

**RESOLUTION NO. 2022-\_\_**

**RESOLUTION OF THE YOLO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
ADOPTING AN ADDENDUM  
FOR THE ZONING CODE UPDATE RELATED TO SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS AND  
ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS AND CEQA EXEMPTION FOR THE ZONING CODE  
AMENDMENTS RELATED TO TELECOMMUNICATION FACILITIES**

**WHEREAS**, on November 8, 2022, the Yolo County Board of Supervisors held a public hearing and considered a recommendation from the Planning Commission’s October 13, 2022, decision on the Zoning Code Update (ZC #2022-02);

**WHEREAS**, the proposed ordinance consists of two separate components: (1) an update of the Zoning Regulations of the Yolo County Code related to solar energy systems and energy storage systems uses in the unincorporated area, to reduce regulatory hurdles, clarify terminology, and identify new uses while ensuring consistency with policies of the 2030 Countywide General Plan and with all aspects of State and federal laws related to planning and zoning (“Solar Energy Systems and Energy Storage Systems Ordinances”), and (2) amendments to the Zoning Regulations related to telecommunication facilities to clarify application of existing regulations, identify federal statutes already in effect, and reformat the section for ease of reference (“Wireless Telecommunications Facilities Amendments”); and

**WHEREAS**, as to the Solar Energy Systems and Energy Storage Systems Ordinances, the County seeks to encourage renewable energy systems that are ancillary to the primary uses of a property without compromising impacts to agriculture and natural resources, broaden permit streamlining opportunities for small accessory use solar energy systems, and specify development standards for energy storage systems; and

**WHEREAS**, the County prepared an Addendum to the previously adopted 2011 Negative Declaration for Solar Facilities Ordinances in connection with the updated solar energy systems and energy storage systems ordinances; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 15162(a) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that “When an EIR has been certified or a negative declaration adopted for a project, no subsequent EIR shall be prepared for that project unless the lead agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in light of the whole record, one or more of the following:

- (1) Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;
- (2) Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or Negative Declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or
- (3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete or the Negative Declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:
  - (A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR

or negative declaration;

(B) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;

(C) Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible, and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or

(D) Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; and

**WHEREAS**, staff has determined that the action to update the solar energy facilities ordinances into one consolidated ordinance, broaden the expedited permit process for small accessory use solar energy systems, clarify the distinction between ‘accessory’ solar energy systems and utility solar energy systems, and address provisions for energy storage systems does not cause any “substantial changes,” “new information,” “significant effects,” or require any new or revised “mitigation measures or alternatives,” or trigger any of the other criteria listed in Section 15162(a) of the CEQA Guidelines that would require a subsequent environmental document to be prepared; and

**WHEREAS**, as explained in the Addendum, there is no substantial evidence in light of the whole record that the Solar Energy Systems and Energy Storage Systems Ordinances may have a significant effect on the environment; and

**WHEREAS**, as to the Wireless Telecommunications Facilities Amendments, the County encourages extending broadband services throughout the rural areas by clarifying requirements for telecommunication facilities, reducing the proliferation of new towers through collocation, and specifying federal provisions related to permit streamlining for non-substantial improvements to existing permitted facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, the County reviewed the Wireless Telecommunications Facilities Amendments under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) and determined the project is exempt from CEQA based on the common sense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment; and

**WHEREAS**, a CEQA Exemption has been prepared for the update to the wireless telecommunication facilities ordinance because it can be seen with certainty there is no possibility the activity may have a significant effect on the environment; and

**WHEREAS**, prior to the Planning Commission’s decision on October 13, 2022, to recommend approval of the Zoning Code Update, the Commission reviewed and considered the Addendum to the 2011 Negative Declaration for the Solar Energy Systems and Energy Storage Systems Ordinances and common sense CEQA exemption for the Wireless Telecommunications Facilities Amendments; and

**WHEREAS**, the Addendum and exemption considered by the Planning Commission on October 13, 2022, constitute the environmental documents adopted pursuant to this Resolution in

compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines as they pertain to the Project considered by the Board of Supervisors on November 8, 2022.

**NOW, THEREFORE,** the Board of Supervisors hereby finds and resolves as follows:

1. The foregoing recitals are true and correct.
2. The Board of Supervisors has independently reviewed and analyzed the Addendum to the 2011 Negative Declaration Solar Energy Systems and Energy Storage Systems Ordinances, considered the information and analysis contained therein, and considered all written and oral comments received on the project and these documents.
3. Based on this review and analysis, the Board of Supervisors finds that the Addendum reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors also hereby makes the following additional findings:
  - A. The Addendum has been completed in compliance with CEQA and all other legal requirements and it is incorporated by reference; and
  - B. As further explained in the Addendum, no new or worse significant effects could occur, and no new mitigation measures would be required, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15162. No substantial changes are proposed in the Solar Energy Systems and Energy Storage Systems Ordinances that could involve new or worse significant impacts. There is no substantial new information that shows previously identified significant effects will be more significant than described in the 2011 Negative Declaration for the Solar Facilities Ordinances.
4. For the foregoing reasons, and for all reasons described in the Addendum to the Negative Declaration as well as all other documents in the record for this matter, the Board thus adopts the Addendum as the appropriate level of environmental review for the Solar Energy Systems and Energy Storage Systems Ordinances. The Board of Supervisors has considered the Addendum with the 2011 Negative Declaration prior to adoption of the Solar Energy Systems and Energy Storage Systems Ordinances
5. The Board of Supervisors has independently reviewed and analyzed the notice of exemption prepared for the Wireless Telecommunications Facilities Amendments, considered the information and analysis contained therein, and considered all written and oral comments received on the project and these documents.
6. Based on this review and analysis, the Board of Supervisors finds that the Wireless Telecommunications Facilities Amendments are subject to the common sense exemption because there is no substantial evidence, on the basis of the entire record, that the Wireless Telecommunications Facilities Amendments will have a significant effect on the environment. The Director of the Department of Community Services, or designee, is directed to file a notice of exemption for the Wireless Telecommunications Facilities Amendments.
7. The Director of the Department of Community Services, located at 292 West Beamer Street in Woodland, California, shall serve as the custodian of the administrative record.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED** by the Board on this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2022, by the following vote:


AYES:  
NOES:  
ABSTENTIONS:  
ABSENT:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Angel Barajas, Chair  
Yolo County Board of Supervisors

Attest:  
Julie Dachtler, Senior Deputy Clerk

Approved As To Form:  
Philip J. Pogledich, County Counsel

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy (Seal)

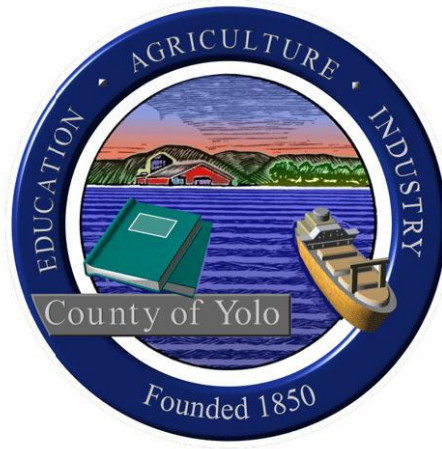
By:   
Eric May, Senior Deputy

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**Exhibit A – Addendum to Negative Declaration**

**Exhibit B – CEQA Exemption**

# EXHIBIT A



## YOLO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

**Addendum to the  
Yolo County Solar Facilities Ordinance Negative Declaration  
ZF 2010-005  
[Initially adopted by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors September 2011]**

**September 2022**

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## ADDENDUM TO NEGATIVE DECLARATION

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### CEQA REQUIREMENTS

This document has been prepared as an Addendum to the Yolo County Solar Facilities Ordinance Negative Declaration in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15164. This is the first Addendum to the Yolo County Solar Facilities Ordinance Negative Declaration, which was adopted by the County on September 27, 2011. Subsequently, on October 11, 2016, the County adopted Resolution No. 16-97 and Environmental Determination relying on the 2011 Negative Declaration as the adequate level of environmental review under CEQA for minor revisions to the Solar Facilities Ordinances. This Addendum analyzes a series of amendments to the Solar Facilities Ordinances codified in Article 11 of Chapter 2, Title 8, Yolo County Code, that would facilitate a more streamlined approach for accessory solar uses and renewable energy systems without compromising important natural resources.

