



June 27, 2019

**VIA EMAIL: [HGUERRA@CO.TULARE.CA.US](mailto:HGUERRA@CO.TULARE.CA.US)**

Mr. Hector Guerra  
Tulare County  
5961 South Mooney Boulevard  
Visalia, CA 93277-9394

**Governor's Office of Planning & Research**

**JUNE 27 2019**

**STATE CLEARINGHOUSE**

Dear Mr. Guerra:

INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR THE GLOVER SOLAR  
PROJECT,  
SCH# 2019059123

The Department of Conservation's (Department) Division of Land Resource Protection (Division) has reviewed the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) submitted by Tulare County (County) for the Glover Solar (project). The Division monitors farmland conversion on a statewide basis and administers the California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act and other agricultural land conservation programs. We offer the following comments and recommendations with respect to the proposed project's potential impacts on agricultural land and resources.

#### Project Description

The Project is located on a ±150-acre site and consists of a solar facility that would provide approximately 19.95 megawatts of electricity. Project components include: approximately 76,250 solar photo-voltaic modules mounted on single access trackers; associated motors, torque tubes, and drivelines for the single-axis tracking system; eight inverter stations; various wiring, underground cables, combiner boxes, inverters, and transformers; a new, on-site substation/switchyard tying into a new mile-long 6-kV transmission interconnection line with the nearby Southern California Edison substation; access and internal roads; security fencing; and motion activated lighting.

The Project site is located approximately six miles southeast of the City of Tulare and approximately three and a half miles south of State Route 137, abutting Road 164 to the west and Avenue 200 to the south. The site is also identified as Tulare County Assessor Parcel Number 198-060-011 which is zoned agriculture, and is designated as Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance according to the most recent

Important Farmland Map produced by the Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program<sup>1</sup>.

### Department Comments

The conversion of agricultural land represents a permanent reduction and significant impact to the State's agricultural land resources. Under CEQA, a lead agency should not approve a project if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available that would lessen the significant effects of the project.<sup>2</sup> All mitigation measures that are potentially feasible should be included in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). A measure brought to the attention of the lead agency should not be left out unless it is infeasible based on its elements.

The Department advises the use of permanent agricultural conservation easements on land of at least equal quality and size as mitigation for the loss of agricultural land. Conservation easements will protect remaining land resources and mitigate the project impacts in accordance with CEQA Guideline § 15370. The Department highlights agricultural conservation easements because of their acceptance and use by lead agencies as an appropriate mitigation measure under CEQA. Agricultural conservation easements are an available mitigation tool and should always be considered; however, the use of conservation easements is only one form of mitigation that should be considered. Any other feasible mitigation measures should also be considered.

As stated in the IS/MND<sup>3</sup>, the County, through resolution has adopted a two-level review process for evaluating the siting of public and private utility structures (solar) on agriculturally zoned and Williamson Act contracted land.

Level II (a) states, "Adhere to all criteria noted in Level I to be completed...".  
Level II(c) states, "Should not support, unless a unique proposal is approved by the Board of Supervisors, the siting of public and private solar utility structures located outside of UDB, UAB, HOB areas of the County on irrigated prime farmland as defined by any of the following criteria: (i) Identified as Prime Farmland by the FMMP."

### Conclusion

The Department recommends that the County carefully consider the compatibility of the proposed project, not only with Government Code Section 51238.1 (Principles of Compatibility), but also with its own two-level review process for compatibility with the Williamson Act. The Department requests a copy of the Board of Supervisors unique proposal, as stated in the County's two-level review process.

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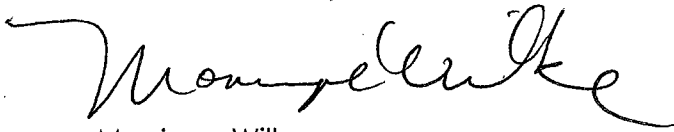
<sup>1</sup> Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, California Important Farmland Finder, 2016, <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/CIFF/>

<sup>2</sup> California Environmental Quality Act Statute and Guidelines, Association of Environmental Professionals, 2017, Section 21002, page 2.

<sup>3</sup> <https://tularecounty.ca.gov/rma/index.cfm/projects/planning-projects/applicant-projects/glover-solar-project-19-003/mitigated-negative-declaration-for-the-glover-solar-project-19-003/>, page 17-20

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Glover Solar project. Please provide this Department with notices of any future hearing dates as well as any staff reports pertaining to this project. If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Farl Grundy, Environmental Planner at (916) 324-7347 or via email at [Farl.Grundy@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:Farl.Grundy@conservation.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Monique Wilber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Monique Wilber  
Conservation Program Support Supervisor

