

EIR ADDENDUM

Gibson Solar Farm Project

Use Permit ZF #2020-0043
(SCH: 2021100191)

Prepared for
**Yolo County Department
of Community Services**



Prepared by



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1. BACKGROUND

The developer of the Gibson Solar Farm Project, Emeren Group Ltd. (Emeren), proposes to amend the project's existing Major Use Permit (ZF#2020-0043) to include taller generation tie line (gen-tie) and Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) interconnection poles that will connect the Gibson Solar Project to the PG&E grid. This Addendum is necessary to analyze potential impacts associated with the proposed changes that were not previously included in the Gibson Solar Project's Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

The new gen-tie line connecting the Gibson Solar Project to the PG&E interconnection point was originally proposed to use up to 10 wooden poles, each extending 37 feet above ground, within an existing orchard. For safety purposes, the project is now proposed to use taller poles to handle the weight of the conductors serving the project and ensure adequate clearance between the conductors and agricultural equipment used on the surrounding property. The gen-tie line poles are now proposed to consist of 12, 70-foot-tall wooden poles. The poles would be buried 9 feet in the ground, leaving 61 feet visible above the ground, which is an increase of 24 feet from what was originally proposed. In addition, an existing 35-foot-tall pole on the south side of County Road 23 (point of interconnection) will be replaced by a 55-foot pole buried 8.5 feet deep, for a total height of 46.5 feet above the ground, and three existing 45-foot-tall poles connecting the point of interconnection to the proposed gen-tie line will be replaced by three, 60-foot poles buried 9 feet deep, for a total height of 51 feet above the ground. The proposed amendment is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as described below.

2. CEQA REQUIREMENTS

This document has been prepared as an Addendum to the Gibson Solar Farm Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (SCH # 2021100191) in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, Section 15164. This is the first Addendum to the Gibson Solar Farm EIR, which was certified by the County Board of Supervisors on October 10, 2023. This Addendum analyzes the developer's proposal to increase the height of the gen-tie line and four other power poles connecting the project to the PG&E grid.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15164 provides that the Lead Agency "shall prepare an Addendum to a previously certified EIR if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred." The conditions in Section 15162 include substantial changes in the project or the circumstances under which the project is undertaken that result in new significant environmental effects, or new significant information showing new significant environmental effects, among others. Pursuant to Section 15164(e), a brief explanation is provided herein documenting the County's decision that preparation of a subsequent EIR is not required.

The Guidelines go on to state that: 1) the addendum need not be circulated but can be included in or attached to the Final EIR (Section 15164(c)), and 2) the County must consider the addendum with the Final EIR (Section 15164(d)).

Section 15164 was created in response to Public Resources Code Section 21166 which provides that no subsequent or supplemental EIR shall be required unless "substantial changes" in the project or the circumstances under which the project is being undertaken will necessitate "major revisions" of the EIR, or "new information" which was not known and could not have been known at the time the EIR was certified, becomes available.

The analysis provided in this document demonstrates that the circumstances, impacts, and mitigation requirements identified in the 2023 Gibson Solar Farm EIR 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 EIR to be exceeded.

3. COUNTY REGULATORY BACKGROUND

Yolo County does not currently have any regulations applicable to visual and scenic resources. Design review is performed on a project-by-project basis by the County during the application review for a building permit.

The following policies are presented in the Yolo County 2030 General Plan, Land Use and Community Character Element (2009):

- Policy CC 1.1** Encourage private landowners of both residential and commercial properties to maintain their property in a way that contributes to the attractive appearance of Yolo County, while recognizing that many of the land uses in the County, including agriculture and light industry, require a variety of on-site structures, equipment, machinery and vehicles in order to operate effectively.
- Policy CC 1.2** Preserve and enhance the rural landscape as an important scenic feature of the County.
- Policy CC 1.3** Protect the rural night sky as an important scenic feature to the greatest feasible extent where lighting is needed.
- Policy CC 1.8** Screen visually obtrusive activities and facilities such as infrastructure and utility facilities, storage yards, outdoor parking and display areas, along highways, freeways, roads, and trails.

