

From: Eric Solorio
To: Docket Optical System
Date: 1/15/2010 2:48 PM
Subject: Fwd: RSPP Docket #: 09-AFC-9

DOCKET	
09-AFC-9	
DATE	<u>JAN 15 2010</u>
RECD.	<u>JAN 15 2010</u>

>>> "Penelope LePome" <plepome@earthlink.net> 1/15/2010 1:55 PM >>>
Mr. Solorio and Commissioners:

While I generally support power generation from renewable energy sources, I have several serious concerns regarding the Ridgecrest Solar Power Project (RSPP). My two biggest concerns are the use of scarce water and threat to biological habitats. I would like to see this project built on a site where the needed water is available without costly mitigation and the habitats have already been disturbed.

Although Solar Millennium has agreed to dry cooling, it will still use a lot of water over the next 30 years. The construction phase will require even greater amounts of water. We do not know how much water we have remaining or its quality. The only source of water for the Ridgecrest area is underground. The water proposed to serve this project will be the most pristine water available here. I suggest you consider drawing water from the LADWP aqueduct if RSPP is located on a different site. After all, LADWP is the Department of WATER and Power.

My second concern is for the biological resources at this site. During the scoping and workshop meetings, no one has addressed the site as a biological SYSTEM. The density of desert tortoise at this site is very high at over 9 tortoise per square kilometer. Relocating tortoise is problematic because of the high mortality rate, not to mention the expense of moving 69 tortoise. The irony is that this habitat may be perfect as a relocation site for tortoise from other disturbed areas such as the Owens and Amargosa Valleys. There are also Mohave Ground Squirrels that are hard to catch and can only be moved at very specific times of the year. Can the project endure such a delay? Other wildlife includes burrowing owls, snakes (although there was no mention of them), other reptiles and vegetation. One commenter stated that the soil at the site comes from volcanic rock breakdown and is very rich in minerals, especially potassium, a necessary nutrient. In the spring, wildflowers cover this area. The extent of floristic diversity and distribution is not completely known in the desert. What we do know is that deserts never recover their former state of vegetation.

Another concern is dust mitigation during construction. I find it very hard to believe that we will not have dust clouds after the hardpan is broken. Wind-borne pathogens will expose us to Valley Fever and other illnesses. This was not addressed in any of the presentations. The health of 30,000 people is the issue. How will this serious health threat be addressed and by whom? Given the precarious state of our economy, I am afraid that ground will be broken but the construction will be halted. Even if Solar Millennium posts a bond, that is scant assurance in this age of failing banks and bond insurers such as AIG.

For the reasons outlined, it would be better for all concerned if this solar project were in a location that would be more viable economically, biologically and hydrologically.