



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

April 28, 2010

DOCKET

09-AFC-10

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ATTN: Ms. Liana Reilly, NEPA Document Manager
Western Area Power Administration
P.O. Box 281213
Lakewood, Colorado 80228-8213

Subject: Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement/Staff Assessment for the Proposed Construction and Operation of the Rice Solar Energy Project, Riverside County, CA (DOE/EIS-0439) and Possible Land Use Plan Amendments

Dear Ms. Reilly:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the March 29, 2010 Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement(EIS)/Staff Assessment for the Proposed Construction and Operation of the Rice Solar Energy Project, Riverside County, California (DOE/EIS-0439) and Possible Land Use Plan Amendments. Our comments are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and our NEPA review authority under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

EPA supports increasing the development of renewable energy resources, as recommended in the National Energy Policy Act of 2005. Using renewable energy resources such as solar power can help the nation meet its energy requirements while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. To assist in the scoping process for this project, we have identified several issues for your attention in the preparation of the EIS. We are most concerned about potential impacts to water resources, biological resources, and habitat, as well as cumulative impacts associated with the development of multiple large-scale solar installations in the desert southwest.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this NOI and are available to discuss our comments. Please send one hard copy of the Draft EIS and two CD ROM copies to this office at the same time it is officially filed with our Washington D.C. Office. If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3545 or at mcpherson.ann@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

Ann McPherson
Environmental Review Office

Enclosures: EPA's Detailed Comments
Cc: Allison Shaffer, Bureau of Land Management
John Kessler, California Energy Commission

PROOF OF SERVICE (REVISED 3/4/10) FILED WITH
ORIGINAL MAILED FROM SACRAMENTO ON 04/28/10

TKG

**US EPA DETAILED COMMENTS ON THE NOTICE OF INTENT TO PREPARE AN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/STAFF ASSESSMENT FOR THE RICE SOLAR ENERGY
PROJECT, APRIL 28, 2010**

Project Description

Rice Solar Energy, LLC (RSE) has applied to the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) to interconnect the Rice Solar Energy Project (proposed project) to WAPA's transmission system. The new 230-kV transmission line from the solar facility would extend approximately ten miles from the solar facility boundary to a new substation which would be located adjacent to WAPA's existing Parker-Blythe transmission line. RSE has also applied to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for a right of way (ROW) to build, operate, and maintain a portion of the proposed transmission line and access roads on public lands managed by the BLM.

RSE proposes to construct a 150-megawatt (MW) solar-powered electrical generation facility in eastern Riverside County, California. The proposed solar generation facility is located within a private land holding of 3,324 acres, of which 2,560 acres constitute the project parcel. The proposed project would use concentrating solar power tower technology with thermal storage capabilities. The solar generation facility would contain the power block, a central receiver or tower, solar fields consisting of mirrors or heliostats, a thermal energy storage system, storm water system, water supply and treatment system, a wastewater system, evaporation ponds, and other supporting facilities. These facilities would be situated on 1,410 acres of the project parcel and would be surrounded by a site fence. The proposed solar generation facility would be located on the site of a former airfield (Rice Army Airfield) that was used during World War II as a training site, later transferred to private use, and then abandoned sometime between 1955 and 1958.

Statement of Purpose and Need

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) should clearly identify the underlying purpose and need to which WAPA is responding in proposing the alternatives (40 CFR 1502.13). The *purpose* of the proposed action is typically the specific objectives of the activity, while the *need* for the proposed action may be to eliminate a broader underlying problem or take advantage of an opportunity.

Recommendation:

The purpose and need should be a clear, objective statement of the rationale for the proposed project. The DEIS should discuss the proposed project in the context of the larger energy market that this project would serve; identify potential purchasers of the power produced; and discuss how the project will assist the state in meeting its renewable energy portfolio standards and goals.

