

October 3, 2010

California Energy Commission
Attn: Docket No. 09-AFC-9
1516 Ninth Street, MS-4
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

Re: (Solar Millennium) Ridgecrest Solar Power Project (09-AFC-9)

Dear Docket Clerk:

Enclosed for filing with the California Energy Commission is the original "Intervenor Desert Tortoise Council Comments "Ridgecrest Solar Power Project Mohave Ground Squirrel Habitat Connectivity Study, Scope of Work Outline – Third Draft, September 22, 2010."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S. Sidney Silliman".

Sidney Silliman, Ph.D.
Chair, Ecosystems Advisory Committee
Desert Tortoise Council
1225 Adriana Way
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(909) 946-5027

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

**Energy Resources Conservation
and Development Commission**

In the Matter of:

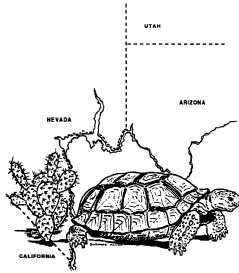
THE APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION
FOR THE (SOLAR MILLENNIUM)
RIDGECREST SOLAR POWER PROJECT

DOCKET NUMBER 09-AFC-9

**INTERVENOR DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL COMMENTS
“RIDGECREST SOLAR POWER PROJECT MOHAVE GROUND SQUIRREL
HABITAT CONNECTIVITY STUDY, SCOPE OF WORK OUTLINE – THIRD DRAFT,
SEPTEMBER 22, 2010”**

October 3, 2010

Desert Tortoise Council
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DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL
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October 1, 2010

Via Email and U.S. Mail

Mr. Eric Solorio
Siting Project Manager
California Energy Commission
1516 Ninth Street, MS-15
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: “Ridgecrest Solar Power Project Mojave Ground Squirrel Habitat Connectivity Study, Scope of Work Outline – Third Draft, September 22, 2010”

Dear Mr. Solorio:

The Desert Tortoise Council (DTC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the “Ridgecrest Solar Power Project Mojave Ground Squirrel Habitat Connectivity Study, Scope of Work Outline – Third Draft, September 22, 2010.”

As you will recall, the DTC presented its concerns about the potential negative impacts of the Ridgecrest Solar Power Project to both the Desert Tortoise and the Mojave Ground Squirrel (MGS) in our comments of May 21, 2010 on the Staff Assessment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement. In addition, I represented the DTC at the September 9, 2010 workshop in Sacramento regarding the proposed connectivity study for the MGS.

The third draft of the study proposal takes into consideration much of the discussion from the workshop and is significantly improved as a result. In particular, the contributions of Dr. Fraser Shilling from UC Davis will be very helpful in the development and analysis of habitat connectivity models. Combined with Dr. Philip Leitner’s unparalleled knowledge of MGS biology, the study may provide important information on the potential impacts of the Ridgecrest Solar Power Project on the MGS and possible mitigation thereof.

However, a lingering concern of the DTC is that no provision has been made to gather incidental information on the Desert Tortoise, a federally listed species that is known to have a viable population in the area and which also will be negatively impacted by the Solar Power Project. As one of the three scientists who was responsible for the original state listing of the MGS back in the early 1970s, the 1993 (unsuccessful) petitioner for MGS federal listing, and the co-author

with Defenders of Wildlife of the MGS federal listing petition currently being reviewed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, I certainly do not want to detract from the MGS focus of the proposed study. Still, I believe that it is quite reasonable to expect competent field biologists to record incidental observations of tortoise presence and activity as informal field notes that would be made available at the end of the MGS study.

You may recall that I brought this suggestion up near the end of the workshop, but received no comment on it, even though Desert Tortoise issues were an item on the discussion agenda. It is the DTC's position that incidental observations on Desert Tortoises, recorded as field notes, should be part of the study protocol.

Finally, as I also indicated at the workshop, a budget should be prepared for the study. In the academic world, at least, research protocols that require external funding are necessarily accompanied by a budget breakdown. Now that a detailed schedule has been proposed for the first year of work, it should be possible to provide estimated budgets for the four "Tasks" outlined there. This would allow the interested agencies, intervenors, and others to make some judgment as to the adequacy of funding and whether the goals of the study are likely to be achieved.

Sincerely,

Glenn R. Stewart

Glenn R. Stewart, Ph.D.
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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 7/9/2010)

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DECLARATION OF SERVICE

I, Sidney Sullivan, declare that on, Oct 3, 2010, I served and filed copies of the attached Comme. Tolon MGS Study 3rd Draft. 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].

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;

by delivering on this date, for mailing with the United States Postal Service with first-class postage thereon fully prepaid, to the name and address of the person served, for mailing that same day in the ordinary course of business; that the envelope was sealed and placed for collection and mailing on that date 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
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

docket@energy.state.ca.us

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct, that I am employed in the county where this mailing occurred, and that I am over the age of 18 years and not a party to the proceeding.

