

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT FOR THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION, AND
DECOMMISSIONING OF A SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEM AT NAVAL AIR
STATION LEMOORE, KINGS COUNTY AND FRESNO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and U.S. Department of the Navy (Navy) NEPA regulations (32 CFR Part 775), and Chief of Naval Operations Manual-5090.1, the Navy gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required for the Proposed Construction, Operation, and Decommissioning of a Solar Photovoltaic (PV) System at Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore, Kings County and Fresno County, California.

Proposed Action: The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase Navy installation energy security, operational capability, strategic flexibility, and resource availability through the development of renewable energy generating systems.

The Proposed Action is required to meet the renewable energy standards put forth by the One Gigawatt Initiative and Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Energy Goals. Under the Proposed Action, the Navy and a private partner would enter into an agreement to allow the private partner to use Navy land to construct, operate, and own the proposed solar PV system. The partner would sell the generated power to regional customers and/or the Navy. The private partner would be responsible for maintenance, operation, and the eventual decommissioning of the solar PV system. Construction may begin as early as 2016.

Public Participation: The public participation process included the publication of a Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft EA in two local newspapers: the Fresno Bee from May 22 through May 24, 2015, and the Hanford Sentinel on May 22, 23, and 26, 2015. The Draft EA was also made available for public review at the Lemoore Branch Library, the Kings County Library, and the

Riverdale Branch Library. In addition, the Draft EA was made available via the Navy Region Southwest website (<http://www.cnmc.navy.mil/NASLSolarPV>). The 30-day public review period was from May 22 to June 22, 2015. One public comment was received on the Draft EA that provided some information about an abandoned underground pipeline in the project area; this information has been evaluated in the EA. A NOA of the Final EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be published in the Fresno Bee and the Hanford Sentinel. Copies of the documents will also be placed at three local libraries and on the Navy Region Southwest website.

Alternatives Analyzed:

1) **Proposed Action (Alternative 1):** Under Alternative 1, up to approximately 2,730 acres within Sites A and B would be developed to support the construction and operation of a 390 megawatt (MW) or greater solar PV system.

Alternative 1 Option: An optional substitute for developing both Sites A and B is to use only the 145 acres of Site A for the production of up to 20 MW of solar power.

2) **Alternative 2:** Under Alternative 2, up to approximately 2,730 acres within up to four separate sites (Sites A, B, D, and/or E) would be developed to support the construction and operation of a 390 MW or greater solar PV system.

3) **No Action Alternative:** Under the No Action Alternative, the Navy would not enter into an agreement with a private partner to construct and operate a solar PV system at NAS Lemoore.

Alternative to be Implemented: The Proposed Action (Alternative 1) has been selected for implementation as it best meets the purpose and need for the project and would have no significant impacts to the human or natural environment.

Existing Conditions: The Proposed Action would occur within a 12,709-acre area used to provide a buffer around the NAS Lemoore Operations Area. NAS Lemoore operates approximately 53 agricultural out-lease areas with 16 lessees. Sites A, B, D, and E are located within this area. Surrounding land uses include agriculture, managed grazing lands, and natural resource management areas.

Three archeological sites are located within the project's Area of Potential Effect. No federally listed plant or animal species are known to occur in the project area.

Environmental Effects and Mitigation Measures: Impact avoidance and minimization measures as described in Table 3.0-1 of the EA would be implemented. The following is a summary of the environmental consequences of the selected alternative:

Land Use: The construction, operation, and decommissioning of the solar PV system would be consistent with the NAS Lemoore Master Plan. Alternative 1 would comply with requirements applicable to the operation of a solar PV system within an explosive safety quantity distance arc. Soils designated as farmland of statewide importance would be temporarily converted to non-farm uses (for the duration of the project) but would remain largely unchanged and would be available for future agricultural use. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not have a significant impact to land use.

Biological Resources: Sites A and B are located within the potential renewable energy area identified in NAS Lemoore's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan. There would be no impact to federally listed species as none occur within the project area. No impact on native and/or natural plant communities at Sites A and B would occur as the solar PV system sites are located in active agricultural land. The impact avoidance/minimization measures listed in Table 3.0-1 of the EA would be implemented to lessen any potential impacts to biological resources. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not have a significant impact to biological resources.

