COUNTY OF COLUSA
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
1213 Market Street, Colusa, CA 95932
(530) 458-0480

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION**
**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

**Date:** June 24, 2024

**To:** State Clearinghouse, Agencies, and Interested Parties

**From:** Colusa County Community Development Department
1213 Market Street, Colusa CA, 95932

**Subject:** Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Proposed Janus Solar and Battery Storage Project

**The Purpose of This Notice of Preparation**

The purpose of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to comply with Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15082. Colusa County is the Lead Agency for the Project. The Project includes one or more discretionary approvals that trigger environmental review and County staff has determined that an environmental impact report (EIR) is the appropriate level of review.

The County is requesting input for the preparation of an EIR regarding the scope and content of environmental concerns from your agency's area of responsibility. The EIR will be utilized by various agencies for subsequent approvals. Please provide appropriate contact information for the person(s) in your agency for consultation regarding this Project that is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The NOP is available on the County website at:

https://www.countyofcolusa.org/996/Janus-Solar-Project

**Project Location**

The Project site includes two parcels with Assessor Parcel Numbers (APN) 018-050-005 and 018-050-006, which are approximately 630.5 and 255.7 acres, respectively, for a total area of 886.2 acres. The site is more generally located in Township 14 North, Range 4 West, Sections 1 and 2. The Project would connect to the existing PG&E Cortina Substation, which is located on Walnut Drive approximately 3 miles northeast of the Project site, as shown on the Site Plan (see Attachment A). The Project is approximately 6.5 miles southwest of the City of Williams. State Highway 20 runs approximately 1.5 miles from the Project site to the north and west.

The Project would connect to the electrical grid at the existing PG&E Cortina Substation via a roughly 4-mile long 60 kilovolt (kV) gen-tie line partially located within existing County right-of-way (ROW) along Walnut Drive and Spring Valley Road, as identified on the Site Plan (Attachment A).

**Project Setting**

The Project site is located in a transitional area of Colusa County between the farmed valley floor and the westerly foothills of the California Coast Range. Topographic and geotechnical surveys demonstrate that the site's topography varies from relatively flat to gently rolling hills with elevation changes of approximately 150 feet.

The Project site historically has been used for grazing activities and contains approximately 56 acres of land on the northwest portion that will continue to be used as a corral area to support the landowner's ongoing cattle grazing operation.

The Project site is under Williamson Act contract, although it is not irrigated and is not prime farmland. The EIR will include an assessment of potential Project-related impacts to agricultural resources including potential actions by the Board of Supervisors regarding the Williamson Act contracts.

**Project Description**

The Project will utilize approximately 666 acres of the approximately 886-acre Project site. Construction is planned to begin in July 2025 and conclude in June 2026, lasting approximately 11 months. The Project would generate and store up

to 80 megawatts alternating current (MWAC), for the purpose of delivering renewable electricity to the grid in a cost-competitive manner.

A more detailed description is provided as follows:

Solar Arrays and Inverter Blocks - The solar PV power generation facilities would include solar arrays and inverter blocks. The solar PV modules (i.e., panels) would convert solar energy into direct current (DC) electricity. By design, the solar PV panels absorb sunlight to generate electrical output and are manufactured with anti-reflective glass that minimizes potential for glare. The PV modules would be mounted together in arrays on a modular tracking system such that the angle of the panels would change throughout the day. Each tracking assembly would consist of galvanized steel posts on which frames, ranging between 6 and 10 feet above grade, depending on the topography, would be placed. The Project would also include inverter blocks to convert the DC electricity from the solar arrays to alternating current (AC) electricity. The inverter blocks would be located along internal access roads within the solar arrays. Each inverter block would consist of enclosed inverter stations and a transformer approximately 10 feet in height above grade set on concrete or steel foundations. An electrical collection system would be installed underground in branch circuits to connect the electrical output of the energy facility to the on-site substation. Cable lengths would vary with the distance of the solar arrays to the on-site substation.

On-Site Substation - The Project would include an on-site substation located on an approximately 3-acre portion of the Project site within a perimeter fence. The substation would include a generator step-up transformer to increase the output voltage from the module blocks (34.5 kV) to the voltage of the 60-kV transmission line, protective relay and metering equipment, utility and customer revenue metering, and a station service transformer that would provide power to the substation and its weatherproof control house.

Battery Energy Storage System - The battery energy storage system (BESS) would be located to the east of the on-site substation within an approximately 4-acre area. The BESS would consist of lithium ion battery technology that would be used to either control electric frequency or store energy produced by the solar PV power generation facilities. The BESS would be housed in standard shipping containers.

Transmission Line and Point of Interconnection – The Project would connect to the electrical grid at the existing PG&E Cortina Substation via a roughly 4-mile long 60 kilovolt (kV) gen-tie line partially located within existing County right-of-way (ROW) along Walnut Drive and Spring Valley Road. The gen-tie line

would be installed on existing, retrofitted, or new poles, either aboveground or underground depending on feasibility.