Alternatives Analysis

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires evaluation of reasonable alternatives, including those that may not be within the jurisdiction of the lead agency (40 CFR Section 1502.14(c)). A robust range of alternatives will include options for avoiding significant environmental impacts. The DEIS should provide a clear discussion of the reasons for the elimination of alternatives which are not evaluated in detail. Reasonable alternatives should include, but are not necessarily limited to, alternative sites, capacities, and technologies as well as alternatives that identify environmentally sensitive areas or areas with potential use conflicts. The alternatives analysis should describe the approach used to identify environmentally sensitive areas and describe the process that was used to designate them in terms of sensitivity (low, medium, and high).

The environmental impacts of the proposal and alternatives should be presented in comparative form, thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision maker and the public (40 CFR 1502.14). The potential environmental impacts of each alternative should be quantified to the greatest extent possible (e.g., acres of wetlands impacted, tons per year of emissions produced, etc.).

Recommendations:

The DEIS should describe how each alternative was developed, how it addresses each project objective, and how it would be implemented. The alternatives analysis should include a discussion of alternative sites, capacities, and generating technologies including different types of solar energy technologies, and describe the benefits associated with the proposed technology.

The DEIS should clearly describe the rationale used to determine whether impacts of an alternative are significant or not. Thresholds of significance should be determined by considering the context and intensity of an action and its effects (40 CFR 1508.27).

The DEIS should discuss the feasibility of using residential and wholesale distributed generation, in conjunction with increased energy efficiency, as an alternative to the proposed project.

EPA recommends that the DEIS identify and analyze an environmentally preferred alternative. This alternative should consider options that would reduce environmental impacts including: decreasing the capacity of the proposed project, relocating components of the proposed project, and shrinking the overall project footprint.

The DEIS should discuss each alternative's potential to impact air traffic and safety in the vicinity of the proposed project.

EPA has worked closely with the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) to develop maps¹ showing contaminated lands and mining sites with renewable energy generation potential. These maps were developed in conjunction with the *RE-Powering America's Land: Renewable Energy on Contaminated Land and Mining Sites* program,² which was launched by the EPA Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) in September 2008. Under this initiative, EPA is taking a multi-pronged approach³ to encouraging reuse of EPA tracked lands⁴ into clean and renewable energy production facilities. EPA has developed a Renewable Energy Interactive Mapping Tool⁵ that utilizes Google Earth to display these sites. We estimate that there are approximately 480,000 disturbed and contaminated sites and almost 15 million acres of potentially contaminated properties across the United States. Many of the contaminated properties are suitable for renewable energy development and have existing transmission capacity and infrastructure in place, as well as adequate zoning.

Recommendations:

The DEIS should describe the current condition of the land selected for the proposed project, discuss whether the land is classified as disturbed, and describe to what extent the land could be used for other purposes.

EPA recommends that WAPA utilize the Renewable Energy Interactive Mapping Tool to explore whether there are disturbed sites located in proximity to the proposed project that might also be utilized.

EPA strongly encourages WAPA and other interested parties to pursue the siting of renewable energy projects on disturbed, degraded, and contaminated sites, before considering large tracts of undisturbed public lands. To that end, we note that the BLM Arizona State Office recently issued a Notice of Intent (NOI)⁶ to prepare an EIS for the Arizona Restoration Design Energy Project,⁷ funded under the Department of Interior's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. Implementation of this initiative will result in the identification of disturbed or previously developed sites within the National System of Public Lands in Arizona that, after remediation or site preparation, can be made available for renewable energy development or generation.

¹ To develop the maps, EPA and NREL collected renewable energy resource information and merged it with EPA and state data on contaminated lands and mining sites across the country. The mapping analysis applied basic screening criteria, such as distance to electric transmission lines, distance to roads, renewable energy potential, and site acreage in order to identify EPA tracked lands that might be good candidates for solar, wind, or biomass energy production facilities.