Section 15164 of the CEQA Guidelines provides that the Lead Agency shall prepare an Addendum to an adopted Negative Declaration if only minor technical changes or additions are necessary or none of the conditions described in Section 15162 call for preparation of a subsequent EIR or Negative Declaration. The Guidelines go on to state that: 1) the Addendum need not be circulated, but can be included in or attached to the adopted Negative Declaration (Section 15164(c)), and that 2) the County must consider the Addendum with the adopted Negative Declaration (Section 15164(d)).

The requirements of the Guidelines are described in more detail in the matrix below. Under the current situation, use of an Addendum is justified. This Addendum demonstrates that the circumstances, impacts, and requirements identified in the Yolo County Solar Facilities Ordinance Negative Declaration remain substantively unchanged by the situation described herein, and supports the finding that the proposed modifications do not raise any new issues and do not cause the level of impacts identified in the previous Negative Declaration to be exceeded. Pursuant to Section 15164(e) a brief explanation is provided herein documenting the County's decision that preparation of a subsequent EIR or Negative Declaration is not required.

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### BACKGROUND

The “project” that is the focus of this Addendum is a series of amendments to the Small and Medium Solar Energy Systems Ordinance and Large and Very Large Solar Energy Systems Ordinance, codified in Title 8, Article 11 of the Yolo County Code of Ordinances, that standardize the requirements for the siting of solar energy systems in the unincorporated area of the County. The Negative Declaration described onsite (or ‘accessory’) and utility (or ‘large-scale’) solar energy systems as part of the regulatory process for siting solar energy systems. However, the changes proposed to the ordinances, i.e., adding new nomenclature and clarifying definitions, are not covered by the Negative Declaration.

The proposed changes to the Solar Energy Systems Ordinances are described below, excerpted from the proposed amendments to Sections 8-2.1104 and 8-2.1105 of the Yolo County Code.

## Solar Energy Systems Ordinance

The proposed amendments to the Small and Medium Solar Energy Systems Ordinance (County Code Section 8-2.1104) and Large and Very Large Solar Energy Systems Ordinance (Section 8-2.1105) include a comprehensive consolidation of both ordinances into one Solar Energy Systems Ordinance (8-2.1104). The amendments provide a distinction between accessory solar energy systems (i.e., those systems that support or offset energy needs to onsite or adjacent uses) and utility solar energy systems, which are systems that produce and distribute energy directly to the electrical grid.

The changes proposed to the solar facilities regulations provide for greater permit streamlining opportunities under the Solar Rights Act and broaden provisions for ancillary uses without impacts to important County resources, such as removal of productive agricultural land and foraging habitat for the Swainson's hawk. The primary purpose for proposing these changes is to meet the needs of agricultural operators seeking to offset onsite energy demands with renewable energy sources. The current regulations are overly restrictive for systems that are ancillary to the primary uses of agricultural property. Indeed, on-site electric generation supportive of agricultural uses do not represent a conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses and can be established in a way that is supportive of the Swainson's hawk foraging activities.

The proposed amendments, however, do not change the current requirements to mitigate for the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses, or the removal of Swainson's hawk foraging habitat for utility systems, i.e., medium-sized and large-scale systems that feed the electrical grid for offsite users. A discretionary process and environmental review would still be required for any utility energy system and for any accessory system that cannot meet standards for protecting natural resources.

## Energy Storage Systems Ordinance

The proposed amendments enact Section 8-2.1105 for regulating energy storage systems, an emerging renewable energy system that is often coupled or paired with solar energy systems. Most energy storage systems would be paired with another renewable energy system, such as a solar or wind energy system. A typical one-megawatt energy storage system is about the size of a shipping or storage container occupying very little space on a property. The proposed ordinance sets standards for energy storage systems, including occupancy requirements for housing energy storage systems, setback and height requirements, and addresses lighting, noise, removal of combustible vegetation, and decommissioning requirements. Any energy storage system that can produce or store more than two megawatts of energy would require a discretionary and environmental review prior to permitting.

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## **DETERMINATION**

The amendments to the Solar Energy Systems Ordinance and proposed Energy Storage Systems Ordinance do not represent a significant change to the County's Zoning Regulations regarding renewable energy sources as analyzed under the adopted Negative Declaration.

In order to assess whether additional CEQA review is required for the proposed amendments, an analysis of the applicability of Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines has been prepared. The table on the following pages provides verbatim wording from the Guidelines and a corresponding analysis of the applicability of each section to the proposed ordinances.

## COMPARISON OF CEQA REQUIREMENTS AND REQUEST

CEQA Requirement (Section 15162)	Relationship to Proposed Project
<p>(a) When an EIR has been certified or negative declaration adopted for a project, no subsequent EIR shall be prepared for that project unless the lead agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in light of the whole record, one or more of the following:</p>	<p>The Yolo County Solar Facilities Ordinance Negative Declaration was adopted by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors on September 27, 2011. Findings of Fact, a Statement of Overriding Considerations, and a Mitigation Monitoring Plan were not applicable and therefore were not adopted at the same time.</p> <p>The information below summarizes the substantial evidence in support of the County's determination that the preparation of a subsequent EIR or subsequent negative declaration is not required.</p>
<p>(1) Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;</p>	<p>There are no substantial changes proposed in amendments to Sections 8-2.1104 and 8-2.1105 of the Yolo County Code. The consolidation of the Small and Medium Solar Energy Systems and Large and Very Large Solar Energy Systems Ordinances, redefining terminology, and clarifying use types (i.e., accessory uses vs utility uses) does not change what was anticipated and described as part of the analyses in the Initial Study prepared for the Negative Declaration. The Negative Declaration already identified the potential for impacts to aesthetics, agricultural, air quality, and biological resources, GHG and climate change and concluded there would be less than significant effects. The energy storage systems contemplated by the Energy Storage Systems Ordinance are typically associated with the solar systems analyzed in the Negative Declaration, and the systems take up less than an acre of space and do not represent a substantial increase of land devoted to such systems.</p> <p>The proposed amendments to the Solar Energy Systems Ordinance and proposed new Energy Storage Systems Ordinance would be similar to the existing regulations that include standards for addressing and mitigating impacts to loss of agricultural resources and removal of habitat for special status species. The updated ordinances would not create any new potentially significant or significant and unavoidable impacts.</p>

