EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Griffith Energy Storage, LLC (Applicant), a wholly owned, indirect subsidiary of NextEra Energy Resources, LLC (NEER), has applied to the San Joaquin County Community Development Department for a Site Approval (SA)[1] to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission a 400-megawatt (MW) battery energy storage system (BESS) and associated facilities and infrastructure, to be known as the Griffith Energy Storage Project (Project) in San Joaquin County. Additionally, because the Project includes an access road and interconnection generation-tie (gen-tie) line directly adjacent to the battery storage site in Alameda County, the Applicant seeks approval of a Utility Roadway Permit from Alameda County. Approval of such an encroachment permit would be a discretionary action, making Alameda County a Responsible Agency for the Project, pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15381.

The energy storage facility would house lithium-ion batteries (or similar technology) totaling 400 MW of energy on a 106-acre site, owned by a private landowner in unincorporated San Joaquin County. To avoid environmental constraints, only an estimated 32 acres of the 106-acre site would be used for the Project within San Joaquin County. The proposed BESS would provide reliable and flexible power to the local electrical system. In addition to the energy storage facility, the Project would interconnect at the Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) Tesla Substation in close proximity to the site in Alameda County via a 230-kilovolt (kV) interconnection generation tie (gen-tie) line that extends from the energy storage facility within a gen-tie corridor partially within Alameda County.

“Projects” within the State of California are required to undergo environmental review to determine the environmental impacts associated with implementation of the project in accordance with CEQA. For the proposed Project, San Joaquin County is the lead agency, and thus is required to conduct an environmental review to analyze the potential environmental effects associated with the proposed Project.

This document is a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared in accordance with CEQA. It provides an overview of the proposed Project and considers alternatives, identifies the anticipated environmental impacts from the proposed Project and the alternatives, and identifies mitigation measures designed to reduce the level of significance of any significant impact.

PURPOSE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The primary purpose of CEQA is to inform the public and decision makers as to the potential impacts of a project and to allow an opportunity for public input to ensure informed decision making. CEQA requires all state and local government agencies to consider the environmental effects of projects over which they have discretionary authority. CEQA also requires each public

[1] The Site Approval process provides a method for reviewing proposed uses which possess characteristics that require special appraisal in order to determine if the uses have the potential to adversely affect other land uses, transportation, or facilities in the vicinity. The Review Authority may require conditions of approval necessary to eliminate, or minimize to an acceptable level, any potentially adverse effects of a use.

agency to mitigate or avoid the significant environmental impacts resulting from proposed projects, when feasible, and to identify a range of feasible alternatives to the proposed Project that could reduce those environmental effects. The EIR must include the contents required by CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, and examine all phases of the project, including planning, construction, operation, and any reasonably foreseeable future phases.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Project site is situated roughly in the southwestern corner of Township 2 South, Range 4 East, southeast portion of Section 32 of the Midway, California, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle. The Project site is centered at a latitude of 37.710 degrees and longitude of -121.554 degrees (in decimal degrees). The Property is approximately 0.9 mile southwest of Interstate 580 and approximately 5 miles southwest of the city of Tracy, and in proximity to the PG&E Tesla Substation. The Project site consists of Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 209-10-19 in San Joaquin County and APN 99B-7885-002 and 99B-7590-1-3 in Alameda County for the access road and gen-tie line.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Applicant has identified the following Project Objectives:

1. Construct and operate a 400-MW BESS in San Joaquin County with an interconnection at the Tesla Substation (located in Alameda County) in a cost-competitive manner.

2. Assist California utilities in meeting their obligations under California's Renewable Portfolio Standard Program and Senate Bill (SB) 100, which calls for 100 percent of all electricity sold in California to come from carbon-free resources by the year 2045, including 60 percent renewables by 2030, and SB 1020, which requires utility providers to supply 90 percent and 95 percent of supplied electricity from renewable sources by 2035 and 2040, respectively.

3. Assist California utilities in meeting their obligations under the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) Mid-Term Reliability Procurement Requirements.

4. Provide for the economically viable, commercially financeable, and environmentally beneficial use of the site's limited agricultural capacity due to the absence of available irrigation.

5. Develop a site in proximity to transmission infrastructure in order to minimize environmental impacts.

6. Develop a battery energy storage facility in San Joaquin County, which would support the economy by investing in the local community, creating local construction jobs and increasing tax and fee revenue to the County.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is designed to absorb or output approximately 400 MW of electricity within the BESS (on 32 acres in San Joaquin County) and would include a 230-kilovolt overhead or underground gen-tie line that will extend to the PG&E Tesla Substation within Alameda County. The gen-tie corridor is 14,920 feet long and 100 feet wide, such that the corridor incorporates approximately 8 acres. The Project would contain pad-mounted energy storage units, in addition to inverters, supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) equipment, a collector substation, and an interconnection gen-tie line to the Tesla Substation. The Project would also include related and supporting facilities, such as on-site service roads, gates and security fencing, and temporary laydown and construction areas.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Construction is expected to begin in 2024 and be completed in approximately 15 months, including 3 months of testing and commissioning, with a workforce of 20 to 60 workers, depending on the phase. Once operational, the Project would operate 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Routine operations would require one or two workers in a light utility truck to visit the facility on a weekly basis. Typically, one major maintenance inspection would take place annually. The expected lifespan of the Project is 35 years.

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

Table EX-1, Summary of Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures, summarizes the potential impacts for the proposed Project. The table also identifies mitigation measures recommended to reduce, avoid, or minimize significant impacts and indicates the net level of impact following implementation of all mitigation measures.

The potentially adverse effects of the proposed Project are discussed in Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this Draft EIR. Mitigation measures have been recommended that would avoid, reduce, or minimize impacts. All of the potential impacts associated with the proposed Project would be either less than significant or mitigated to less than significant. The proposed Project would not result in any significant unavoidable impacts.

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines requires consideration and discussion of alternatives to the proposed Project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the Project and would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed Project. In addition to the proposed Project, three project alternatives were considered and are briefly summarized here (and are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this Draft EIR).

- **No Project Alternative:** The Project site would not be developed and would remain in its existing condition and continue to experience a reduction in agricultural production from water resource allocation constraints.
- **Three-Terrace Southeast Corner Alternative**: The Project site would be set back from residences along West Patterson Pass to the north and Midway Road to the west. The

facilities would be sited on three terraces with approximately the same final footprint as the Project. Site preparation would require 472,822 cubic yards of cut (65,898 cubic yards more than the Project) and 476,911 cubic yards of fill (71,270 cubic yards more than the Project), as shown in Figure 3-1.

- **Northern Site Alternative**: The Northern Site Alternative would relocate the Project to the parcel north of the Project site and north of West Patterson Pass Road, which consists of a parcel approximately 142 acres in size, shown in Figure 3-2.

AREAS OF CONTROVERSY

Areas of controversy were identified through written agency and public comments received during the scoping period. Public comments received during the scoping period are provided in Appendix A. In summary, the following issues were identified during scoping and are addressed in the appropriate sections of Chapter 4, *Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures*:

- Impacts related to air quality
- Impacts related agricultural resources
- Impacts to hydrology and water quality resources
- Impacts related to wildfire