4. PROPOSED PROJECT AMENDMENT EVALUATION

The “project” that is the focus of this Addendum is an evaluation of the proposed change to the height of the gen-tie line by an increase of 24 feet and replacement of four existing power poles to increase the height by 11.5 feet for the point of interconnection pole (labeled #1 in Figure 1) and 6 feet for the remaining three poles (labeled 2, 3, & 4 in Figure 1). The analysis in Table 1 provides the evaluation of the proposed changes and demonstrates that the circumstances, impacts, and mitigation requirements identified in the 2023 Gibson Solar Farm EIR remain substantively unchanged by the proposed height changes, such that an Addendum is warranted under Section 15164.

The proposed change would not have an effect on the conclusions identified in the 2023 Gibson Solar Farm EIR for the following issue areas, and thus they are not included in Table 1: air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation, tribal cultural resources, utilities and service systems, and wildfire. The remaining two issue areas – aesthetics and agriculture – are analyzed in Table 1 to conclude that the conditions described in Section 15162 for a subsequent EIR are not present and the preparation of an addendum to the previously certified EIR is appropriate.

Figure 1. Construction Sketch

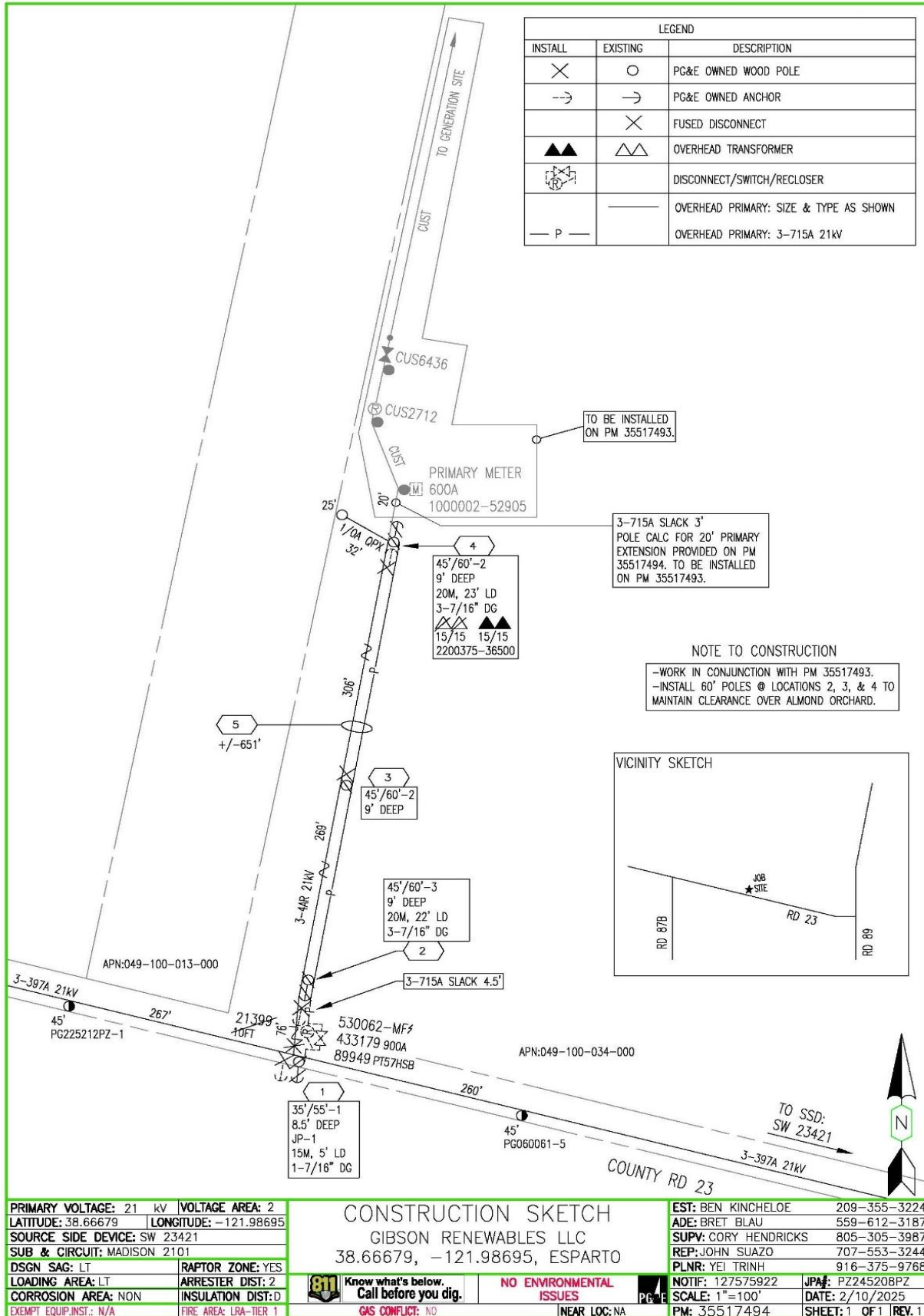
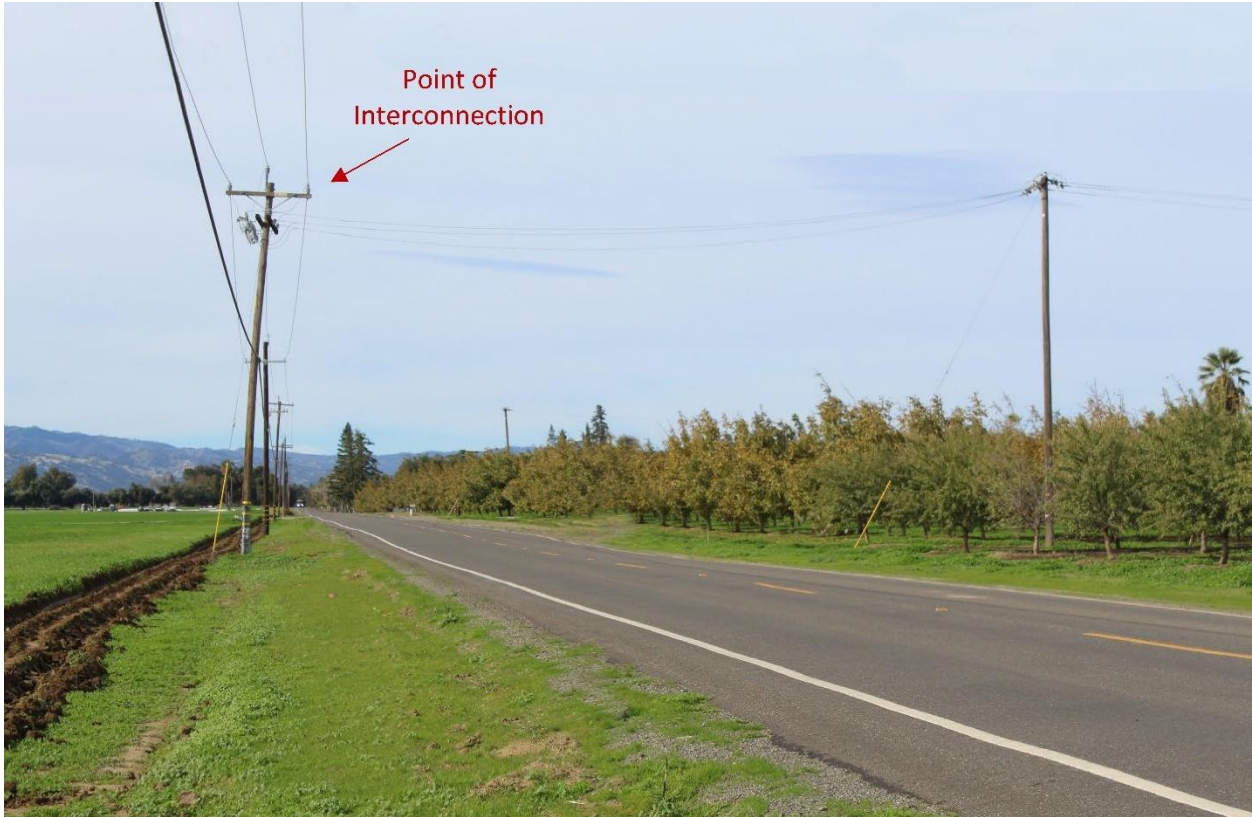