² For additional information on EPA's RE-Powering America's Land, please use the following weblink:
<http://www.epa.gov/renewableenergyland/index.htm>

³ See Internet site: http://www.epa.gov/renewableenergyland/docs/repower_contaminated_land_factsheet.pdf

⁴ EPA tracks abandoned mine lands, Brownfields, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) sites, Federal Superfund Sites, and Non-Federal Superfund Sites.

⁵ See Internet site: http://www.epa.gov/renewableenergyland/mapping_tool.htm. Open the Renewable Energy Interactive Map (KMZ) to launch the Renewable Energy Mapping Tool. More detailed information on the EPA tracked sites is available at: http://epa.gov/renewableenergyland/maps/ocpa_renewable_energy_data.xls.

⁶ See Internet site: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-404.pdf>

⁷ See Internet site: http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/energy/arra_solar.html

Water Resources

Water Supply and Water Quality

The DEIS should estimate the quantity of water the project will require and describe the source of this water and potential effects on other water users and natural resources in the project's area of influence. The DEIS should clearly describe existing groundwater conditions, potential cumulative impacts to groundwater quantity and quality, and avoidance measures to prevent impacts. The DEIS should clearly depict reasonably foreseeable direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to this resource. Specifically, the potentially-affected groundwater basin should be identified and any potential for subsidence and impacts to springs or other open water bodies and biologic resources should be analyzed. The DEIS should include:

- A discussion of the amount of water needed for the proposed solar thermal power plant, where this water will be obtained, and the amount and source of power that would be needed to move the water to and through the facility;
- A discussion of availability of groundwater within the basin and annual recharge rates;
- A description of the water right permitting process and the status of water rights within that basin, including an analysis of whether water rights have been over-allocated;
- A description of any water right permits that contain special conditions; measures to mitigate direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts; and provisions for monitoring and adaptive management;
- A detailed discussion of cumulative impacts to groundwater supply within the hydrographic basin(s) that would support the alternatives, including impacts from other large-scale solar installations that have also been proposed;
- An analysis of different types of technology that can be used to minimize water use for the solar thermal power plant;
- A discussion of whether it would be feasible to use other sources of water, including wastewater or deep-aquifer water, as cooling water for the proposed solar thermal power plant;
- A discussion of whether it is possible to recycle the water that would be sent to the evaporation pond (if wet cooling is utilized) and re-inject or reuse this water; and
- An analysis of the potential for alternatives to cause adverse aquatic impacts such as impacts to water quality and aquatic habitats.

Recommendation:

EPA recommends that the DEIS discuss the water demands of various solar technologies, including wet cooling and dry cooling systems. We also recommend that WAPA consider utilization of technologies that will minimize water use and the implementation of conservation measures that will reduce water demands.

EPA encourages WAPA to include in the DEIS a description of all water conservation measures that will be implemented to reduce water demands. Project designs should maximize conservation measures such as appropriate use of recycled water for landscaping and industry,

xeric landscaping, and water conservation education. Water saving strategies can be found in the EPA's publications *Protecting Water Resources with Smart Growth* at www.epa.gov/piedpage/pdf/waterresources_with_sg.pdf, and *USEPA Water Conservation Guidelines* at www.epa.gov/watersense/docs/app_a508.pdf.

In addition, the DEIS should describe water reliability for the proposed project and clarify how existing and/or proposed sources will be affected by climate change. At a minimum, EPA expects a qualitative discussion of impacts of climate change to water supply, and the adaptability of the project to these changes.

Disposal of Discharges

The DEIS should address the potential effects of project discharges, if any, on surface and groundwater quality. The specific discharges should be identified and potential effects of discharges on designated beneficial uses of affected waters should be analyzed. If the facility is a zero discharge facility, the DEIS should disclose the amount of process water that would be disposed of onsite and explain methods of onsite containment. If evaporation ponds will be used for disposal of condensate or other process water, identify chemical characteristics of the pond water and how seepage into groundwater will be prevented. Identify the storm design containment capacity of ponds, explain how overflow in larger storm events will be managed, and discuss potential environmental impacts (drainage channels affected, water quality, biological resources) in the event of overflow.

