

DOCKETED

Docket Number:	02-AFC-01C
Project Title:	Sonoran Energy Project (formerly Blythe Energy Project Phase II) - Compliance
TN #:	212735
Document Title:	Notice of Availability of the Final Staff Assessment for the Sonoran Energy Project Amendment (02-AFC-1C)
Description:	Letter to the Public Final Staff Assessment
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Organization:	California Energy Commission
Submitter Role:	Commission Staff
Submission Date:	8/11/2016 8:52:59 AM
Docketed Date:	8/11/2016

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

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SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5512
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August 1, 2016

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
OF THE
FINAL 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 the Final Staff Assessment (FSA) Part A of the Petition to Amend the Sonoran Energy Project (SEP) (formerly known as Blythe Energy Project II). The FSA Part A contains the staff's independent evaluation for all technical sections with the exception of Transmission System Engineering which will be published in a subsequent FSA Part B. The FSA Part A is now available for public review and comment at <https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=02-AFC-01C>. Energy Commission staff's conclusions are summarized in this notice.

This FSA Part A 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). An Energy Commission Committee assigned to the petition will hold evidentiary hearings on the FSA Parts A and B 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 public participation in the review of the FSA. 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 kilovolt (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 combustion turbine generator's (CTG) 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;
- Use the existing BEP evaporation ponds for wastewater disposal and construct two onsite evaporation ponds consistent with Condition of Certification **BIO-12** for

cooling system initial commissioning, maintenance, planned/forced outages, and emergency;

- Decrease the size of the emergency diesel fire pump engine; and
- Optimize the general arrangement.

Summary of the California Energy Commission Staff's Conclusions

Based upon the information provided and analyses completed, **Summary Table 1** below illustrates Energy Commission staff's assessment of the petition to amend. Please review the FSA Part A for a detailed discussion of the significance of staff's conclusions.

**Summary Table 1
Environmental and Engineering Assessment**

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

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

Copies of the FSA Part A 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 FSA Part A 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 FSA Part A 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 Poneh Jones at poneh.jones@energy.ca.gov or by telephone (916) 654-4425.

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: 8/10/16

Christine Root
CHRISTINE ROOT
Compliance Office Manager
Siting, Transmission, & Environmental Protection Division

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