Table 1. Review of Proposed Amendment to the Gibson Solar Farm Project Relative to the Initial Study Environmental Checklist Factors

Discussion	Level of Impact
Aesthetics	
<p>Areas from which public views of the gen-tie line are potentially available include public roads and the community of Madison.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ State Route 16 is approximately 3,200 feet north of the northern-most gen-tie pole. Orchards and open fields separate the road from the gen-tie. Existing wooden poles and conductors are found along this road and traverse the nearby orchards. ■ County Road 23 is approximately 625 feet south of the southern-most gen-tie pole and directly adjacent to the existing poles that will be replaced with taller poles. Orchards are on both sides of the gen-tie line. Wooden utility poles are along the south side of the road, approximately 250-260 feet apart. Existing poles and conductors are also in the orchard. ■ County Road 89 is approximately 4,500 feet to the east of the gen-tie line. This road is also paralleled by utility poles. ■ From the community of Madison, the nearest point to the proposed gen-tie is at Hurlbut and Tutt Streets, approximately 3,400 feet northeast of the gen-tie, with an orchard between this location and the gen-tie. Existing utility lines within the community of Madison are on wooden poles with multiple lines running from pole to pole and from poles to homes. 	<p>Less than significant</p>
<p>Figure 2 shows the current view of the existing power poles along County Road 23. Figure 3 is a simulated view of the proposed taller poles which would be an increase of 11.5 feet for the point of interconnection pole and 6 feet for the pole immediately north of County Road 23. As demonstrated in Figure 3, the increase in height is not substantially different from the surrounding power poles that parallel County Road 23 and would not be noticeable to the average viewer traveling along County Road 23.</p> <p>Figure 4 shows the current view of the existing power poles running north of and perpendicular to County Road 23, from the perspective of County Road 23. Figure 5 is a simulated view with the existing poles replaced with taller poles (increase of 6 feet) in the middle ground, and the taller gen-tie lines in the background (increase of 24 feet from originally proposed). Although the poles are visible from the roadway, they do not substantially change the existing scenery due to the existing power poles in the orchard and along the surrounding roadways.</p> <p>In addition, because of the proximity of local orchards to the roads and Madison and the distances between these locations and the gen-tie, views of the new gen-tie line would be largely, if not fully, obscured by trees. If seen at all, the poles would be in the background and would be similar in appearance to existing wood poles found throughout the area. Viewers would see them as being similar to existing poles and lines that serve homes, farm facilities, and pumps within the orchards and fields and within Madison. The taller poles would not noticeably change the visual experience of a viewer and would not alter any of the conclusions reached in the EIR with regard to visual impacts.</p> <p>Given the large number of existing utility poles and associated conductors found along local roads, within the agricultural lands, and within Madison, and the ability of orchards near roads and Madison to obscure the new gen-tie from view, the project changes from 10, 37-foot-tall poles to 12, 61-foot-tall poles, from one 35-foot-tall pole to one 46.5-foot-tall pole, and from three 45-foot-tall poles to three 51-foot-tall poles, are not significant changes.</p>	
Agricultural Resources	
<p>The height of the gen-tie line is proposed to be raised for compatibility with existing orchard operations on the parcel. The increased height allows safe use of orchard pruning equipment without risk of equipment contacting the power lines.</p>	<p>No additional impacts beyond those identified in 2023 EIR</p>