Related and Supporting Facilities - The Project-related supporting facilities and infrastructure would include an operations and maintenance (O&M) facility, internal service roads, security fencing, gates and lighting, a construction laydown yard, and other temporary construction areas.

Operations and Maintenance Facility - The O&M facility would include office space, storage, and sanitary facilities. The sanitary facilities would drain to an on-site septic system. Water would be supplied by either on-site wells or trucked to the site. An equipment storage area and a gravel parking lot for employees, visitors, and emergency response vehicles would be located adjacent to the container. The O&M facility would be located in the vicinity of the on-site substation and will occupy an area of approximately 1 acre.

Internal Service Roads - Internal service roads would be constructed to access the Project, for ingress and egress to the Project site, to individual Project components, and between the solar array rows to facilitate installation, maintenance, and cleaning of the solar panels. Roads throughout the arrays would provide access to the inverter equipment pads and substations and would be graveled. The roads would be approximately 12 feet wide.

Security Fencing, Gates, and Lighting - The site perimeter would be bordered by a 6- to 8-foot-tall woven wire or chain link fence. This type of fence would provide necessary security for the Project while also being friendly to wildlife. A locked security gate would be located at the site entrance.

Construction Laydown Yards - Temporary, construction laydown yards would be included in the Project. The laydown yards would, collectively, be approximately 5 acres in size and located within the Project site. The laydown yards would be graded with a gravel surface and temporarily fenced to provide storage for supplies, vehicles, and equipment during construction.

**Potential Environmental Impacts**

Pursuant to CEQA and Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15064, the discussion of potential environmental impacts in the EIR shall be focused on impacts identified by the County as potentially significant. The EIR will also evaluate cumulative impacts of the Project when considered in conjunction with other related past, current, and reasonably foreseeable

future projects. The Lead Agency has initially identified the following environmental considerations as potentially significant effects of the Project:

***Aesthetics*** – The Project is located in a rural area surrounded by existing agricultural uses consisting of grazing lands and scattered residential buildings and accessory buildings. The Project would alter the existing character of the site and surrounding area. The Project site is located to the east of Spring Valley Road and residents and travelers in the area would observe alterations to the existing landscape. The EIR will provide an assessment of the Project's potential impacts to visual resources, as well as the potential for glint and glare impacts.

***Agriculture and Forestry Resources*** - The site is unirrigated and current activities are limited to grazing. The Project site is designated as Farmland of Local Importance by the California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. The Project site is under Williamson Act contract but is not designated Prime or Unique Farmland. The EIR will provide an assessment of potential Project-related impacts to agricultural resources including potential actions by the Board of Supervisors regarding the Williamson Act contracts.

***Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions*** - The EIR will describe regional and local air quality in the vicinity of the proposed Project site and evaluate impacts to air quality associated with the construction and operation of the Project. An air quality study will establish baseline conditions, and Project and cumulative impacts. The proposed Project's estimated air emissions will be compared to emissions thresholds of the Colusa County Air Pollution Control District and California Air Resources Board. The EIR will describe existing air quality conditions within the Sacramento Valley Air Basin and will evaluate the proposed Project's potential air quality impacts. Potential air quality emissions include fugitive dust and combustion exhaust. The EIR will also include a discussion of greenhouse gas emissions and the proposed Project's contribution to potential cumulative impacts on global climate change.

***Biological Resources*** - Construction of the proposed Project may modify biotic habitats used by sensitive plant and wildlife species. As such, site development may be regulated by state or federal agencies, in addition to being subject to CEQA. A preliminary biological assessment of special status species was completed in November 2019. The assessment indicated that the Project site primarily consists of non-native grasslands, with smaller areas of disturbed potential wetland, riparian woodland, and native forbs are present on the Project site. The Project site contains ephemeral and riverine drainages, which have been heavily disturbed due to historical and existing ranching activities. Additional plant and wildlife studies and a wetland delineation study will be prepared prior

to publication of the EIR, and the Project's potential impacts to biological resources will be further analyzed in the EIR.

***Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources*** - The County will initiate the AB 52 process by notifying seven tribes, six from the NAHC lists and another who has requested consultation in the past. A records search, tribal consultation, and a cultural pedestrian survey will be included for the Project site. There are no known historic architectural resources on the site. The EIR will examine the Project's potential to affect cultural resources and tribal cultural resources.

***Energy*** - The EIR will include an analysis of the Project's potential to result in impacts on energy conservation and/or consumption.

***Geology/Soils and Mineral Resources*** - Initial construction, buildout, and operation of the proposed Project could result in impacts related to geotechnical hazards, including seismicity of the area, potential for liquefaction and subsidence, potential for soil erosion, soil stability characteristics, and shrink/swell potential of site soils, as applicable. Mineral resources in the County are generally related to gravel along existing waterways. While no significant waterways exist on the Project site, gravel resources have the potential to be present due to the proximity of the Coast Range and possible alluvial fans. If paleontological resources exist on the site, ground-disturbing activities could result in potentially significant impacts. The EIR will provide a geological evaluation of the proposed Project site to establish baseline conditions and assess the potential for impacts related to geology, soils, mineral resources, and paleontological resources.