## COMPARISON OF CEQA REQUIREMENTS AND REQUEST

CEQA Requirement (Section 15162)	Relationship to Proposed Project
(2) Substantial changes will occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or	The Solar Energy Systems Ordinances were approved in September and October, 2011. No substantial changes have occurred with respect to the circumstances under which the updated ordinances will be undertaken that would warrant major revisions to the Negative Declaration. Therefore, the County has concluded that the proposed amendments are not a substantial change in circumstances.
(3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified or the negative declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:	
(A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration;	There has been no new information of substantial importance that has become known since the Solar Energy Systems Ordinances were approved in September and October, 2011, that shows the project will have any significant impacts that were not discussed in the previous Negative Declaration.
(B) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;	There has been no new information of substantial importance that has become known since the Solar Energy Systems Ordinances were approved in September and October, 2011 that the project will contribute to, or substantially increase the severity of, any previously identified less than significant impacts.
(C) Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or	There has been no new information of substantial importance that has become known since the Solar Energy Systems Ordinances were approved in September and October, 2011 that mitigation measures or alternatives previously found to be infeasible would in fact be feasible in mitigating significant effects of the project. The Negative Declaration does not include mitigation measures that would apply to the proposed amendments. There were no identified potential impacts in the previously adopted Negative Declaration.
(D) Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from	There were no mitigation measures analyzed in the previously adopted Negative Declaration that

## COMPARISON OF CEQA REQUIREMENTS AND REQUEST

<b>CEQA Requirement (Section 15162)</b>	<b>Relationship to Proposed Project</b>
those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.	have been rejected by the County. There are no significant impacts from the proposed amendments that require mitigation measures to be considered.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis provided above, the proposed changes to the Solar Energy Systems Ordinances, which would amend Sections 8-2.1104 and 8-2.1105 of the Yolo County Code, would not result in new or more severe environmental impacts and no subsequent EIR or subsequent negative declaration is required. This Addendum shall be attached to the existing Negative Declaration and will be considered by all relevant decision-making bodies prior to approval of the project.



**YOLO COUNTY  
PLANNING & PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

**INITIAL STUDY/ NEGATIVE DECLARATION  
ZONE FILE # 2010-005**

**SOLAR FACILITIES ORDINANCE**

**February, 2011**

## Initial Environmental Study/Negative Declaration

1. **Project Title:** Zone File #2005-005
2. **Lead Agency Name and Address:**  
Yolo County Planning and Public Works Department  
292 West Beamer Street  
Woodland, CA 95695
3. **Contact Person, Phone Number, E-Mail:**  
Eric Parfrey, Principal Planner  
(530) 666-8043 eric.parfrey@yolocounty.org.
4. **Project Location:** The project would apply to all unincorporated properties in the agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, and open space zoning districts in Yolo County
5. **Project Sponsor's Name and Address:**  
Yolo County Planning and Public Works Department  
292 West Beamer Street  
Woodland, CA 95695
6. **General Plan Designation(s):** Applies in unincorporated Yolo County within all of the land use designations
7. **Zoning:** Applies in unincorporated Yolo County within all zoning districts
8. **Project Summary:** The Solar Facilities Ordinance would amend the Yolo County Zoning Ordinance to provide an updated set of procedures and standards for the review and permitting of solar energy systems located on unincorporated lands.
9. **Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:** Not applicable (applies to many of the unincorporated properties in Yolo County)
10. **Other public agencies whose approval is required:** None
11. **Other Project Assumptions:** The Initial Study assumes compliance with all applicable State, Federal, and Local Codes and Regulations including, but not limited to, County of Yolo Improvement Standards, the California Building Code, the State Health and Safety Code, and the State Public Resources Code.

## **Project Description**

### Need for Project

In October, 2010, the Yolo County Board of Supervisors requested that the Planning and Public Works Department prioritize the adoption of updated zoning regulations for solar facilities, based on several discussions of tentative proposals for solar utility-scale projects in the unincorporated area. Two formal applications for one medium-sized, and one large, solar project have already been received by the department in the last year.

### Existing Regulations and Laws

The existing zoning regulations for Yolo County currently allow “freestanding household solar panels,” defined as “photovoltaic structures erected on a permanent foundation.” as an allowed “by right” accessory use in the agricultural and residential zones (Article 34 in Title 8, Chapter 2 of the Yolo County Code). The only other references in the County Code that apply to solar facilities are in the agricultural zones. In the Agricultural Preserve (A-P), Agricultural Exclusive (A-E), and Agricultural General (A-1) zones, “electrical distribution and transmission substations” are allowed through the issuance of a Minor Use Permit by the Zoning Administrator. The Zoning Administrator has interpreted this section to mean that solar facilities larger than “household solar panels” could be approved with a Use Permit since such facilities are substantially similar to an “electrical substation.” In the Agricultural Industrial (AGI) zone, electrical substations are allowed as a principal use without a Use Permit. There are no other standards or development criteria for larger solar facilities in the County Code. The only solar systems that have been approved by Yolo County until recently are small solar panels placed on private residences or public buildings.

Previously enacted State law (Section 65850.5 of the Government Code) encourages the installation of solar energy systems in order to reduce demands on public utilities, and restricts the ability of local jurisdiction from placing onerous conditions on their approval in some circumstances. Section 65850.5 does not apply, however, to solar facilities that provide power for offsite uses (including commercial sale). In addition, another State law, the Williamson Act, requires the County to make certain determinations and adopt findings that a proposed solar facility is a compatible use with the Williamson Act for lands under contract.

The 2030 Yolo Countywide General Plan and the draft Climate Action Plan (CAP) include numerous policies and measures to reduce fossil fuel reliance and greenhouse gas emissions by strongly encouraging and, in some cases, requiring, conversion to solar energy sources. For example, the draft CAP calls for establishment of a Community Choice Aggregation program where 50% of overall County purchases are from 50% renewable sources, and 25% of all County energy purchases are 100% renewable. The draft CAP also assumes that all new homes approved by the County would be required to install solar water heaters and photovoltaic systems.

## Proposed Solar Facilities Ordinance

The proposed Yolo County ordinance for solar energy systems has been drafted to be consistent with State law, the Yolo County General Plan and the Climate Action Plan. Table 1 on the following page summarizes the proposed permitting and mitigation requirements for solar facilities in the draft ordinance.

Solar facilities vary dramatically in size, depending on whether the system is generating electricity primarily for on-site uses such as a house or farm, or whether the project is a “utility size” project that feeds power into the statewide power grid.

The proposed Solar Facilities Ordinance requires a graduated review process for small, medium-sized, large, and very large solar energy systems., based on the size of the system (the amount of electricity generated), the zone district where it is to be located, and whether the solar system conforms to a list of design standards.

In terms of zoning, small solar systems would be allowed in all zoning districts in the unincorporated area, including agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, and open space/park zones. Medium-sized solar facilities would be allowed in all zoning districts, except for the residential zones. Large and very large solar energy systems would be allowed only within agricultural and public/quasi-public zoning districts.

Small residential photovoltaic systems in the range of about 300 to 400 kilowatts (kw) are mounted on roofs or pole mounted in back yards. Under the proposed ordinance, these small systems would continue to be subject only to building permit requirements, with an over-the-counter “Zoning Clearance” review by planners to ensure that the project conforms to required property line setbacks, height limits, and other standards. The size threshold for small systems is defined as up to 0.5 megawatt (MW, or 500 kilowatts).

Industry representatives use the following “rule of thumb” to estimate the land needed for medium-sized and large commercial solar facilities: five or six acres of land for each megawatt generated. This rule assumes a typical site plan of flat, open land devoted to closely spaced rows of panels on a single axis poles that can rotate to maximize solar collection. This rule of thumb means that a small solar facility of 0.5 MW could take up approximately two or three acres of land.