The disposal of wastewater or other fluids into the subsurface is subject to the requirements of the Underground Injection Control Program, pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water Act. Permits may or may not be required, depending on project specifications and federal and/or state requirements.

Clean Water Act Section 404

The project applicant should coordinate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to determine if the proposed project requires a Section 404 permit under the Clean Water Act (CWA). Section 404 regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States (WOUS), including wetlands and other *special aquatic sites*. The DEIS should describe all WOUS that could be affected by the project alternatives, and include maps that clearly identify all waters within the project area. The discussion should include acreages and channel lengths, habitat types, values, and functions of these waters. In addition, EPA suggests that WAPA include a jurisdictional delineation for all WOUS, including ephemeral drainages, in accordance with the 1987 *Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual* and the December 2006 *Arid West Region Interim Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Arid West Region*. A jurisdictional delineation will confirm the presence of WOUS in the project area and help determine impact avoidance or if state and federal permits would be required for activities that affect WOUS.

If a permit is required, EPA will review the project for compliance with *Federal Guidelines for Specification of Disposal Sites for Dredged or Fill Materials* (40 CFR 230), promulgated pursuant to Section 404(b)(1) of the CWA ("404(b)(1) Guidelines"). Pursuant to 40 CFR 230, any permitted discharge into WOUS must be the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA) available to achieve the project purpose. The DEIS should include an evaluation of the project alternatives in this context in order to demonstrate the project's compliance with the 404(b)(1) Guidelines. If, under the proposed project, dredged or fill material would be discharged into WOUS, the DEIS should discuss alternatives to avoid those discharges.

The DEIS should describe the original (natural) drainage patterns in the project locale, as well as the drainage patterns of the area during project operations, and identify whether any components of the proposed project are within a 50 or 100-year floodplain. We also recommend the DEIS include information on the functions and locations of WOUS, as well as ephemeral washes in the project area, because of the important hydrologic and biogeochemical role these washes play in direct relationship to higher-order waters downstream.

Clean Water Act Section 303(d)

The CWA requires States to develop a list of impaired waters that do not meet water quality standards, establish priority rankings, and develop action plans, called Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), to improve water quality.

Recommendation:

The DEIS should provide information on CWA Section 303(d) impaired waters in the project area, if any, and efforts to develop and revise TMDLs. The DEIS should describe existing restoration and enhancement efforts for those waters, how the proposed project will coordinate with on-going protection efforts, and any mitigation measures that will be implemented to avoid further degradation of impaired waters.

Biological Resources and Habitat

The DEIS should identify all petitioned and listed threatened and endangered species and critical habitat that might occur within the project area. The document should identify and quantify which species or critical habitat might be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively affected by each alternative and mitigate impacts to these species. Emphasis should be placed on the protection and recovery of species due to their status or potential status under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). We recommend that the DEIS include a biological assessment under Section 7 of the ESA and provide a recent status update of this report. Analysis of impacts and mitigation on covered species should include:

- Baseline conditions of habitats and populations of the covered species;
- A clear description of how avoidance, mitigation and conservation measures will protect and encourage the recovery of the covered species and their habitats in the project area;

- Monitoring, reporting and adaptive management efforts to ensure species and habitat conservation effectiveness.

EPA is also concerned about the potential impact of construction, installation, operation, and maintenance activities (deep trenching, grading, filling, and fencing). The DEIS should describe the extent of these activities and the associated impacts on habitat and threatened and endangered species. We encourage habitat conservation alternatives that avoid and protect high value habitat and create or preserve linkages between habitat areas to better conserve the covered species. EPA is also concerned about the potential for adverse impacts to native vegetation and/or animal species due to increased shade from the heliostats after installation is complete.

Recommendations:

The DEIS should describe the condition of the land selected for the proposed project and disclose whether the land is classified as disturbed or impaired.

