

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

1516 NINTH STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5512
www.energy.ca.gov

California Energy Commission

**DOCKETED
11-AFC-2**

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June 21, 2012

TO: AGENCY DISTRIBUTION LIST

REQUEST FOR AGENCY COMMENTS ON THE SUPPLEMENTAL STAFF ASSESSMENT FOR THE PROPOSED HIDDEN HILLS SOLAR ELECTRIC GENERATING SYSTEM, APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION (11-AFC-2)

The enclosed CD copy of the Supplemental Staff Assessment (SSA) contains the California Energy Commission staff's preliminary Cultural Resources evaluation of the Hidden Hills Solar Electric Generating System, 11-AFC-2.

We request that you review the enclosed SSA for Cultural Resources if your agency would normally be responsible for this technical subject but for the Energy Commission's permitting authority. Please provide any written comments to Mike Monasmith, Siting Project Manager, no later than 5:00 p.m., Monday, July 23, 2012 at the address on this letterhead or by email to: mike.monasmith@energy.state.ca.us.

Technical or project schedule questions should be directed to Mr. Monasmith at (916) 654-4894 or by email. You may also present your comments at the public workshops on the SSA (and/or the May 24, 2012 Preliminary Staff Assessment or "PSA"). The PSA/SSA workshops will be held in Bishop, California on Wednesday, June 27, 2012, from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m. and on Monday, July 2, 2012, from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Based on the workshop dialogue, written comments received regarding the SSA (and PSA), and additional information that will be gathered, the Energy Commission staff will issue a Final Staff Assessment (FSA).

PSA Workshop Agenda for June 27, 2012 in Bishop:

- Air Quality / Public Health
- Biological Resources (wildlife)
- Cultural Resources (ethnology)
- Land Use
- Socioeconomics

PSA Workshop Agenda for July 2, 2012 in Sacramento:

- Alternatives
- Biological Resources (botany)
- Cultural Resources (archeology)
- Transmission System Engineering
- Misc. Issues (carry-over discussions from June 27, 2012 workshop)

***Note:** Agendas are subject to change, as are the order of topics

Description of the Proposed Hidden Hills Solar Electric Generating System

The Hidden Hills Solar Electric Generating System (HHSEGS) is proposed for development by a wholly owned subsidiary of BrightSource Energy, Inc. (Applicant). As proposed, HHSEGS would be located on approximately 3,277 acres of privately owned land leased in Inyo County, California, adjacent to the Nevada border. The project site is approximately 8 miles south of Pahrump, Nevada, and approximately 45 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada.

As proposed, HHSEGS would comprise two solar fields and associated facilities: the northern solar plant (Solar Plant 1) and the southern solar plant (Solar Plant 2). Each solar plant would generate 270 megawatts (MW) gross (250 MW net), for a total net output of 500 MW. Solar Plant 1 will occupy approximately 1,483 acres (or 2.3 square miles), and Solar Plant 2 will occupy approximately 1,510 acres (or 2.4 square miles).

A 103-acre common area would be established on the southeastern corner of the site to accommodate an administration, warehouse, and maintenance complex, an onsite 138 kV switchyard and a natural gas metering station. A temporary construction laydown and parking area on the west side of the proposed project site would temporarily occupy approximately 180 acres.

Groundwater would be drawn daily from six onsite groundwater supply wells that would be drilled and developed to provide raw water for the HHSEGS project; two new wells per power block (primary and backup) and two wells at the administration complex. The wells would supply both solar plants and would be used for the power cycle make-up water, mirror wash water, and other domestic uses. The entire 500-MW net project would require up to 140 acre feet of groundwater per year (an acre foot of water equals 325,851 gallons).

Energy Commission Licensing Authority

The Energy Commission is responsible for reviewing and ultimately approving or denying all applications for construction and operation of thermal electric power plants, 50 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 produces several environmental and decision documents rather than an Environmental Impact Report.

Summary of the California Energy Commission Staff's Preliminary Findings

Staff preliminarily concluded the following in regard to the HHSEGS project:

Cultural Resources: The project would have significant and unavoidable impacts to an archaeological landscape; three ethnographic landscapes; and an historic trail

and road corridor. The extent to which it may be feasible to mitigate these impacts is still being analyzed; however, staff believes that mitigation measures for any of these five historical resources would not reduce the impacts of the proposed project to a less than significant level.

The status of the project, an electronic copy of the AFC, copies of notices, and other relevant documents are also available on the Energy Commission's web site at: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/hiddenhills/index.html>.

Sincerely,

Date: June 21, 2012


CHRIS DAVIS
Siting Office Manager

Enclosure: CD Copy of SSA