

## DOCKETED

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**STATE OF CALIFORNIA**  
**Energy Resources**  
**Conservation and Development Commission**

In the matter of:

DOCKET NO. 09-AFC-06C

Amendment for the **BLYTHE SOLAR  
POWER PROJECT**

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**COLORADO RIVER INDIAN TRIBES**

**Testimony of Wilene Fisher-Holt regarding Impacts of the Blythe Project on Cultural  
Resources**

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## **Qualifications**

I am a descendent of the Chemehuevi and Mojave tribes. For the past 2 years I have maintained the position as the CRIT Museum Director. As the Museum Director I am also responsible for the Cultural Resources of the Colorado River Indian Tribes and the traditional lands of the tribes. I have a strong background in the cultural arts of my people which includes knowledge of both the Mojave and Chemehuevi traditions and customs. I was born and raised on the CRIT reservation in Parker, AZ. I attended college at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, UT where I received my Masters degree in Social Work. Both of my grandmothers were known for their cultural arts. Although, back in their time the work was utilitarian not considered art. My maternal grandmother was a Mojave beadworker and my paternal grandmother was a well know Chemehuevi basket weaver and healer in the community. I grew up traveling the areas at hand and have knowledge of both the tribes as it relates to the desert and how our people survived in it. Both of my parents and grandparents taught me how to respect the land, the air we breathe, and the plants and animals and they will take care of us. I have a Masters degree but more importantly my education has been a life-long teaching of who we are as a people of the desert and the Colorado River.

## **Statement**

Both the Mohave and Chemehuevi consider the Palo Verde Mesa and Chuckwalla Valley areas part of our traditional homelands. Since time immemorial our peoples have lived and survived in this area. It was only with the Federal Government that our people were forced to live on reservations. There are both Mohave and Chemehuevi families today that can tell of family history and ties to the proposed solar area.

Creation stories both Chemehuevi thru Salt songs and Mohave thru Bird songs tell a history of these areas. The mountains have Indian names and the trail systems –both spiritual and visible foot trails—are evidence that we were and continue to live here.

It is believed these solar developments, including the Blythe Solar Power Project as well as the Palen Project, the Genesis Solar Energy Project, and the McCoy Solar Energy Project, disrupt the Creation stories systems, including both the spiritual and visible trail systems. They will also disrupt the connection the songs carry our ancestors to and thru the happy hunting ground. Also, the Mohave used the trails for runners to communicate between settlements throughout the desert and along the Colorado River. Currently, Tribes continue to hold Spirit Runs for these sacred areas given to the people by our Creator.

The traditional clan songs of the Mohave tell of so much detail of names, places that they are more of the history of our people:

When our Creator Mastamho at Avi Kwame (Spirit Mountain) set us here and gave us our name, the Amacava (Mohave) he gave us our Creation stories and the clan songs...He set our lands so each clan would know its territory and how it fit into the land of the whole tribe. Our clan songs show us places we need to survive, not only physically in finding water and food in the desert, but also how to survive as a people with the same beginning and the same traditions. He also

told us about the other people (tribes) living around us and gave them their territory.

As for the Clans, since the beginning of time the Mohave believe God “Matavilya,” gave the Mohaves their names to use and pass on to their children. He began with the above things-the sky of heavens. Neolge the sun; Oach the clouds, rain and wind. Whalia, the moon; and Maha the birds. Then he named the earth things-desert and mountain animals and plants. The families named for the animals of the earth are Moha the mountain sheep and deer; Hipa the fox and/or coyote; Masipa, the quail; Necah the worms; Plants are Vemeacka the desert plants; Mus the mesquite, Gottah the tobacco and Kumathee the ocotillo and Quinetha the cactus.

In addition, the wild plants of the desert, desert game, mountain sheep, deer, turtle, rabbit and squirrel supplement our diet. Clay sources from surrounding mountains and desert plants are used for pottery and basket making. These items are mainly for cooking and storage of seeds and nuts, pottery for water carrying vessels. Salt known to be collected from Project area is considered sacred and is used during certain ceremonies and not consumed because of its power during certain ceremonies. The redtail hawk feathers are used for sacred items for ceremony. Creosote is known for its many medicinal uses. The desert not only provides food for sustenance but was also used for housing. Using arrowweed, mesquite and clay for a well-insulated house to survive in the extreme desert temperatures.

Our people didn't have generalized cremation and burial grounds. While traveling in our nomadic lifestyles if someone passed a ceremony for cremation or burial was held at that place. So, the vast region surrounding the Colorado River is considered a burial ground and sacred, for our ancestors are buried throughout the region. Genesis is a fine example of what lays underneath! There are buried cultural materials throughout our homeland, “our desert.”

Specifically, there are sacred ceremonial sites in/near the Blythe solar area. There are mazes or some describe as rows on the desert pavement. These are areas known to be made by Warriors of the Mohave people. They were made from a fasting ritual of running back and forth in a small area lasting 4 days. As a four day physical fasting period the warrior was not allowed to eat meat and consume salt as a way of sacrificing for the ceremony. These are very special areas to the Mohave people and it is important part of our history and traditions. They are located in certain areas throughout the Mojave Desert.

As Museum Director, I have attended numerous informational meetings and site visits regarding other proposed and approved renewable energy facilities in CRIT's ancestral homelands. I am familiar with the typical mitigation measures proposed for cultural resource impacts. I have discussed these measures with CRIT elders, councilmembers, and tribal members. I have also discussed these measures with representatives of other tribes. I was never asked by CEC staff for my opinion about the sufficiency or appropriateness of the measures proposed for the Blythe Project. Nor was I ever asked by CEC staff to discuss the cultural and religious impacts of this Project with them prior to the issuance of the Staff Assessment.

### **Exhibits**

In my role as CRIT Museum Director and Director of Cultural Resources have also collected written statements from two CRIT members regarding the impacts of the Palen Project on cultural resources. I attest that Exhibits 4012 to 4013 are true and correct copies of these written statements, and hereby sponsor these Exhibits in this proceeding.

**Testimony of Wilene Fisher-Holt  
regarding Impacts of the Blythe Project on the Cultural Resources**

I, Wilene Fisher-Holt, declare as follows:

1. I am currently the Museum Director as well as the Director of Cultural Resources at the Colorado River Indian Tribes. I have served in this position with CRIT for 2 years. I am also the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer.

2. My relevant professional qualifications and experience are set forth in the attached testimony.

3. I prepared the attached testimony relating to the proposed Amendment to the Blythe Solar Power Project.

4. It is my professional opinion that the attached testimony is true and accurate with respect to the issues that are addressed.


5. I am personally familiar with the facts and conclusions described within the attached testimony and if called as a witness, I could testify competently thereto.

6. In addition to this written testimony, I am sponsoring Exhibits 8015 to 8018 in this proceeding. These Exhibits are listed in Opening Testimony document submitted together with this specific testimony.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

DATED: November 13, 2013

AT: Parker, AZ

  
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Wilene Fisher-Holt