The “medium-sized” category for regulating solar projects has been defined to include those generating between 0.5 MW and 5.0 MW of power. Projects in this range can be commercial or utility-sized, in contrast to small home or farm systems. However, facilities in this size may also be designed to serve primarily on-site uses, including providing electricity for large agricultural pumping operations. Using the land requirements noted above, a medium-sized solar facility of 5.0 MW could take up approximately 25 or 30 acres of land.

Medium-sized solar facilities would be allowed through the issuance of either a non-discretionary (no public hearing) Site Plan Review, or a discretionary Minor Use Permit approved by the Zoning Administrator following a public hearing. A Site Plan Review would normally be required if the project conforms to all standards, and the project is

## TABLE 1

### PROPOSED PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS FOR SOLAR FACILITIES

#### Small solar systems (up to 0.5 megawatt (MW))

Building Permit and Zoning Clearance required, for projects that meet the following criteria:

- meets all Building Code and zoning standards
- will impact less than 2.5 acres of prime agriculture soils or Swainson's hawk foraging habitat

#### Medium-sized solar systems (over 0.5 and less than 5.0 MW)

Site Plan Review (non-discretionary permit, but standard regulations attached) required for projects that meet the following criteria:

- meets all Building Code and zoning standards
- located on predominantly non-prime soils
- located on non-Williamson Act contracted land
- will impact less than 2.5 acres of Swainson's hawk foraging habitat
- no mitigation is required for permanent loss of agricultural land/soils or Swainson's hawk foraging habitat

Minor Use Permit (discretionary permit, with CEQA review and Conditions of Approval attached) required for the following projects:

- meets all Building Code and zoning standards
- located on predominantly prime soils and/or located on Williamson Act contracted land
- will impact more than 2.5 acres of Swainson's hawk foraging habitat
- mitigation required for permanent loss of agricultural land/soils and for Swainson's hawk foraging habitat, to be determined by a study and type of system, in-lieu fee option available for both

#### Large solar systems (5.0 to 20.0 MW)

Major Use Permit approved by the Planning Commission required with conditions:

- meets all Building Code and zoning standards
- findings of Williamson Act compatibility for contracted lands
- if project found not to be compatible with Williamson Act, cancellation required
- mitigation required for permanent loss of agricultural land/soils or Swainson's hawk foraging habitat, determined by a study, in-lieu fee option available for both for up to 20 acres of impact, on-site or off-site easements required for over 20 acres of impact (no "stacking" of agricultural and Swainson's hawk easements allowed on the same land)

#### Very Large solar systems (over 20.0 MW)

Major Use Permit approved by the Board of Supervisors, following a recommendation of the Planning Commission, required, with more conditions and more mitigation than specified above

located on non-prime agricultural lands and disturbs less than 2.5 acres of Swainson's hawk foraging habitat. Among other things, a Minor Use Permit would be required if the medium-sized solar facility is located on prime land, is incompatible with the Williamson Act, if it affects more than 2.5 acres of habitat, or if health and safety issues are raised.

For large solar energy systems generating between over 5.0 MW and up to 20.0 MW, all applications would be subject to a Major Use Permit issued by the Planning Commission. Very large solar facilities in excess of 20 MW in size would be referred to the Board of Supervisors for approval of a Major Use Permit. Large and very large solar energy systems, and those medium-sized systems that are required to undergo discretionary review through a Use Permit, would be required to conform to setback and other environmental regulations, and to mitigate for loss of agricultural and habitat lands.

### Environmental Effects of Proposed Solar Facilities Ordinance

This Initial Study/Negative Declaration analyzes the potential environmental impacts of the proposed ordinance. As noted above, the existing Yolo County zoning regulations currently allow mounted solar panels as a "by right" accessory use in the agricultural and residential zones, and "electrical distribution and transmission substations"—the regulatory analog for larger solar facility projects—are allowed through the issuance of a Minor Use Permit by the Zoning Administrator in the main agricultural zones (A-P and A-1). The proposed ordinance would continue to allow small solar facilities "by right" in all zones through the issuance of a building permit, if specific setback, height, and other standards are met. This change for small facilities represents a slight tightening of regulations, i.e., applying more specific development criteria, such as height and setback requirements, which should have a beneficial environmental impact.

For medium-sized solar facilities, the ordinance would allow certain projects to be approved with a non-discretionary Site Plan Review if the use was located on non-prime farmlands and on non-Williamson Act contracted lands, if Swainson's hawk foraging habitat impacts were less than 2.5 acres, if all other standards were met, and if no potentially significant environmental impacts would be caused by the project. This represents a streamlining of the current zoning regulations, which would normally be interpreted by staff to require a Minor Use Permit for any medium-sized facilities. Medium-sized solar facilities that meet the criteria cited above would not require discretionary and public review through the Zoning Administrator. This change would serve as an incentive for applicants to propose medium-sized solar projects on non-prime and non-contracted lands.

However, medium-sized facilities that do not meet the criteria above, i.e., the facilities are proposed on prime and/or Williamson Act contracted lands, or disturb more than 2.5 acres of foraging habitat, would continue to require a Minor Use Permit, similar to the current zoning requirements. In addition, the ordinance requires that any medium-size solar facility be designed to avoid any identified significant environmental resources. As is the case now, if, in the independent judgement of the Planning Director, the proposed project could cause a potentially significant environmental impact as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act, the ordinance requires that an Initial Study be prepared and that the project undergo discretionary review as a Minor (or Major) Use Permit.

The proposed Solar Facilities Ordinance would create the greatest change to the existing zoning regulations for large and very large solar systems. Currently, there are no development standards and defined mitigation requirements that could be applied to large and very large solar facilities in the unincorporated areas. Under existing regulations, large and very large solar projects could be required to mitigate for loss of Swainson's hawk foraging habitat, but the projects would be automatically exempted from mitigation for farmland loss. The proposed ordinance sets detailed standards and requirements, and requires mitigation for farmland loss, which should serve to reduce potential environmental impacts on resources in the rural and agricultural areas.

Under the existing zoning, large and very large solar facilities zones would be required by staff to submit an application for a Minor Use Permit, and staff would have the discretion to determine whether the project should be heard at the Zoning Administrator level or whether the complexity or controversial nature of the application warranted a hearing before the Planning Commission. With adoption of the proposed ordinance, large and very large solar facilities would be required to apply for a Major Use Permit, with large facility applications heard at the Planning Commission, and very large project applications heard at the Planning Commission, followed by a final hearing and decision at the Board of Supervisor. This means that all large and large solar systems would undergo more review, and in some cases, a higher level of review, than under current regulations and mitigation requirements

In addition to standards and requirements included within the ordinance that will reduce potential impacts, other parts of the Yolo County Code and the 2030 Countywide General Plan contain additional regulations, policies, and programs that also address and reduce impacts related to solar development. These additional regulations and policies are identified under the respective topic sections in the following analysis.

## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is still "Potentially Significant Impact" (after any proposed mitigation measures have been adopted) as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Resources             | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources          | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Geology / Soils          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hazards & Hazardous Materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrology / Water Quality          | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use / Planning      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources             | <input type="checkbox"/> Noise                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Population / Housing     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services               | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation / Traffic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities / Service Systems   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance |   |

**DETERMINATION:** (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
  
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
  
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
  
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
  
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to the earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Planner's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **PURPOSE OF THIS INITIAL STUDY**

This Initial Study has been prepared consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15063, to determine if the project as described herein may have a significant effect upon the environment.

