

February 1, 2010

Eric Solorio
Project Manager
California Energy Commission
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

DOCKET

09-AFC-9

DATE FEB 01 2010

RECD. FEB 02 2010

RE: Ridgecrest Solar Power Project, Docket No. 09-AFC-9, Responses to CEC Data Requests, Data Request 58, Additional Information

Dear Mr. Solorio:

On January 25, 2010, Ridgecrest Solar I, LLC (the Applicant) provided to the CEC responses to the CEC's data requests Sets 1 and 2, dated December 22, 2009 and January 19, 2010, respectively. A portion of the response to Data Request 58, prepared by Dr. Phil Leitner, pertaining to the Mohave ground squirrel and habitat connectivity at the proposed Ridgecrest Solar Power Project (RSPP) site was inadvertently omitted from the response. Please find attached the complete response prepared by Dr. Leitner to Data Request 58 to support the data response for Data Request 58 submitted to the CEC on January 25, 2010.

If you have any questions on this data response to the Staff's Data Request 58, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Alice Harron
Senior Director, Development

**RIDGECREST SOLAR POWER PROJECT
(09-AFC-9)
DATA REQUEST 58**

Prepared by

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January 10, 2010

58. Please provide maps and describe the importance of the project site to the local and regional Mohave ground squirrel populations regarding habitat quality and value, habitat fragmentation, and maintaining adequate connectivity for local and regional Mohave ground squirrel movement.

DATA RESPONSE

There are no records of Mohave ground squirrel occurrence on the RSPP site. However, two lines of evidence suggest that the project site supports a Mohave ground squirrel population. First, there are 24 documented Mohave ground squirrel occurrences within 5 miles of the boundaries of the project ROW (Figure 1). An analysis of the habitat associated with these occurrences indicates that the species has been detected in both Creosote Bush Scrub and in Desert Wash Scrub in the region surrounding the project site. Second, the project site supports both of these desert scrub communities and Mohave ground squirrel habitat suitability has been mapped (Figure 2). The entire project site is classified as suitable habitat for the species, with over 77% considered to be medium and high suitability. Furthermore, the southern portion of the project site is located within the Mohave Ground Squirrel Conservation Area as designated in the BLM West Mojave Plan. As a result of these considerations, the Applicant has chosen to assume presence of the species over the entire project site.

The project site is located on the southern edge of Indian Wells Valley on El Paso Wash, a major wash system that drains the mountainous terrain to the south. A recent review of the status of the Mohave ground squirrel (Leitner 2008) indicates that this site is adjacent to two areas known to support Mohave ground squirrel populations. The Little Dixie Wash core area lies immediately to the west, while another population is known to be present to the north and east of the project site. Thus, the project site may currently help

to provide some habitat connectivity between these two populations (Figure 3), although there is extensive land to the north of the project site that could serve the same function. The wash system on which the project is located may constitute a linkage that provides habitat connectivity between Indian Wells Valley and areas to the south that support Mohave ground squirrel populations.

While the construction of the project will result in loss of 1738 acres of Mohave ground squirrel habitat, the recent redesign of the project layout will avoid impact to El Paso Wash itself. This will provide a north-south habitat connection and would allow wildlife movement through the project site. Redesign has also resulted in avoidance of impact to another wash in the southwest corner of the project site. This will provide an additional north-south habitat corridor along the western edge of the project site. These two connections are shown on Figure 4. While the project will clearly result in some habitat loss and fragmentation, habitat connectivity would be maintained within the project site. In addition, there are north-south habitat corridors both to the west and to the east of the project site that can provide connectivity (Figure 4). It should be possible to maintain linkages from Indian Wells Valley to the south even with construction of the RSPP.

[NOTE: Figures/maps provided in January 25, 2010 submittal.]



BEFORE THE ENERGY RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
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**APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION
For the *RIDGECREST SOLAR
POWER PROJECT***

Docket No. 09-AFC-9

**PROOF OF SERVICE
(Revised 1/25/2010)**

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DECLARATION OF SERVICE

I, Elizabeth Copley, declare that on February 1, 2010, I served and filed copies of the attached Ridgecrest Solar Power Project Data Request #58, Additional Information. The original document, filed with the Docket Unit, is accompanied by a copy of the most recent Proof of Service list, located on the web page for this project at:

[\[http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/solar_millennium_ridgecrest\]](http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/solar_millennium_ridgecrest).

The document has been sent to both the other parties in this proceeding (as shown on the Proof of Service list) and to the Commission's Docket Unit, in the following manner:

(Check all that Apply)

For service to all other parties:

- sent electronically to all email addresses on the Proof of Service list;
- by personal delivery or by overnight delivery service or depositing in the United States mail at Oakland, California with postage or fees thereon fully prepaid and addressed as provided on the Proof of Service list above to those addresses **NOT** marked "email preferred."

AND

For filing with the Energy Commission:

- sending an original paper copy and one electronic copy, mailed and emailed Respectively, to the address below (preferred method);

OR

- depositing in the mail an original and 12 paper copies, as follows:

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

Attn: Docket No. 09-AFC-9
1516 Ninth Street, MS-4
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docket@energy.state.ca.us

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.


