

GIBSON SOLAR FARM USE PERMIT ZF#2020-0043

TUESDAY September 26, 2023
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
TRACY GONZALEZ, ASSISTANT PLANNER

PROJECT APPLICANT:
JAMIE NAGEL, PROJECT MANAGER, GIBSON RENEWABLES, LLC

CEQA CONSULTANT:
HEDY KOCZWARA, ASPEN ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

PROJECT LOCATION

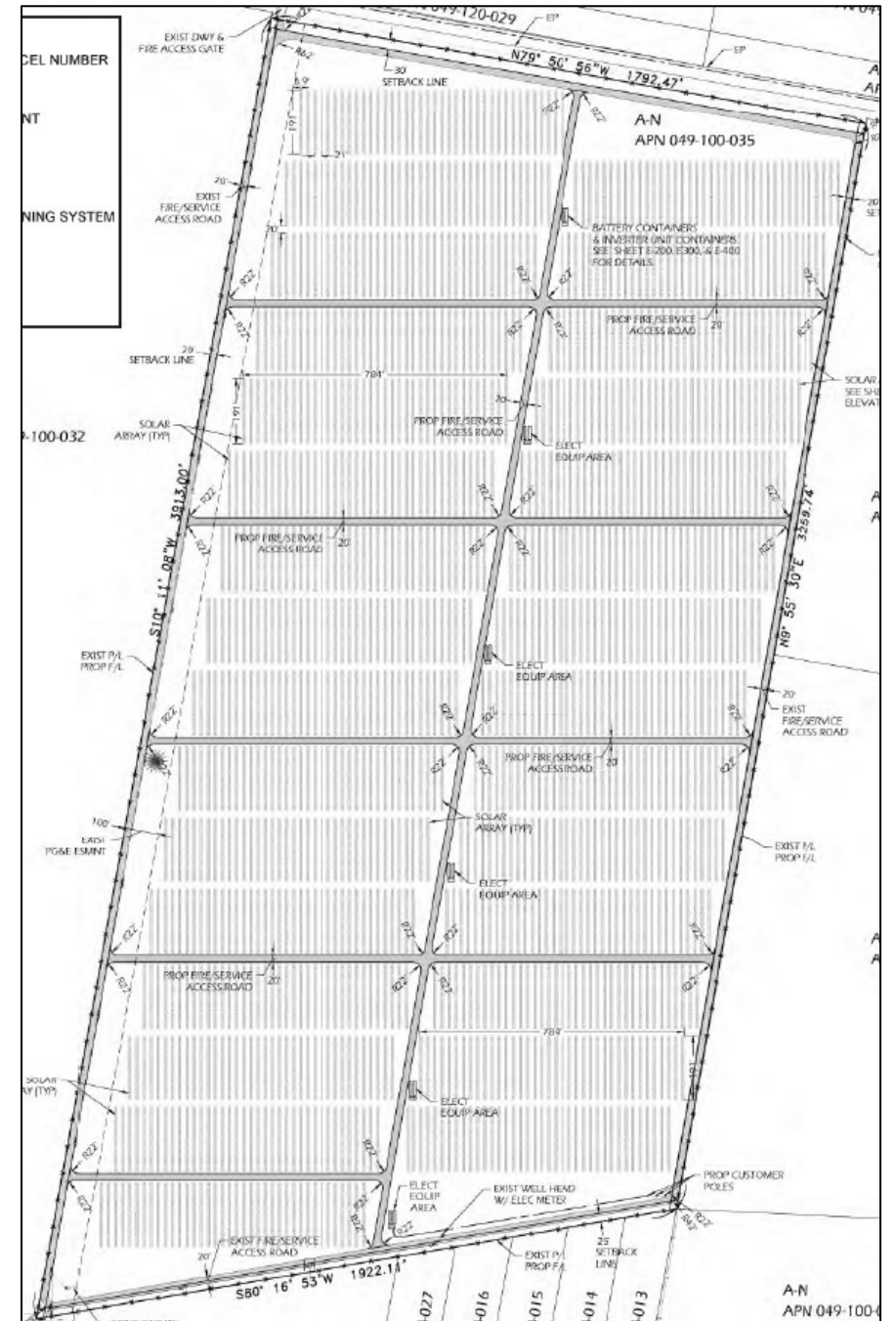
NO SITUS ADDRESS
(APN: 049-100-035)