## **EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers except “No Impact” answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A “No Impact” answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g. the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A “No Impact” answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).
2. All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. “Potentially Significant Impact” is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect is significant. If there are one or more “Potentially Significant Impact” entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.
4. “Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated” applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from “Potentially Significant Impact” to a “Less Than Significant Impact.” The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from Section XVII, “Earlier Analyses,” may be cross-referenced).
5. A determination that a “Less Than Significant Impact” would occur is appropriate when the project could create some identifiable impact, but the impact would be less than the threshold set by a performance standard or adopted policy. The initial study should describe the impact and state why it is found to be “less than significant.”
6. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration, pursuant to Section 15063 (c)(3)(D) of the California Government Code. Earlier analyses are discussed in Section XVII at the end of the checklist.
7. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g. general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
8. Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.

## I. AESTHETICS

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion of Impacts

(a, b), (c) *Less than Significant Impact.* The proposed Solar Facilities Ordinance would allow the construction of solar energy systems in residential, commercial, and rural agricultural areas which could affect scenic resources. However, the ordinance sets specific height and setback standards that must be met, which would help to avoid or mitigate potential impacts upon scenic vistas or visual resources. For example, Section 8-2.2420.4(a) of the ordinance limits small photovoltaic solar panels mounted on private homes in residential zones from extending more than five (5) feet above the roof surface, thereby reducing potential visual impacts to adjacent neighbors.

Similarly, Sections 8-2.2420.5 and 8-2.2420.6 include design standards that require medium-sized, large and very large solar systems to meet height, setback, and lot coverage standards that would reduce impacts to scenic vistas and other visual resources. Ground mounted solar arrays must meet a height limit of either 15 feet in commercial areas, or 25 feet in the agricultural areas, and must be set back from property lines 50 or 100 feet. The actual "footprint" of large and very large solar facilities should be no more than 5 percent of the property, with the total amount of the lot covered by all solar uses (roads, buildings) limited to 35% of the total area.

Sections 8-2.2420.5 and 8-2.2420.6 require that medium-sized, large, and very large solar facilities "shall be designed to minimize any identified impacts to natural features, e.g., sensitive and listed wildlife species and habitat, water courses, or heritage trees."

In addition, the 2030 Yolo Countywide General Plan contains the following policies related to protection of visual resources which must be applied when considering any solar development project:

Policy CC-1.5 Significant site features, such as trees, water courses, rock outcroppings, historic structures and scenic views shall be used to guide site planning and design in new development. Where possible, these features shall become focal points of the development.

Policy CC-1.12 Preserve and enhance the scenic quality of the County's rural roadway system. Prohibit projects and activities that would obscure, detract from, or negatively affect the quality of views from designated scenic roadways or scenic highways.

Policy CC-1.16 The following features shall be stringently regulated along designated scenic roadways and routes with the intent of preserving and protecting the scenic qualities of the roadway or route:

- Signage
- Architectural design of adjoining structures
- Construction, repair and maintenance operations
- Landscaping
- Litter control
- Water quality
- Power poles, towers, above-ground wire lines, wind power and solar power devices and antennae

Policy CC-1.17 Existing trees and vegetation and natural landforms along scenic roadways and routes shall be retained to the greatest feasible extent. Landscaping shall be required to enhance scenic qualities and/or screen unsightly views and shall emphasize the use of native plants and habitat restoration to the extent possible. Removal of trees, particularly those with scenic and/or historic value, shall be generally prohibited along the roadway or route.

Policy CC-1.18 Electric towers, solar power facilities, wind power facilities, communication transmission facilities and/or above ground lines shall be avoided along scenic roadways and routes, to the maximum feasible extent.

(d) *Less than Significant Impact.* Solar energy systems may be designed with outdoor lighting. If outdoor lighting is included in a project, standard conditions would be attached to the approval which require any lighting to be designed so that illumination is directed downward and shielded from spilling onto adjacent properties. Sections 8-2.2420.5 and 8-2.2420.6 specifically require that “The proposed solar facility shall be designed to minimize any glare or lighting on adjacent neighbors.”

## II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES:

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. Would the project:

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)) or timberland (as defined in Public Resources Code section 4526)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to nonforest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Discussion of Impacts

- (a) *Less than Significant Impact.* The proposed ordinance would continue to allow small solar facilities “by right” in all zones through the issuance of a building permit, if specific setback, height, and other standards are met. This change represents a slight tightening of regulations, i.e., applying more specific development criteria, which should have a beneficial environmental impact. In particular, the proposed ordinance would require medium, large, and very large solar facilities built on prime and non-prime farmland to comply with the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and provide mitigation on at least a 1:1 basis. No such mitigation is required under the current regulatory scheme, since solar facilities are considered an allowed use under agricultural zoning and are exempt from mitigation requirements.

The ordinance would allow certain medium-sized facilities to be approved with a non-discretionary Site Plan Review if the use was located on non-prime and non-Williamson Act contracted lands, if biological resource impacts were less than 2.5 acres, if all other standards were met. This represents a streamlining of the current zoning regulations, which would normally be interpreted by staff to require a Minor Use Permit for any medium-sized facilities. Medium-sized solar facilities that meet the criteria cited above would not require discretionary and public review through the Zoning Administrator. This change would serve as an incentive for applicants to propose medium-sized solar projects on non-prime lands. However, medium-sized facilities that do not meet the criteria, i.e., the facilities are proposed on prime and/or Williamson Act contracted lands, or would disturb more than 2.5 acres of habitat, would continue to require a Minor Use Permit and, as discussed further below, will be required to mitigate the loss of farmland.

The biggest changes to existing zoning regulations by the proposed Solar Facilities Ordinance involve large and very large solar systems. Currently, there are no adopted development standards and few mitigation requirements that are applied to large and very large solar facilities. The proposed ordinance sets detailed standards and requirements, which should serve to reduce potential environmental impacts on resources in the rural and agricultural areas.

Yolo County has adopted the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (Section 8-2.2416 of Title 8, Chapter 2, of the Yolo County Code), which requires that conversion of agricultural land to a non-agricultural use must mitigate for the loss at a ratio of one acre conserved for every acre lost (developed). Conversion from an agricultural use allowed under the agricultural zoning to another allowed agricultural use does not require mitigation. Solar facilities are an allowed or conditionally permitted use under the agricultural zoning, so mitigation for solar projects would not normally be required under the existing regulatory scheme. However, the proposed Solar Facilities Ordinance has been drafted to remove the exemption from mitigation for medium-sized (if built on prime and/or Williamson Act contracted lands), large, and very large solar projects, so that these projects would be required to mitigate for loss of agricultural land.

Under the proposed ordinance, medium-sized solar projects that impact less than 2.5 acres of Swainson’s hawk foraging habitat will not be required to mitigate for loss of foraging habitat or agricultural land. This threshold corresponds to the County’s existing “de minimus” finding for new rural residences that may be approved with a building permit with no mitigation requirement.

The proposed ordinance requires that other medium-sized solar projects that disturb over 2.5 acres of farmland or Swainson’s hawk foraging habitat, as well as all large and very large solar facilities, must mitigate for the “permanent loss” of agricultural and/or habitat lands. The ordinance does not define “permanent loss.” Rather, the loss of agricultural lands and habitat, whether “permanent” or temporary, is to be determined on a case-by-case basis by individual studies prepared by qualified professionals, including biologists. The design of individual

solar projects, including the spacing of the individual arrays, varies greatly and will determine the amount of mitigation that is required. Overall, the proposed ordinance ensures that the specific impacts of individual projects on these resources will be considered and appropriately mitigated.

