

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Development

Avellana Power Rural Electric Cooperative: Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA

ACTION: Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), an agency within the Department of Agriculture, has prepared and is announcing that an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a project proposed by the Avellana Properties Rural Electric Cooperative (APREC), is available for public review and comment. RUS is publishing the EA to inform interested parties and the general public about the project proposal and to invite the public to comment on the scope, proposed action, and other issues addressed in the EA. The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR part 1500), and RUS, Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR part 1970) and evaluates the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects related to providing financial assistance for the APREC's Solar and Broadband Project (Project).

RUS has determined that its action regarding the proposed Project is an undertaking subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. 306108) and its implementing regulation, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800). RUS must take into account the undertaking's potential effects on historic properties and pursuant to 36 CFR 800.2(d), RUS is hereby seeking public comment concerning the undertakings potential effects on historic properties.

APREC, of Apple Valley, California is proposing to construct, operate, and maintain a 2.25 Megawatt (MW) solar power generating facility and broadband internet service delivery network on approximately 44.92 acres in San Bernardino County, California. APREC intends to apply to RUS for funding.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Elisa Sims Albury, Environmental Protection Specialist, RUS, Phone (202) 692-1970, RUSPublicComments@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: APREC proposes to construct a 2.25 MW solar generation and operations facility on 4.72 acres privately-owned land and construct an underground electrical distribution grid and broadband internet network on 40.2 adjacent privately owned acres. The Service Area consists of the area between Bear Valley Road and Las Piedras Rd and between Circle 5 Road and Laguna Seca Drive. Solar components would include solar arrays, inverters, 7.2 MW of battery storage, associated switchgear, access roads, and a new distribution grid to supply power to members of the Avellana cooperative. Broadband service project components would include an IP-based network headend with bandwidth aggregation, VPN-provisioning engine, and a Network Operations Center (NOC), as well as a community distribution grid, last mile optical termination, and home-based Internet of Things (IoT) with Ip-telephone sideband. Power and internet services will be distributed to 400 planned new cooperative-member homes, a medical/dental clinic, community center, convenience store, wastewater treatment plant, fire suppression system, and lighting grid.

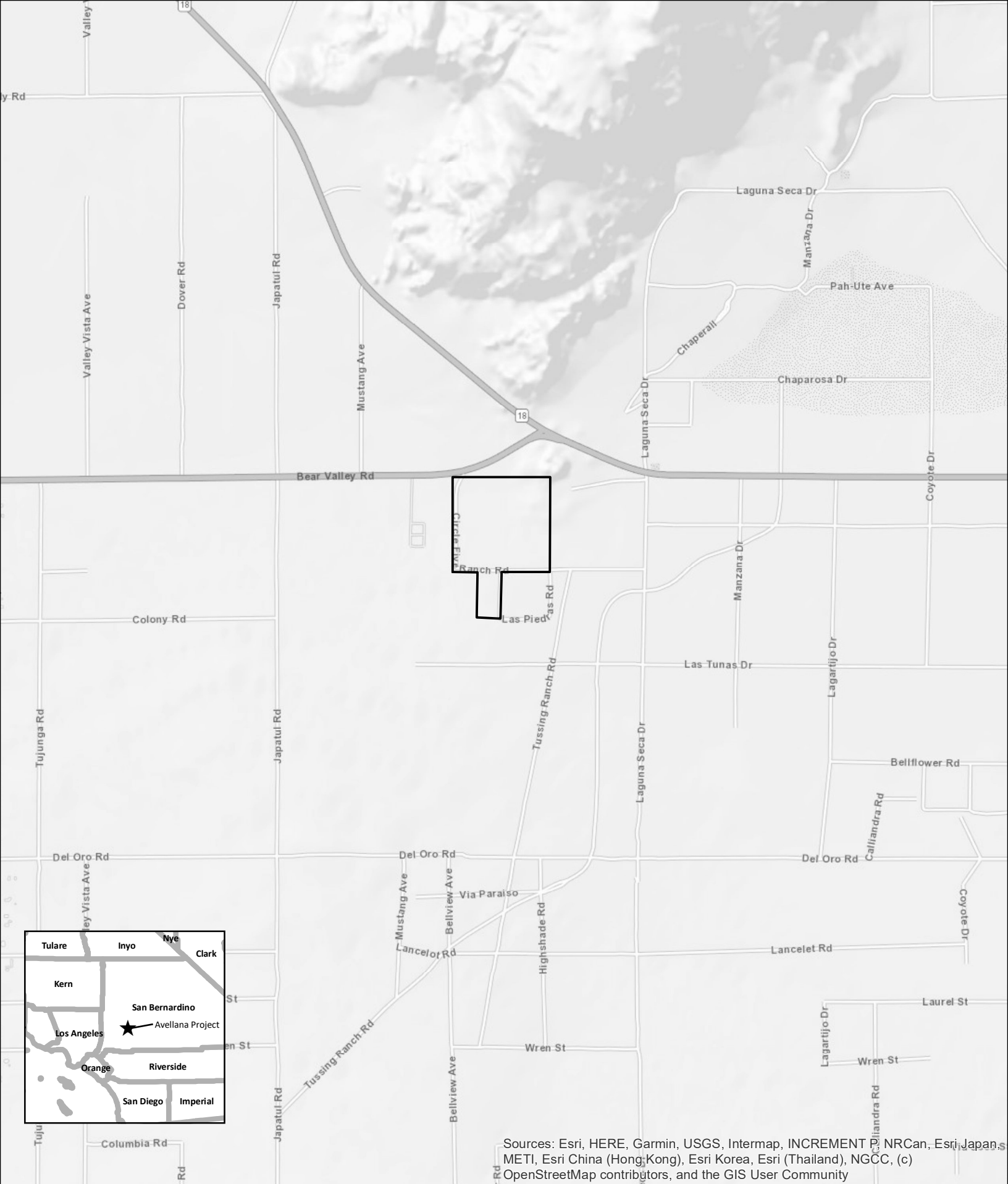
APREC prepared an environmental assessment for RUS that describes the project, assesses the proposed project's environmental impacts, and summarizes as applicable any mitigation measures used to minimize environmental effects. RUS has conducted an independent evaluation of the EA and believes that it accurately assesses the impacts of the proposed project. No significant impacts are expected because of the construction of the project.

The EA is available for review on RUS's website at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessment/avellana-solar-and-broadband-project>. Questions and comments should be sent to RUS at the email address provided above. RUS will accept questions and comments on the environmental assessment for 14 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Any final action by RUS related to the proposed project will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant Federal environmental laws and regulations and completion of environmental review procedures as prescribed by 7 CFR Part 1970.


A general location map of the proposal is shown below.

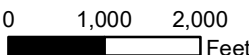
Dated: **March 23, 2023**



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri, Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Avellana Properties Rural Electric Cooperative Solar/Broadband Project

 Avellana Project Area

Scale: 1:24,000  Feet 