***Greenhouse Gas Emissions*** - The temporary construction activities associated with the proposed Project, which would involve operation of heavy off-road equipment, on-road trucks, and construction worker commute trips, would generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. However, as a solar facility, the proposed Project is expected to displace traditional sources of electricity production that involve combustion energy sources (e.g., burning coal, fuel oil, or natural gas). As such, the provision of solar energy by the proposed Project would produce GHG-free electricity that is anticipated to offset GHGs that would otherwise be generated by traditional sources of electricity. The potential impacts associated with GHG emissions generated during construction of the Project and the potential GHG offsets resulting from operation of the Project will be evaluated in the EIR. The proposed Project's estimated GHGs will be evaluated for consistency with the Colusa County General Plan (adopted July 31, 2012) and 2022 State Scoping Plan.

***Hazards and Hazardous Materials*** - There are no known hazards or hazardous materials located within the proposed Project site according to the Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment. The EIR will evaluate the potential for the proposed Project to result in, or be affected by, impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials.

***Hydrology/Water Quality*** - According to the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (Map Numbers 06011C0625F and 06011C0650F), the majority of the Project site is located within Zone X. Zone X is an area determined to be outside the 0.2 percent annual chance floodplain. There are some locations along drainages that are identified as Zone A and are considered to be within the 100 Year Flood Plain. The EIR will analyze the proposed Project's impacts on hydrology and water quality.

***Land Use/Planning*** - The EIR will describe the proposed Project's potential effects on existing and planned uses on and around the Project site. The General Plan land use designation is Agricultural Upland (AU). The site is zoned as Foothill Agriculture (F-A), which has a minimum parcel size of 80 acres. The designations are intended to promote and support agricultural uses such as grazing. The F-A zoning designation allows for energy generation for off-site use with a Use Permit. The EIR will provide a discussion of relevant local plans and policies.

***Noise*** - The EIR will describe the noise levels associated with construction and operations and will compare these levels to applicable noise thresholds to determine whether the proposed Project would result in potentially significant noise impacts. A noise study will establish baseline, Project, and cumulative impacts.

***Population/Housing*** - The EIR will evaluate the Project's effect on population and housing in the local area based on estimations of Project employment and distribution of the employees by place of residence.

***Public Services*** - The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project's potential to create an adverse impact to schools, and will also evaluate effects on local police and fire services along with parks and regional recreational facilities.

***Recreation*** - Recreational activities in the vicinity of the Project will be analyzed in the EIR.

***Transportation/Traffic*** - The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project's impact on regional and local transportation facilities based on a transportation analysis that will assess both construction-related impacts (heavy truck trips and construction worker trips), as well as operational impacts (employee and visitor trips).

Construction-related vehicles would primarily access the Project site from State Route 20, Walnut Drive and Spring Valley Road. The EIR will evaluate traffic safety, road damage impacts, and agricultural aircraft operations.

***Utilities and Service Systems*** - The proposed Project would not require extension/connection to urban services such as potable water service, wastewater treatment, and storm-water drainage. However, the EIR will analyze drainage, wastewater, natural gas, and electrical systems and the proposed Project's impact on these systems. The EIR will analyze water supply for construction and maintenance activities, as well as describe the existing solid waste facilities that serve the Project site.

***Wildfire*** – As of April 1, 2024, the proposed Project site is designated by CALFIRE as a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone within the State Responsibility Area (SRA). The Project site is not within a Fire-Threat Area as designated by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). The EIR will evaluate the potential impacts of the Project related to wildfire.

***Growth Inducement*** - The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project's potential for growth inducement resulting from the construction and operation of the Project, as well as new demand for housing, and goods and services. The effect of primary and secondary increases in employment and economic activity will be discussed.

***Cumulative Impacts*** - The EIR will discuss the incremental contribution of the proposed Project to cumulative effects of other past, current, and planned and reasonably foreseeable projects in the vicinity. The summary of projects method will be used where applicable. Also, to the extent feasible, the cumulative impacts analysis will quantify the degree of severity of any cumulative impact.

***Alternatives Evaluated Under the EIR*** - In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed Project that are capable of meeting most of the proposed Project's objectives, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed Project. The EIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the Lead Agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. The EIR will also provide an analysis of a No Project Alternative.

***Opportunity for Public Comment***

Interested individuals, groups, and agencies may provide to the County of Colusa Community Development Department, written comments on topics to be addressed in the EIR for the proposed Project. Because of time limits mandated

by state law, comments should be provided no later than 5:00 p.m. on July 31, 2024. Agencies that will need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed Project should provide the name of a staff contact person. Please send all comments to:

Greg Plucker, Community Development Director
Colusa County Community Development Department
1213 Market Street, Colusa CA, 95932
(530) 458-0480
gplucker@countyofcolusa.com

**Attachment A**: Janus Solar and Battery Storage Project - Site Plan