Solar projects that include tightly clustered rows of solar panels would be required to mitigate for the total area of the solar arrays, while much larger systems that have widely spaced arrays may be able to design the project so that some form of agriculture (row crops or grazing) can continue (or be established) between the foundations.

The studies required by the ordinance will also address the issue of “permanent” versus temporary loss of agricultural productivity. Some, if not all, of the medium, large, and very large solar projects will sign 20- or 25-year “Power Purchase Agreements” with utilities, which must be approved by the California Public Utilities Commission. For these larger projects, the County must address through the Use Permit and environmental review process whether it is possible to “reclaim” agricultural and habitat values on the land if the solar facilities are removed after 25 years and the land is restored to its previous condition. A surety bond or similar financial guarantee will be required to ensure the appropriate reclamation of the site after the solar facilities are removed or become inoperative.

The proposed ordinance sets forth several types of mitigation that could be considered for loss of prime agricultural lands. The requirements included in the ordinance for mitigation of impacts to prime and non-prime agricultural lands would reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level.

- (b) *Less than Significant Impact.* Construction of solar facilities could conflict with existing zoning for agricultural uses and with existing Williamson Act contracts. Solar facilities would not conflict with agricultural zoning per se, since solar systems are an allowed or conditionally permitted uses under the County’s agricultural zoning. However, operation of solar facilities could cause land use conflicts with adjacent agricultural activities such as pesticide spraying and harvesting. To reduce the potential impacts to adjacent agricultural operations, Sections 8-2.2420.5 and 8-2.2420.6 require setbacks of 50 or 100 feet from all property lines. This section of the ordinance also requires that “The proposed solar facility shall be designed to minimize any identified impacts to adjacent agricultural operations, such as orchards that require aerial application of chemicals, which may require greater setbacks” than those required in the ordinance.

Regarding conflicts with the Williamson Act, all applications for medium-sized and large solar facilities that are proposed on lands under Williamson Act would be subject to a determination and finding by the County that the use is compatible with the Act, as required by State law. Since almost two-thirds of the agricultural land in Yolo County is under contract, it is assumed that a majority of medium, large, and very large solar facility applications that are proposed could fall into this category of review. Conversely, small systems would not be subject to this determination but would be assumed to be a compatible use with any existing Williamson Act contract.

According to the California Department of Conservation publication *Solar Power and the Williamson Act* (May, 2010), medium-sized to very large solar facilities may be found to be a compatible use under the Williamson Act if the project meets the following criteria:

- the proposed project would not significantly interfere with the underlying agricultural operation;
- the proposed project would displace a very small percentage of the overall agricultural operation.

This language has been incorporated into the proposed ordinance.

The determination of Williamson Act compatibility would be made on a case-by-case basis under the proposed ordinance, using the State guidelines and County policies and regulations. As noted above, the proposed ordinance includes several types of mitigation that are to be considered to address loss of prime agricultural lands and Swainson's hawk habitat. The ordinance would ensure that impacts to existing agricultural zoning and Williamson Act contracts are less-than-significant.

(c) and (d) *No impact.* The proposed ordinance would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, or result in the loss or conversion of forest or timberland. There is very little forest in Yolo County and the remoteness of the few forested areas would not be attractive for solar development, since they are not adjacent to existing substations.

(e) *No impact.* The ordinance would not cause any other changes in the existing environment which could result in the conversion of farmland.

### III. AIR QUALITY:

Where applicable, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion of Impacts

#### Thresholds of Significance:

The Yolo Solano Air Quality Management District (YSAQMD) has published a set of recommendations that provide specific guidance on evaluating projects under CEQA relative to the above general criteria (YSAQMD, 2002). The Guidelines identify quantitative and qualitative long-term significance thresholds for use in evaluating the significance of criteria air pollutant emissions from project-related mobile and area sources. These thresholds include:

Reactive Organic Gases (ROG)	82 pounds per day (ppd)
Oxides of Nitrogen (NOx)	82 ppd
Particulate Matter (PM <sub>10</sub> )	150 ppd
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	550 ppd

Development projects are considered cumulatively significant if:

1. The project requires a change in the existing land use designation (i.e., general plan amendment, rezone); and
2. Projected emissions (ROG, NOx, or PM<sub>10</sub>) of the project are greater than the emissions anticipated for the site if developed under the existing land use designation.

**Impact analysis:**

- (a) *No Impact.* The solar energy ordinance would not substantially conflict with or obstruct implementation of the Yolo Solano Air Quality Management District Air Quality Attainment Plan (1992), the Sacramento Area Regional Ozone Attainment Plan (1994), or the goals and objectives of the County’s General Plan. Wind energy could have a beneficial impact by helping to reduce the County’s and the state’s reliance on power generation from polluting sources of energy such as natural gas or coal.
- (b), (c) *Less than Significant Impact.* The Yolo-Solano Region is a non-attainment area for state particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) and ozone standards, and the Federal ozone standard. Development of solar energy systems would not contribute significantly to air quality impacts, but could generate some small amount of PM<sub>10</sub>, during grading of the site for the solar mounts and construction of access roads, etc. Standard dust and emissions control measures recommended by the YSAQMD would be attached to all Use Permits, Site Plan Reviews, and building permits issued for solar projects
- (d) *No Impact.* Adoption of the recommended changes in the zoning regulations to allow permitting of solar energy systems would not have the potential to expose any sensitive receptors to any substantial increase in pollutant levels, since setback requirements would preclude any site clearing or grading within proximity of nearby homes.
- (e) *No Impact.* The solar facilities would not generate any new odors.

**IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native residents or migratory wildlife corridors or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- |  |                          |                          |                                     |                                     |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

**Discussion of Impacts**

(a), (b), (c) *Less than Significant Impact.* The proposed regulations include several development standards that would preclude the development of solar energy on sensitive lands with important biological resources and would require mitigation for any significant loss of habitat lands.

Section 8-2.2420.5(g) requires that “The proposed solar facility shall be designed to minimize any identified impacts to natural features, e.g., sensitive and listed wildlife species and habitat, water courses, or heritage trees.” This section applies to all medium-sized, large, and very large solar systems.

Numerous policies and programs included in the 2030 Yolo Countywide General Plan also require that any development project approved by the County meet environmental goals, such as:

Policy CO-2.9: Protect riparian areas to maintain and balance wildlife values.

Policy CO-2.14: Ensure no net loss of oak woodlands, alkali sinks, rare soils, vernal pools or geological substrates that support rare endemic species, with the following exception. The limited loss of blue oak woodland and grasslands may be acceptable, where the fragmentation of large forests exceeding 10 acres is avoided, and where losses are mitigated.

Policy CO-2.22: Prohibit development within a minimum of 100 feet from the top of banks for all lakes, perennial ponds, rivers, creeks, sloughs, and perennial streams. A larger setback is preferred.

Policy CO-2.30: Protect and enhance streams, channels, seasonal and permanent marshland, wetlands, sloughs, riparian habitat and vernal pools in land planning and community design.

Policy CO-2.41: Require that impacts to species listed under the State or federal Endangered Species Acts, or species identified as special-status by the resource agencies, be avoided to the greatest feasible extent. If avoidance is not possible, fully mitigate impacts consistent with applicable local, State, and Federal requirements.