- ❖ **Zone:** Agricultural Intensive (A-N)
- ❖ **Size:** ~147 acres
- ❖ **Prime Farmland**, if irrigated (Class I and II soils)
 - ❖ Farmed in tomatoes, wheat, and alfalfa
- ❖ Enrolled in a Williamson Act contract (#71-206).
- ❖ Access from SR 16 at NW corner
- ❖ POI: Existing PG&E 21kV Distribution Line within 1 mile of Project site.
 - ❖ Gen-tie line will extend south to CR23 at SE corner to POI.



ORIGINAL PROPOSAL & SITE PLAN

- ❖ Up to 20 MW solar PV with at least 6.5 MWac/26 MWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)
- ❖ Multi-Use Plan for the Project to collectively grow native plants, support pollinators, incorporate grazing, and host apiary use at the site.
- ❖ Response to VCE's Local RFO solicitation:
 - ❖ VCE awarded Project a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), which will assist with achieving critically important regulatory mandates regarding energy storage.
- ❖ 20-foot-wide fire/service roads throughout site
- ❖ Equipment skids located down centerline of site between the panel arrays
- ❖ Project was considered under County's SES Ordinance, updated in Nov/2022 – approx. 2 years after Project was submitted to the County for review.
 - ❖ COA's (#20-23) in **Att. G.** include additional site design modifications



Environmental Review (CEQA)

- ❖ An EIR is required when evidence indicates that the proposed project would have a significant impact(s) on the environment.

The EIR identified:

- ❖ A potential conflict with the Williamson Act contract. This incompatibility would be avoided with implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-2, which would result in either:
 - non-renewal of the Williamson Act contract (which would then expire in 9 years),
 - cancellation of the contract if the BOS makes statutory findings, or
 - a determination that the Project is a compatible “electric facility” use under Government Code Section 51238.
- ❖ Significant and unavoidable impact to Agricultural Resources from conversion of Prime Farmland to a non-agricultural use.
 - Projects that convert prime farmland are required to mitigate per the County’s Agricultural Conservation and Mitigation Program (Chapter 2, Article 4 of Title 8)
 - The mitigation ratio will depend on the location of mitigated lands: within 2 miles of a SOI, within 2 miles of the General Plan urban growth boundary of the town of Esparto, or within a priority conservation area.

REDUCED FOOTPRINT ALTERNATIVE

Original Project:

