

DOCKETED

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CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

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October 18, 2013

**REQUEST FOR COMMENTS
ON THE STAFF ASSESSMENT – PART B
FOR THE PROPOSED BLYTHE SOLAR POWER PROJECT
AMENDMENT (09-AFC-6C)**

To: AGENCY DISTRIBUTION LIST

This notice is to inform you that the California Energy Commission (Energy Commission) staff has prepared a Staff Assessment-Part B (SA) for the Revised Petition to Amend to modify the Blythe Solar Power Project (BSPP). The SA Part B contains staff's independent, objective evaluation of the Revised Petition to Amend for the technical areas of Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Land Use, Traffic and Transportation, Visual Resources, and Alternatives.

The SA Part A, which was published on September 23, 2013, contains the Energy Commission staff's independent, objective, final engineering, public health, and environmental evaluation of the proposed BSPP, based on the information provided by the applicant, government agencies, interested parties and other sources available at the time the SA was prepared. The SA-Part A includes staff's environmental and engineering evaluation of the BSPP project in the following technical areas: Air Quality, Hazardous Materials Management, Noise and Vibration, Public Health, Socioeconomics, Soil and Water Resources, Transmission Line Safety and Nuisance, Waste Management, Worker Safety and Fire Protection, Facility Design, Geology and Paleontology, Power Plant Efficiency, Power Plant Reliability, and Transmission System Engineering.

Agencies are encouraged to participate in the SA review process. Written comments should be provided by November 8, 2013. If you wish to provide comments on the SA, please submit comments to the Energy Commission using the Energy Commission's e-commenting feature by going to the Energy Commission's Blythe Solar Power Project webpage, http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/blythe_solar/, and click on the "Submit e-Comment" link. A full name, e-mail address, comment title, and either a comment or an attached document (.doc, .docx, or .pdf format) is mandatory. After entering CAPTCHA (a challenge-response test used by the system 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 are preparing non-electronic written comments, please mail or hand deliver them to:

California Energy Commission
Dockets Unit, MS-14
Docket No. 09-AFC-6C
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

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

You can also subscribe to receive e-mail notification of all notices and announcements at: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/listservers>. By being on this email list, you will receive all project related notices and documents pertaining to the project's evaluation and review. For additional information contact Mary Dyas, Energy Commission Compliance Project Manager, at (916) 651-8891 or email at mary.dyas@energy.ca.gov.

A public workshop and hearing will be scheduled in mid November 2013, after the comment period for Part B of the SA, to discuss all comments. The SA will serve as staff's formal testimony and submitted into the evidentiary record for Committee consideration. The Committee will consider the recommendations submitted by staff, applicant, intervenors, government agencies, tribes and the public prior to proposing its decision. In the last step, the full Energy Commission will issue the final decision.

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED BLYTHE SOLAR POWER PROJECT

On June 28, 2012, Palo Verde Solar I, LLC (PVSII), the original project owner, filed a petition with the California Energy Commission (Energy Commission) requesting to modify the Blythe Solar Power Project by replacing the solar thermal technology completely with photovoltaic (PV) generating technology. On April 12, 2013, NextEra Blythe Sola Energy Center, LLC (NextEra Blythe Solar), current owner of the BSPP, filed a Revised Petition to Amend with the Energy Commission requesting to modify the approved BSPP (http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/blythe_solar/) to change the solar thermal power-generating technology of the approved project from parabolic trough technology to photovoltaic (PV) technology.

The project, as licensed by the Energy Commission on September 15, 2010, is a 1,000-megawatt (MW) solar thermal power-generating facility utilizing parabolic trough technology on approximately 7,043 acres. The project site is located approximately 8 miles west of the City of Blythe and 2 miles north of the Interstate-10 freeway, on land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Riverside County, California.

The modifications proposed in this revised Petition to Amend include replacing the parabolic trough solar collection system and associated heat transfer fluid with PV modules. The PV modules will consist of a tracker system, fixed tilt system, or combination of the two systems. NextEra Blythe Solar is requesting the Decision be amended to allow the specific combination of PV technologies to be selected prior to construction without the need for filing another amendment.

The modified BSPP would be comprised of four phases designed to generate a total of approximately 485 MW (nominal) of electricity when completed. The first three units (phases) would consist of approximately 125 MW alternating current (AC) each. The fourth unit would generate approximately 110 MW AC. All four units would share an operations and maintenance facility, one on-site switchyard, access and maintenance roads, perimeter fencing and other ancillary security facilities, and a 230-kV gen-tie line. The transmission corridor is located in the center of the site with the exact location to be determined during final design.

ENERGY COMMISSION LICENSING AUTHORITY

The Energy Commission is responsible for reviewing and ultimately approving or denying all applications for construction, operation and modification of thermal electric power plants, 50 megawatts (MW) and greater, proposed for construction in California. In the case of this amendment, the Energy Commission is responsible for reviewing and ultimately approving or denying the requested project changes. 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 Staff Assessments rather than Draft and Final Environmental Impact Reports.

SUMMARY OF CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION STAFF'S CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the information provided, discovery achieved and analyses completed to date, **Summary Table-1** illustrates the Energy Commission staff's assessment of the Petition to Amend and compares it to the originally approved Blythe Solar Power Project (BSPP) as previously licensed by the Commission. Please review the SA for a detailed discussion of the significance of staff's conclusions.

**Summary Table 1
Environmental and Engineering Assessment**

Technical Area	Original Final Decision		Revised Petition to Amend	
	Complies with LORS*	Impacts Mitigated	Complies with LORS*	Impacts Mitigated
Environmental Assessment				
Air Quality/Greenhouse gases	Yes	Yes	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Biological Resources	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Cultural Resources	Yes	No	Yes	No
Hazardous Materials	Yes	Yes	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Land Use	No	No	Yes	No
Noise and Vibration	Yes	Yes	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Public Health	Yes	Yes	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Socioeconomics	Yes	N/A	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Soil and Water Resources	Yes	Yes	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Traffic & Transportation	No	No	Yes	Yes

Technical Area	Original Final Decision		Revised Petition to Amend	
	Complies with LORS	Impacts Mitigated	Complies with LORS	Impacts Mitigated
Transmission Line Safety/Nuisance	Yes	Yes	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Visual Resources	Yes	No	Yes	No
Waste Management	Yes	Yes	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Worker Safety and Fire Protection	Yes	Yes	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Engineering Assessment				
Facility Design	Yes	Yes	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Geology & Paleontology	Yes	Yes	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Power Plant Efficiency	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Power Plant Reliability	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Transmission System Engineering	Yes	Yes	Provided in Part A	Provided in Part A
Alternatives	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Laws, Ordinances, Regulations and Standards (LORS)

AVAILABILITY OF THE STAFF ASSESSMENT

An electronic copy of the SA has been included for your agency's review. The status of the project, copies of notices, and other relevant documents are available on the Energy Commission's webpage for this amendment:

http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/blythe_solar/.

Sincerely,

Date: 18 October 2013



CHRISTOPHER J. MARXEN
 Manager Compliance Office
 Siting, Transmission & Environmental Protection
 Division

cc: Mail List No.7368 Agencies (Notice and CD)