Section 8-2.2420.5(h) of the proposed Solar Facilities Ordinance specifies the type and amount of mitigation that is required to compensate for any loss of habitat. If the proposed solar facility will impact less than 2.5 acres of Swainson’s hawk foraging habitat, no mitigation for the loss of foraging habitat is required. If more than 2.5 acres of habitat is affected, a Minor Use Permit is required, as well as mitigation for the permanent loss Swainson’s hawk foraging habitat, at a ratio of at least 1:1 (one acre mitigated for one acre lost). This is consistent with existing County practices that require biological mitigation to be considered for all discretionary development projects, according to the Yolo County Natural Heritage Program based on discussions and prior agreements with the Department of Fish and Game.

Mitigation for the permanent loss of Swainson’s hawk foraging habitat may be satisfied by payment of an in-lieu fee (for small projects only), dedication of conservation easements either on-site or off-site, or other arrangements satisfactory to the County and the County’s Natural Heritage Program.

Large and very large solar facilities would also be required to meet stronger development standards as set forth in Section 8-2.2420.6 of the ordinance. The development standards for large and very large projects could include designing projects so that habitat could be established or enhanced in the space between solar arrays; and replacing poor foraging crops with crops that accommodate better prey populations and foraging.

In addition, Section 8-2.2420.6(e)(4) specifically prohibits large projects in the most common wetlands areas of Yolo County including rice fields in or near the Yolo Bypass. The ordinance states that “Solar facilities proposed in rice growing areas may be considered compatible only if solar equipment can be installed between the cultivated fields or along irrigation dikes.”

(d)(e) *Less than Significant Impact.* Application of adopted Yolo County General Plan policies to solar projects would reduce potential impacts to wildlife migration corridors. General Plan Policy CO-2.38 requires that all proposed projects comply with the following: “Avoid adverse impacts to wildlife movement corridors and nursery sites (e.g., nest sites, dens, spawning areas, breeding ponds). Preserve the functional value of movement corridors to ensure that essential habitat areas do not become isolated from one another due to the placement of either temporary or permanent barriers within the corridors. Encourage avoidance of nursery sites (e.g., nest sites, dens, spawning areas, breeding ponds) during periods when the sites are actively used and that nursery sites which are used repeatedly over time are preserved to the greatest feasible extent or fully mitigated if they cannot be avoided.”

The proposed ordinance would not conflict with any other local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance. The County does not have any other conservation ordinances, except for a voluntary oak tree preservation ordinance that seeks to minimize damage and require replacement when oak groves are affected by development.

(f) The Yolo County Heritage Program, a Joint Powers Agency composed of the county, the cities, and other entities, is in the process of preparing a Natural Communities Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP) for Yolo County. The NCCP/HCP will focus on protecting habitat of terrestrial (land, non-fish) species. In the interim, the program has implemented a mitigation program acceptable to the Department of Fish and Game for a main species of concern, the Swainson’s hawk. The agreement requires that local agencies review all discretionary applications for potential impacts to the hawk or hawk habitat, and either pay a per-acre in-lieu fee or purchase a conservation easement to mitigate for loss of habitat. See ordinance mitigation requirements as specified above in (a).

**V. CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion of Impacts**

(a) *No impact.* The ordinance would preclude the placement of small solar systems on designated historical landmarks and structures in historical districts unless “the design of the facility is consistent with the purposes of the Landmark or District designation.”

(b), (c), (d) *No impact.* The ordinance would allow construction of solar facilities which could require some amount of ground clearing. No impacts on archaeological, or paleontological resources, or on human remains, would be anticipated. Standard County conditions attached to all Site Plan Review and Use Permit approvals require construction to be halted, and appropriate authorities notified, if any resources or remains are discovered during excavation. Also, environmental review for medium, large and very large systems would routinely evaluate projects for the location and extent of any known archaeological resources, so they can be avoided.

**VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS**

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known Fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.				
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?				
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?				
iv) Landslides?				
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion of Impacts**

(a) to (e) *No impact.* The proposed solar energy ordinance would not be expected to result in any new impacts related to geology, erosion, or soils. Existing requirements for erosion control, stability of the building site and building code compliance would remain in effect. The Use Permit approval process requires that any permitted solar facilities must comply with all building and electrical codes, and requires that applications for all large solar energy developments must submit detailed grading, geotechnical, erosion and sediment control plans.

VII.	GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS/CLIMATE CHANGE.	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:					
a.	Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	Be affected by climate change impacts, e.g., sea level rise, increased wildfire dangers, diminishing snow pack and water supplies, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Environmental Setting

The issue of combating climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) has been the subject of recent state legislation (AB 32 and SB 375). The Governor’s Office of Planning and Research has recommended changes to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, and the environmental checklist which is used for Initial Studies such as this one. The recommended changes to the checklist, which have not yet been approved by the state, are incorporated above in the two questions related to a project’s GHG impacts. A third question has been added by Yolo County to consider potential impacts related to climate change’s effect on individual projects, such as sea level rise and increased wildfire dangers. To date, specific thresholds of significance to evaluate impacts pertaining to GHG emissions have not been established by local decision-making agencies, the Yolo Solano Air Quality Management District, the state, or the federal government. However, this absence of thresholds does not negate CEQA’s mandate to evaluate all potentially significant impacts associated with the proposed project.

The following discussion of GHG/climate change impact relies upon, and “tiers off” the analysis, conclusions, and measures included in the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) of the 2030 Yolo Countywide General Plan. While the FEIR analysis concluded that the severity of impacts related to planned urban growth and GHG/climate change could be reduced by some policies and some available mitigation measures, the overall impact could not be reduced to a less than significant level. The impacts of countywide cumulative growth on GHG emissions, and the impacts of climate change on cumulative growth, are considered significant and unavoidable at this time.

The 2030 Yolo Countywide General Plan and accompanying draft Climate Action Plan (CAP) include numerous policies and measures to reduce fossil fuel reliance and greenhouse gas emissions by strongly encouraging and, in some cases, requiring, conversion to solar energy sources. For example, the CAP calls for establishment of a Community Choice Aggregation program where 50% of overall County purchases are from 50% renewable sources, and 25% of all County energy purchases are 100% renewable. The draft CAP also assumes that all new homes approved by the County would be required to install solar water heaters and photovoltaic systems.

## Discussion of Impacts

- a) *No Impact.* The proposed ordinance would regulate the construction of solar facilities, which could generate a small amount of GHG emissions due to operation of grading equipment and

vehicle employee trips generated during construction, however, these emissions would be more than offset by the beneficial effects of creating new sources of green energy to the local and state grid of electrical power.

- b) *No Impact.* The proposed ordinance would not conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted to reduce GHG emissions, including the numerous policies of the adopted 2030 Yolo Countywide General Plan and the pending Climate Action Plan. The proposed ordinance would help to implement many of the policies.
- c) *Less than Significant Impact.* Solar projects approved under the ordinance would not be anticipated to be affected by certain identified climate change impacts, such as sea level rise and increased wildfire dangers. Individual projects would be evaluated for these impacts as a part of the normal project review process.

**VIII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working within the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion of Impacts**

(a) to (d) *No impact.* Solar facilities do not use or emit any hazardous materials, other than small amounts of lubricating oil. The proposed ordinance would allow solar facilities in primarily rural agricultural areas, and would involve minimal ground disturbance, so no buried hazardous materials would be encountered. Solar systems allowed in commercial and industrial urban areas

which could have hazards would be required to undergo environmental review as part of a Site Plan Review and Use Permit process, so identification and mitigation of potential impacts would occur.