- ❖ 147 acres
- ❖ up to 20 MW solar PV with at least 6.5 MWac/26 MWh BESS

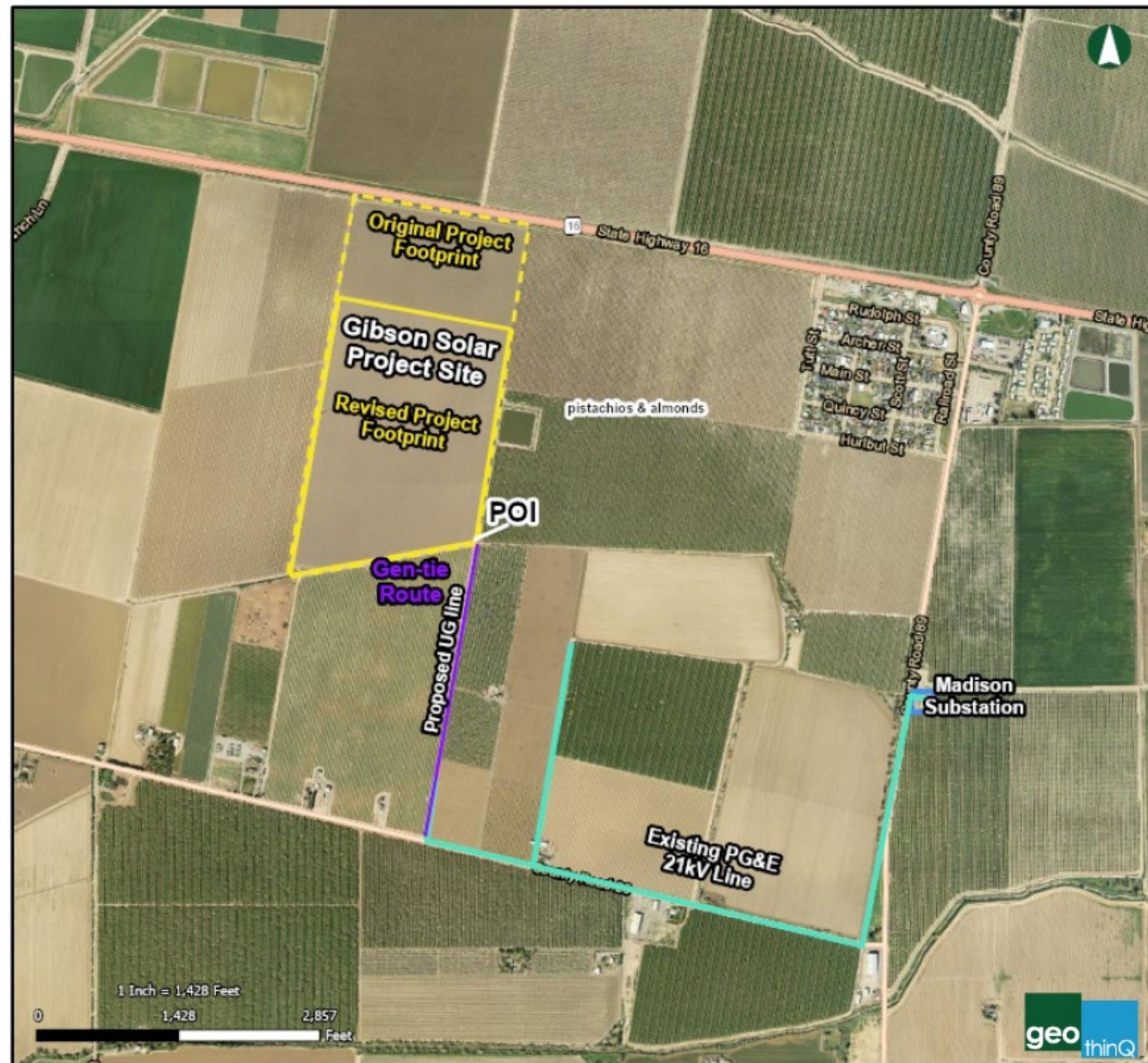
Reduced Footprint Alternative:

- ❖ 100 acres
- ❖ 13 MWac with up to 13 MWac/52 MWh BESS

Staff supported alternative:

- ❖ Soften the visual contrast from HWY 16
- ❖ Decrease the conversion of Prime Farmland from 147 ac to 100 ac
- ❖ Increase battery storage from 6.5 MWac to 13 MWac

Staff also support a partial cancellation of the Williamson Act contract to satisfy MM AG-2 of the MMRP to avoid the incompatibility with the Williamson Act.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **April 18, 2023** - Esparto Citizen's Advisory Committee (ECAC) voted unanimously to recommend approval of the Project
 - Staff incorporated recommendations to the COA's to require a surety bond for decommissioning of the site (#17) and address local flooding regarding the internal access roads (#24)
- **May 8, 2023** - Planning Commission recommended approval of the Reduced Footprint Alternative to the BOS
 - Motion passed 5 to 1;
 - As part of the motion, the Commission recommended revisions to the Project, which are outlined in the staff report and will be discussed further detail during the Applicant's presentation.
- Planning Commission also recommended a partial cancellation of the existing Williamson Act contract under the Reduced Footprint Alternative to satisfy Mitigation Measure AG-2
 - ✓ Partial non-renewal notice filed on 8/22/23



THANK YOU

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Receive a staff presentation and conduct a public hearing to consider the recommendation from the Planning Commission for the Project.
- B. Adopt a Resolution certifying the Final EIR as complete in accordance with CEQA; making CEQA Findings; adopting a Statement of Overriding Considerations; and adopting a MMRP;
- C. Approve partial cancellation of Williamson Act Agreement No. 71-206 and make associated findings;
- D. Adopt the Findings prepared for the Project; and
- E. Approve a Major Use Permit and associated Conditions of Approval for the Reduced Footprint Alternative analyzed in the EIR.