

# Merced County approves solar project on farmland

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**MERCED** — The Merced County Board of Supervisors approved a small solar photovoltaic project that will span 11 acres of farmland in the Dos Palos area.

The project will spread across two parcels on the east side of San Juan Road and about 550 feet north of Highway 152, according to county documents. Supervisors last week unanimously approved the project's conditional use permit.

About 7,560 individual solar panels will be installed to generate 1.5 megawatts of electricity.

The applicant, Sun Harvest Solar, LLC, has a power purchase agreement with PG&E, according to Mark Hendrickson, Merced County director of community and economic development.

The electricity generated will go into the state energy grid to provide power to customers around the state, he said.

In addition to helping Merced County meet a state-mandated goal of having 33% of all energy come from renewable sources, the project can help spur economic activity.

The project will be constructed in five phases over a period of 12 weeks. About 15 workers will be hired during each phase, Hendrickson said.

"There are people that are going to be working as a result of this, so projects like this do contribute to our economy," Hendrickson said. "It is always our hope that Merced County residents will benefit from economic activity taking place."

Hendrickson said the agricultural land was being used for cotton production during the last two years, though it has grown tomatoes and alfalfa in the past. The solar facility will be productive for 20 to 30 years, he said, before being converted back to agricultural land.

Board Chairman and District 5 Supervisor Jerry O'Banion said the project is smaller than other solar facilities approved by the county, but said it can still provide some benefits to the environment.