Public Health and Safety: To minimize Bird/Animal Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) potential, all phases of Alternative 1 would be implemented in accordance with the NAS Lemoore BASH adaptive management strategies to promote safe aircraft operations at NAS Lemoore by reducing the potential for bird and other animal aircraft strike hazards. With implementation of the rodent control, pest management, and weed abatement plans, fewer rodents and pests would be present in and around the solar PV system, therefore, reducing the number of birds drawn to the area. Also, Phase one of the siting of a solar PV system would be beyond 10,000 feet from the airfield and regular monitoring

would occur to determine if the solar PV panel system was or was not attracting additional birds to the area and adaptive management would be implemented, if needed. It is anticipated that as a result of these measures, less birds would be drawn to the project area and become potential BASH threats. Construction and operation of the solar PV system would not present issues with respect to airspace penetration, reflectivity, or interference with communications. Construction, maintenance, and decommissioning activities would be conducted in compliance with health and safety regulations and would not pose a risk to construction personnel or on-going training. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not have a significant impact to public health and safety.

Socioeconomics: While the implementation of Alternative 1 would result in an impact to socioeconomics resulting from loss in crop production, as well as the impact from the loss of approximately 24 agriculture jobs, the loss accounts for 0.13 percent of the annual market value for crops in Kings and Fresno counties. In addition, benefits associated with construction employment opportunities and more stable electricity rates could potentially offset this impact. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not have a significant impact to socioeconomic resources.

Visual Resources: Construction impacts to visual resources would be temporary and limited to viewers from adjacent roadways and agriculture parcels. The solar PV system would be compatible with NAS Lemoore's visual character. Visual sensitivity of the new 230-kV transmission line would be limited to those within the NAS Lemoore Main Side Area and not change the context of the visual environment. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not have a significant impact to visual resources.

Cultural Resources: Three archaeological sites are located within the Area of Potential Effect of Alternative 1. However, these sites are either recommended ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Place (thus not considered historic properties) or would be avoided during construction, operation, and decommissioning activities. Based on the results of the records search and field investigation, no Historic Properties would be affected. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not have a significant impact to cultural resources.

Air Quality: Alternative 1 would not exceed *de minimis* levels; therefore, a Conformity Determination would not be required. Hazardous Air Pollutant (HAP) emissions would be negligible. Long-term beneficial impacts to air quality would occur with implementation of the solar PV system due to the benefits of contributing to the energy/power grid through alternative energy development, therefore, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These potential long-term beneficial impacts would be expected to offset the minor emissions generated as a result of construction, operational maintenance, and decommissioning of the solar PV system. A Clean Air Act Record of Non-Applicability for the selected alternative has been completed and is located in Appendix B of the EA. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not have a significant impact to air quality.

Utilities: Under Alternative 1, there would be the potential for temporary and localized power disruption when the solar PV system comes on-line. Alternative 1 would support achievement of Navy renewable energy goals and strategies. Existing and/or new electrical infrastructure would be sufficient to support the solar PV system. The private partner would use off-site sources to meet all project water needs; NAS Lemoore would not supply water to the project. There would be no impact to NAS Lemoore water supply or use. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not have a significant impact to utilities.

Transportation: Alternative 1 would result in temporary increases in traffic associated with construction, operations, and maintenance, and decommissioning activities. Some of the trips associated with these activities (e.g., delivery of construction materials and equipment, the removal of construction debris, operations, and maintenance) would be periodic and would not regularly add traffic to the roadway network. Construction and decommissioning vehicle trips would occur throughout the associated project phase. The volume of vehicle trips would be relatively low and would not affect the existing traffic level of service. Moreover, since the

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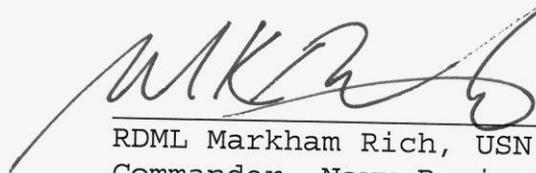
construction areas are outside of fenced areas on NAS Lemoore, traffic from Alternative 1 should not contribute toward any delays or queues at NAS Lemoore Entry Control Points. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not have a significant impact to transportation.

Finding: Based on the analysis presented in this EA, the Navy finds that implementation of the Proposed Action/Alternative 1 will not significantly impact the quality of the human or natural environment.

The EA prepared by the Navy addressing this action is on file and interested parties may obtain a copy from Ms. Teresa Bresler, Senior Environmental Planner, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southwest, Code JE20.TB, 1220 Pacific Highway, San Diego, California 92132-5190, or email Teresa.bresler@navy.mil.

Date

10/20/15



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