Figure 2. KOP 1 Existing Conditions



Timestamp: 12:08 PM 12/03/25; Latitude: 38.666667; Longitude: -121.986111; Orientation Clockwise: 294

Figure 3. KOP 1 Simulation



Figure 4. KOP 2 Existing Conditions



Timestamp: 12:15 PM 12/03/25; Latitude: 38.666944; Longitude: -121.986944; Orientation clockwise: 7

Figure 5. KOP 2 Simulation



Table 2. Comparison of CEQA Requirements and Request

CEQA Requirement (Section 15162)	Relationship to Proposed Project
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:	The Gibson Solar Farm EIR was certified by the County Board of Supervisors on October 10, 2023. CEQA Findings, a Statement of Overriding Considerations, and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) were also adopted at the same time. The information below summarizes the substantial evidence in support of the County's determination that the preparation of a Subsequent EIR is not required.
(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;	There are no changes in the proposed amendment that would require major revisions of the 2023 Gibson Solar Farm EIR. The amendment includes a minimal increase to the height of the gen-tie line poles, which does not contribute to new or substantially increased environmental effects.
(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	No substantial changes have occurred with respect to the circumstances under which the project will be undertaken that would require major revisions of the 2023 Gibson Solar Farm EIR. As described above and analyzed in Table 1, the proposed amendment would not create new significant environmental effects or increase previously identified effects. Therefore, the County has concluded that the proposed amendment is 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 as complete or the negative declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:	There has been no new information of substantial importance that has become known since the Gibson Solar Farm EIR was approved on October 10, 2023. The County has concluded that the need to increase the height of the gen-tie line and other PG&E power poles does not contribute to new or substantially increased environmental effects.
(A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration;	The proposed amendment will not have any significant impacts that were not discussed in the previous EIR.
(B) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;	As noted above and analyzed in Table 1 above, the proposed amendment will not contribute to, or substantially increase the severity of, any previously identified 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 are no relevant mitigation measures or alternatives previously found to be infeasible that would in fact be feasible in mitigating significant effects of the proposed amendment.
(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.	No mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR are included in the proposed amendment.

CEQA Requirement (Section 15162)	Relationship to Proposed Project
b) If changes to a project or its circumstances occur or new information becomes available after adoption of a negative declaration, the lead agency shall prepare a subsequent EIR if required under subsection (a). Otherwise the lead agency shall determine whether to prepare a subsequent negative declaration, an addendum, or no further documentation.	A negative declaration was not adopted for the Gibson Solar Farm Project; therefore, this section does not apply.
c) If the project was approved prior to the occurrence of the conditions described in Subsection (a), the subsequent EIR or negative declaration shall be prepared by the public agency which grants the next discretionary approval for the project. In this situation no other responsible agency shall grant an approval for the project until the subsequent EIR has been certified or subsequent negative declaration adopted.	A subsequent EIR has been determined not to be required; therefore, this section is not applicable.
d) A subsequent EIR or subsequent negative declaration shall be given the same notice and public review as required under Section 15087 or Section 15072. A subsequent EIR or negative declaration shall state where the previous document is available and can be reviewed.	A subsequent EIR has been determined not to be required; therefore, this section is not applicable.

5. SUMMARY

Based on the analysis provided in Table 1 and Table 2, amending the Gibson Solar Farm Major Use Permit as proposed would not result in new or more severe environmental impacts beyond those analyzed in the 2023 Gibson Solar Farm EIR, and no additional CEQA review is required. This addendum shall be attached to the 2023 Gibson Solar Farm EIR.