(e), (f) *No impact.* The solar energy ordinance includes fairly low height limits for solar arrays, so no impacts to private airports would occur.

(g) *No Impact.* The location of solar energy systems should not affect any emergency response plan.

(h) *Less than Significant Impact.* Most applications for medium to very large solar systems are anticipated to be for projects in areas in close proximity to existing PG&E substations, which are in the irrigated farmlands of Yolo County, not in the un-irrigated hilly areas of the western County, with the most significant fire hazards

### IX. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Significantly deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion of Impacts**

(a) to (f) *No impact.* The proposed solar energy ordinance would not allow any structures that could affect drainage patterns, increase runoff, and affect water quality. No major new areas of impervious surface would be constructed with the solar facilities.

(g), (h) *No impact.* No housing is proposed. The County has existing regulations that contain specific requirements for solar systems that may be proposed in flood prone areas, to mitigate flooding impacts.

(i), (j) *No impact.* Solar facilities would not be expected to be located in any areas affected by dam failure, seiche, tsunami, or mudflow. Solar projects could be sited on agricultural lands adjacent to sloughs or other waterways that may be subject to levee failure.

**X. LAND USE AND PLANNING**

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Physically divide an established community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion of Impacts**

(a) *No Impact.* Solar development would not divide any established community.

(b) *No Impact.* The proposed ordinance would add regulations involving solar facilities accessory structures in agricultural and other areas. The ordinance would add clarity and certainty to the zoning code.

(c) *Less Than Significant Impact.* The County does not have an adopted HCP or NCCP, although a draft plan is now being prepared by the Yolo Natural Heritage Joint Powers Agency. No conflicts with the developing plan are anticipated. See discussion in Section II, Biological Resources, above.

**XI. MINERAL RESOURCES**

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion of Impacts**

(a), (b) *No impact.* The proposed ordinance changes would not affect areas designated as significant aggregate deposits, as classified by the State Department of Mines and Geology. Most aggregate resources in Yolo County are located along Cache Creek in the Esparto-Woodland area. Individual project evaluations would analyze any issues related to mineral resources.

**XII. NOISE**

Would the project result in:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion of Impacts**

(a) to (f) *No Impact.* Solar facilities do not generate large amounts of noise when in operation, so no impacts are expected.

**XIII. POPULATION**

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (e.g., by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (e.g., through the extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion of Impacts**

(a) to (c) *No Impact.* The proposed ordinance would not result in increases in population and would not displace any existing housing or current residents.

#### XIV. PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service rations, response time or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Fire protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Police Protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Parks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Other public facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

#### Discussion of Impacts

(a) to (e) *No Impact*. The proposed solar ordinance involves permitting of solar facilities that would not increase the need for any public services.

#### XV. RECREATION

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have been an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

#### Discussion of Impacts

(a) *No Impact*. The proposed ordinance would not require the construction of additional recreational facilities nor substantially increase the use of existing recreational facilities.

(b) *No Impact*. The proposed ordinance changes would not include nor require the construction of additional recreational facilities.

**XVI. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC**

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase on either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

(a) to (g) *No Impact*. The proposed ordinance would regulate the construction of solar facilities which could require a limited number of truck trips to deliver and assemble arrays and other parts to the site. A small number of employees could be involved in the construction of solar facilities, and for periodic maintenance. The number of trips generated during the construction period would not be expected to be substantial in relation to existing traffic loads, and would not exceed any levels of service standards of nearby roads or intersections. Solar development would not affect air traffic, access, or parking capacity.

**XVII. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS**

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- |   |                          |                          |                          |                                     |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**Discussion of Impacts**

(a) to (g) *No Impact*. The proposed ordinance would have no new affects related to utilities or service systems because solar facilities do not rely on any of these services.

Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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**XVIII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE --**

- |   |                          |                          |                          |                                     |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plan or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probably future projects)?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Does the project have environment effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**Discussion of Impacts**

(a) *No Impact*. Based on the information provided in this Initial Study, no potential environmental impacts would result from the project. No important examples of major periods of California history or prehistory in California were identified; and the habitat and/or range of any special status plants, habitat, or plants would not be substantially reduced or eliminated.

(b) *No Impact*. Based on the analysis provided in this Initial Study, the project would have no significant cumulative impacts. As noted in the Project Description, solar energy development will play a key role in reducing the consumption of non-renewable energy in the County and in California, and solar development in Yolo County could contribute to that beneficial cumulative impact to reduce greenhouse gases.

- (c) *No Impact.* Based on the analysis provided in this Initial Study, no impacts to human beings would result from the proposed project. The project as proposed would not have substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

## REFERENCES

- OPDE Solar Farm Conditional Use Permit application materials, City of West Sacramento (June, 2010)
- OPDE West Sacramento Solar Voltaic Renewable Energy Project Swainson's Hawk Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, December, 2010)
- California Department of Conservation, Solar Power and the Williamson Act (May, 2010)
- PG&E map of Solar Voltaic Program Map at <http://www.pge.com/b2b/energysupply/wholesaleelectricssuppliersolicitation/PVRFO/pvmap/>
- Staff experience and knowledge
- 2030 Yolo Countywide General Plan
- Yolo County Code, Title 8, Chapter 2 (the Zoning Ordinance)

# EXHIBIT B

## COUNTY RECORDER

Filing Requested by:

### Yolo County Department of Community Services

(ATTN: Stephanie Cormier)

292 West Beamer Street

Woodland, CA 95695

### Notice of Exemption

To: Yolo County Clerk  
625 Court Street  
Woodland, CA 95695

To: Office of Planning and Research  
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121  
PO Box 3044  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044



From: Yolo County Department of  
Community Services

State Clearinghouse Number: N/A

Project Title: 2022 Article 11 Zoning Code Amendment related to Wireless Telecommunication Facilities

Applicant: Yolo County Department of Community Services, Planning Division  
292 W. Beamer Street  
Woodland, CA 95695

Project Location: Affects all of the unincorporated area of the County

Assessor's Parcel Numbers: Multiple

Project Description: The project is a Zoning Code Amendment to Title 8, Chapter 2, Article 11 of the Yolo County Code of Ordinances related to Wireless Telecommunication Facilities (Section 8-2.1102). The proposed amendments to Yolo County Code Section 8-2.1102 are somewhat minor in nature and include clarifying definitions and application of standard requirements, codifying federal statutes regulating the permitting of non-substantial improvements to existing permitted towers [Title 27 CFR Section 1.6100(b)(7)], and a reorganization of the Section for clarity and ease of reference to provide consistency with other Articles in the Zoning Code. No significant changes are proposed that would reduce regulatory oversight relative to permissible tower heights or parcel size requirements, or otherwise result in a potentially significant impact on the environment.

Exempt Status: **Section 15061(b)(3): 'common sense exemption'**

Reasons why project is exempt: The project falls under the 'common sense exemption' that states: A project is exempt from CEQA where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. Minor changes to the Yolo County Zoning Regulations regulating wireless telecommunication facilities include updating standards to clarify current practices for effective project review. No expansion of use is proposed. The amendment will allow for a more efficient application process and clarify allowable types of non-substantial improvements to permitted facilities as set forth under federal statutes.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Stephanie Cormier, Principal Planner

**Telephone Number:** (530) 666-8041

Signature (Public Agency): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: November 8, 2022

Date received for filing at OPR: