

DOCKETED

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CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

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February 1, 2016

**REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON THE
PRELIMINARY STAFF ASSESSMENT FOR THE
SONORAN ENERGY PROJECT AMENDMENT (02-AFC-1C)**

TO: AGENCY DISTRIBUTION LIST

The enclosed Preliminary Staff Assessment (PSA) contains the California Energy Commission (Energy Commission) staff's preliminary evaluation of the proposed amendment for the Sonoran Energy Project (SEP), formerly the Blythe Energy Project Phase II (BEP II). The PSA is available for review on the Energy Commission's web site at: <https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=02-AFC-01C>

This PSA is not a decision document for power plant proceedings, nor does it contain findings of the Energy Commission related to environmental impacts or the project's compliance with local, state, and federal laws, ordinances, regulations and standards (LORS). The PSA will serve as a precursor to the Final Staff Assessment (FSA). After allowing for a public comment period on this PSA, staff will prepare and publish an FSA that will address comments received and serve as staff's formal testimony in evidentiary hearings to be held by the Energy Commission Committee assigned to hear this case. The Committee will hold evidentiary hearings and will consider the recommendations presented by the staff, petitioner, intervenors, government agencies, tribes and the public, prior to proposing its decision. The Energy Commission will make the final decision, including findings, after the Committee's publication of its proposed decision.

The Energy Commission encourages agency participation in the review of the SEP amendment. The agency comment period for this PSA ends on March 1, 2016. If you wish to provide comments on the document, please submit comments by going to the Energy Commission's SEP webpage <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/sonoran/> and click on the "Submit e-Comment" link. Please provide your full name, agency name, an e-mail address, reference Docket No. 02-AFC-1C, in the subject line, and preferably put your comment in an attached document (.doc, .docx, or .pdf format). After entering characters to ensure that responses are generated by a human user and not a computer, click on the "Agree & Submit Your Comment" button to submit the comment to the Energy Commission Dockets Unit. If you wish to mail written comments on the project, please submit them to the Energy Commission Dockets Unit. Please include the Docket No. 02-AFC-1C for the SEP in the subject line or first paragraph of your comments, and mail or hand-deliver them to:

California Energy Commission
Dockets Unit, MS-4
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

All written comments and materials filed with the Dockets Unit will become a part of the public record of the proceeding. Additionally, comments will be posted on the SEP webpage of the Energy Commission's website.

Summary of the Sonoran Energy Center Petition to Amend

The SEP site is located within the city of Blythe, approximately five miles west of the city center, in eastern Riverside County, one mile east of the Blythe Airport which is currently owned by Riverside County.

The SEP project owner proposes to modify the approved BEP II and change the name of the project to the Sonoran Energy Project. Other modifications proposed for the project include the following:

- Define a new point of electrical interconnection via a 1,320-foot, 161-kV transmission line to the Western Area Power Administration's Blythe substation located southeast of the project site via an existing transmission line located in the Southern California Edison (SCE) Buck Boulevard substation;
- Replace the two Siemens SGT6-5000F combustion turbines with a single, more efficient General Electric (GE) Frame 7HA.02 combustion turbine;
- Replace the Siemens steam turbine generator (STG) with a more efficient single-shaft GE D652 STG;
- Increase the size of the auxiliary boiler to support the CTG's rapid response fast start capability;
- Decrease the size of cooling tower from an 11-cell to a 10-cell tower in response to the reduced heat rejection requirements;
- Decrease the size of the emergency diesel fire pump engine; and
- Optimize the general arrangement.

Summary of the California Energy Commission Staff's Preliminary Conclusions

Based upon the information provided and analyses completed to date, the following **Summary Table 1** illustrates Energy Commission staff's preliminary assessment of the petition to amend. Please review the PSA for a detailed discussion of the significance of staff's conclusions. These preliminary conclusions are subject to change in the FSA depending upon additional information and comments received.

**Summary Table 1
Environmental and Engineering Assessment**

Technical Area	Complies with LORS	Impacts Mitigated	Additional Information Required
Air Quality/Greenhouse gases	Yes	Yes	No
Biological Resources	No	No	No
Cultural Resources	Undetermined	Yes	Yes
*Hazardous Materials	Yes	Yes	Yes
Land Use	No	No	Yes
Noise and Vibration	Yes	Yes	No
Public Health	Yes	Yes	No
Socioeconomics	Yes	Yes	No
**Soil and Water Resources	Yes	Yes	No
Traffic & Transportation	No	No	Yes
Transmission Line Safety/Nuisance	Yes	Yes	No
Visual Resources	Yes	Yes	No
Waste Management	Yes	Yes	No
Worker Safety and Fire Protection	Yes	Yes	No
Facility Design	Yes	Yes	No
Geology & Paleontology	Yes	Yes	No
Power Plant Efficiency	N/A	Yes	No
Power Plant Reliability	N/A	Yes	No
*Transmission System Engineering	Yes	Undetermined	Yes
Alternatives	N/A	N/A	No

*Staff's analysis of the proposed amendment is presently inconclusive for Hazardous Materials and Transmission System Engineering. Insufficient data was available to staff at the time the PSA was prepared to conduct a reliable analysis of potential impacts on these technical areas. Currently staff is reviewing additional information provided by the petitioner and has yet to determine if all information is complete.

** Staff's analysis recommends that the SEP should implement dry cooling to address project water use impacts. In addition to the project's use of wet cooling not complying with state water policy, the Palo Verde Mesa basin is now supporting unsustainable groundwater pumping. The additional groundwater demand required by the SEP would be expected to result in significant impacts to the Palo Verde Mesa groundwater basin and flows in the Colorado River.

Additional Project Information

The status of the project, copies of notices and other relevant documents are available on the Energy Commission's web site:

<https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=02-AFC-01C>

If you have questions about the project, review process or schedule, please contact Mary Dyas, Energy Commission Compliance Project Manager, at (916) 651-8891 or e-mail at mary.dyas@energy.ca.gov.

List Serve

If you would like to be notified of upcoming workshops or other documents being docketed for this project you can subscribe to the List Serve for this project by going to <http://www.energy.ca.gov/listservers/index.html> and entering your first and last name, e-mail address and selecting “**blythe2 (Sonoran Energy Project)**” located under the heading **Construction On Hold**.

Sincerely,

Date: _____ << Signature on file >> _____
CHRISTINE ROOT
Compliance Office Manager
Siting, Transmission, & Environmental Protection Division

Mailed to agency list