

## DOCKETED

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**CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION**

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SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5512  
www.energy.ca.gov



September 11, 2013

**REQUEST FOR COMMENTS  
ON THE FINAL STAFF ASSESSMENT – PART A  
FOR THE PROPOSED PALEN SOLAR ELECTRIC GENERATING  
SYSTEM (09-AFC-7C)**

**To: AGENCY DISTRIBUTION LIST**

This notice is to inform you that the California Energy Commission (Energy Commission) staff has prepared a Final Staff Assessment-Part A (FSA) for the December 12, 2012 Petition to Amend to modify the Palen Solar Power Project (PSPP). The FSA Part A contains staff's independent, objective evaluation of the Petition to Amend for all technical areas except cultural resources which will be provided in Part B, and air quality which will be provided in Part C after the South Coast Air Quality Management District completes its Preliminary Determination of Compliance (PDOC) with its rules and regulations.

The FSA-Part A, which was published on September 10, 2013, contains Energy Commission staff's independent, objective, final engineering, public health, and environmental evaluation of the proposed Palen Solar Electric Generating System (PSEGS) project, based on the information provided by the applicant, government agencies, interested parties and other sources available at the time the FSA was prepared. The FSA-Part A includes staff's environmental and engineering evaluation of the PSEGS project in the following technical areas: **Biological Resources, Hazardous Materials Management, Land Use, Noise and Vibration, Public Health, Socioeconomics, Soil and Water Resources, Traffic and Transportation, Transmission Line Safety and Nuisance, Visual Resources, Waste Management, Worker Safety and Fire Protection, Facility Design, Geology and Paleontology, Power Plant Efficiency, Power Plant Reliability, and Transmission System Engineering.**

If you wish to provide comments on the FSA, please submit comments to the Energy Commission using the Energy Commission's e-commenting feature by going to the Energy Commission's Palen Solar Power Project webpage, <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/palen/>, 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-7C  
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 PSEGS 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 Christine Stora, Energy Commission Compliance Project Manager, at (916) 654-4745 or email at [christine.stora@energy.ca.gov](mailto:christine.stora@energy.ca.gov).

The FSA will serve as staff's formal testimony in evidentiary hearings to be held by the Energy Commission's Committee assigned to hear this case. The Committee will hold evidentiary hearings to consider the recommendations presented by staff, applicant, intervenors, government agencies, 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 Palen Solar Electric Generating System**

On December 17, 2012, Palen Solar Holdings, LLC (PSH) filed a petition with the Energy Commission requesting to modify the Palen Solar Power Project (PSPP). The project, as licensed on December 15, 2010, by the Energy Commission, is a 500-megawatt (MW) solar thermal power generating facility utilizing parabolic trough technology. The project site is approximately 3,794 acres and is located approximately 0.25 mile north of Interstate 10, approximately 10 miles east of Desert Center and approximately halfway between the cities of Indio and Blythe, in Riverside County, California.

In the 2012 petition, the project owner proposes changes to the approved site layout and technology associated with the approved project. The modified project would use solar tower technology. Heliostats—elevated mirrors mounted on a pylon guided by a tracking system—would be used to focus the sun's rays on a solar receiver steam generator located atop a 750-foot tall solar tower near the center of each solar field. The project will use air-cooled condensers for power plant cooling.

The modified project would be comprised of two adjacent solar fields and associated facilities with a total combined nominal output of approximately 500 MW. PSH proposes to develop PSEGS in two operational phases: each phase would consist of one solar field and power block with approximately 250 MW of generation capacity. Each solar field would have an array of approximately 85,000 heliostats for a total of 170,000 heliostats for the project. Each phase would also share common facilities, including an administration building, warehouse, evaporation ponds, maintenance complex and a meter/valve station for incoming natural gas service to the site, an on-site switchyard, and a single-circuit, 230-

kV generation tie-line to deliver power to the electricity grid. Other on-site facilities would include access and maintenance roads (either dirt, gravel, or paved), perimeter fencing, tortoise fencing, and other ancillary security facilities.

The PSEGS amendment does not propose to change the generating capacity of the Energy Commission-approved project, the site access, or the interconnection point at Red Bluff Substation, although there would be a slight re-routing of the generation tie-line near the western end of the route and around the newly constructed Red Bluff Substation.

### **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. 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 rather than Draft and Final Environmental Impact Reports.

### **Summary of California Energy Commission Staff's Final Conclusions**

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

**Summary Table 1  
Environmental and Engineering Assessment**

	PSPP Decision	PSPP Decision	PSEGS Amendme	PSEGS Amendment
Technical Area	Complies with LORS	Impacts Mitigat	Complies with LORS*	Impacts Mitigate
Air Quality/Greenhouse gases	Yes	Yes	To be provided in Part C	To be provided in Part C
Biological Resources	Yes	Yes	Yes	<b>Uncertain</b>
Cultural Resources	Yes	<b>No</b>	To be provided in Part B	To be provided in Part B
Hazardous Materials	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Land Use	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	Yes	Yes
Noise and Vibration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public Health	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socioeconomics	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes
Soil and Water Resources	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Traffic & Transportation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transmission Line Safety/Nuisance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Visual Resources	Yes	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
Waste Management	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Worker Safety and Fire Protection	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Facility Design	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geology & Paleontology	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
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	Yes	Yes
Alternatives	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

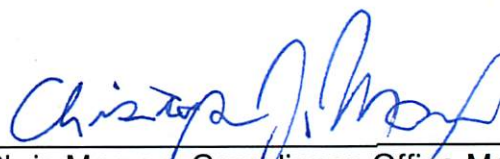
\*laws ordinances regulations and standards (LORS)

**Availability of the Final Staff Assessment**

The status of the project, an electronic copy of the FSA, copies of notices, and other relevant documents are available on the Energy Commission's webpage for this amendment: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/palen/compliance/>.

Sincerely,

Date: 5/6/11, 2011



Chris Marxen, Compliance Office Manager  
Siting, Transmission and Environmental  
Protection Division

cc: Agency List No.7373 (Notice and CD)