

DOCKETED

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Project Title:	Sonoran Energy Project (formerly Blythe Energy Project Phase II) - Compliance
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CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

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February 1, 2016

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
OF THE
PRELIMINARY STAFF ASSESSMENT FOR THE
SONORAN ENERGY PROJECT AMENDMENT (02-AFC-1C)**

TO: MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

This notice is to inform you that the California Energy Commission (Energy Commission) staff has prepared a Preliminary Staff Assessment (PSA). The PSA contains the Energy Commission staff's independent evaluation of the proposed amendment for the Sonoran Energy Project (SEP), formerly the Blythe Energy Project Phase II (BEP II). The PSA is now available for public review and comment. Energy Commission staff's preliminary conclusions are summarized in this notice.

The Energy Commission encourages public participation in the review of the PSA. The public comment period for this PSA begins now and will continue for 30-days until 5:00pm on March 1, 2016.

The Energy Commission staff is planning to hold public workshop during February 2016. The workshop will be a forum to discuss the PSA with all stakeholders who are interested. Public comment will also be taken at the workshop. In the near future, the Energy Commission will issue public notices of the workshop date, time and location. If you wish to be notified of this workshop, please subscribe to the List Serve as described below.

If you wish to provide comments on the document, please submit comments by going to the Energy Commission's SEP webpage at: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/sonoran/> and click on the "Submit e-Comment" link. Please provide your full name, any organization 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 amendment, 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.

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**.

Energy Commission Licensing Authority

The Energy Commission is responsible for reviewing and ultimately approving or denying all applications for construction and operation of thermal electric power plants, 50 megawatts (MW) and greater, proposed for construction in California. The Energy Commission's facility certification process carefully examines public health and safety, environmental impacts and engineering aspects of proposed power plants and all related facilities, such as electric transmission lines and natural gas and water pipelines. The Energy Commission is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and through its certified regulatory program produces Preliminary and Final Staff Assessments (FSAs) rather than Draft and Final Environmental Impact Reports.

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.

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, **Summary Table 1** below 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.

Availability Of The Preliminary Staff Assessment

A copy of the PSA is available on the project web site at:
<https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=02-AFC-01C>

Copies of the PSA have also been sent to those public agencies that would normally have jurisdiction except for the Energy Commission’s exclusive authority to certify sites and related facilities.

Copies of the PSA are also available at the Energy Commission’s Library in Sacramento, the California State Library in Sacramento, and at public libraries in Eureka, Fresno, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Additionally, copies of the PSA were mailed to the following public libraries:

Riverside Library – Main Branch 3581 Mission Inn Avenue Riverside, CA 92501-3306	Brawley Public Library 400 Main Street Brawley, CA 92227-2434
Parker Arizona Public Library 1001 S. Navajo Avenue Parker, AZ 85344-4999	Quartzsite Public Library 465 N. Plymouth Avenue Quartzsite, AZ 85346

Public Resources, Contact Information and Additional Sources for Information

If you desire information on how to participate in the Energy Commission's review of the proposed project, please contact the Energy Commission’s Public Adviser, Alana Mathews, at (916) 653-5898 or toll free in California at (800) 822-6228, or by e-mail at publicadviser@energy.ca.gov. The Public Adviser’s Office webpage is: http://www.energy.ca.gov/public_adviser/

To request special accommodations for those persons with disabilities, contact Lourdes Quiroz at lquiroz@energy.ca.gov or by telephone (916) 654-5146.

News media inquiries should be directed to the Energy Commission Media Office at (916) 654-4989, or by e-mail to mediaoffice@energy.ca.gov.

For additional information about this project, contact Mary Dyas, Energy Commission Compliance Project Manager, at (916) 651-8891 or e-mail at mary.dyas@energy.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Date: _____

<< Signature on file >>

CHRISTINE ROOT
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Siting, Transmission, & Environmental Protection Division

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