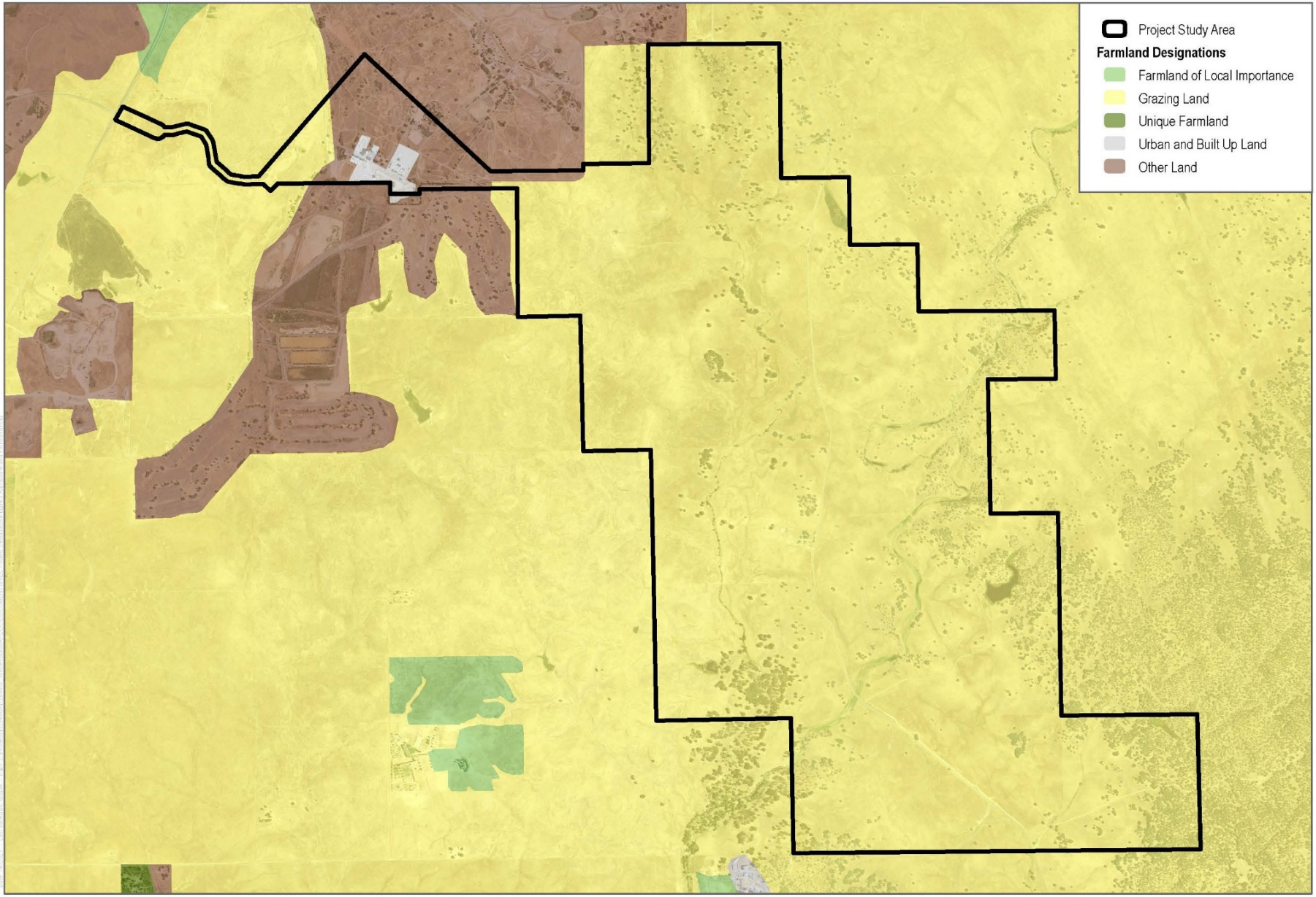


Plate NOP-4: Farmland Map



Please note that the Project Boundaries have been reduced along the Gen-tie connection route. (Reference Plate NOP-2 for the most up-to-date boundary.