The DEIS should indicate what measures will be taken to protect important wildlife habitat areas from potential adverse effects of proposed covered activities and to ensure that desert areas are minimally impacted. We encourage WAPA to maximize options to protect habitat and minimize habitat loss and habitat fragmentation.

The DEIS should discuss the impacts associated with constructing fences around the project site(s), and consider whether there are options that could facilitate better protection of covered species.

The DEIS should discuss the impacts associated with an increase of shade in the desert environment on vegetation and/or species.

The DEIS should discuss the potential impacts on avian species due to collisions with the power tower and/or heliostats and whether there is potential for the concentrating solar rays to burn avian species in flight.

If the project includes evaporation and/or storm water ponds, potential hazards and impacts to humans and wildlife, especially birds, should be discussed.

Explain whether any ponded water associated with the project has the potential to attract wildlife, particularly migratory waterfowl. If there is potential for exposure of wildlife to contaminants in these waters, identify mitigation measures to avoid such impacts.

Invasive Species

Executive Order 13112, *Invasive Species* (February 3, 1999), mandates that federal agencies take actions to prevent the introduction of invasive species, provide for their control, and minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause. Executive Order 13112 also calls for the restoration of native plants and tree species. If the

proposed project will entail new landscaping, the DEIS should describe how the project will meet the requirements of Executive Order 13112.

Recommendation:

The DEIS should include an invasive plant management plan to monitor and control noxious weeds.

Indirect and Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impacts analysis should provide the context for understanding the magnitude of the impacts of the alternatives by analyzing the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects or actions and then considering those cumulative impacts in their entirety (CEQ's Forty Questions, #18). The DEIS should clearly identify the resources that may be cumulatively impacted, the time over which impacts are going to occur, and the geographic area that will be impacted by the proposed project. The DEIS should focus on resources of concern – those resources that are “at risk” and/or are significantly impacted by the proposed project, before mitigation. In the introduction to the *Cumulative Impacts Section*, identify which resources are analyzed, which ones are not, and why. For each resource analyzed, the DEIS should:

- Identify the current condition of the resource as a measure of past impacts. For example, the percentage of species habitat lost to date.
- Identify the trend in the condition of the resource as a measure of present impacts. For example, the health of the resource is improving, declining, or in stasis.
- Identify all on-going, planned, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the study area that may contribute to cumulative impacts.
- Identify the future condition of the resource based on an analysis of impacts from reasonably foreseeable projects or actions added to existing conditions and current trends.
- Assess the cumulative impacts contribution of the proposed alternatives to the long-term health of the resource, and provide a specific measure for the projected impact from the proposed alternatives.
- Disclose the parties that would be responsible for avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating those adverse impacts.
- Identify opportunities to avoid and minimize impacts, including working with other entities.

The BLM has received more than 150 applications for solar projects in the desert southwest. The BLM and Department of Energy (DOE) are preparing a Programmatic EIS to explain how they will address existing and future solar energy development applications on BLM-administered lands in six Western states. EPA is concerned about the cumulative impacts associated with the development of multiple large-scale solar projects in the desert region.

Recommendations:

The DEIS should identify whether the proposed project is located within one of the solar energy study areas or in close proximity to one.

The DEIS should consider the cumulative impacts associated with multiple large-scale solar projects proposed in the desert southwest and the potential impacts on various resources including: water supply, endangered species, and habitat.

As an indirect result of providing additional power, it can be anticipated that this project will allow for development and population growth to occur in those areas that receive the generated electricity.

Recommendations:

The DEIS should describe the reasonably foreseeable future land use and associated impacts that will result from the additional power supply. The document should provide an estimate of the amount of growth, its likely location, and the biological and environmental resources at risk.

The DEIS should consider the direct and indirect effects of the inter-connecting transmission line for the proposed project, as well as the cumulative effects associated with the transmission needs of other reasonably foreseeable projects.

Implementation of Adaptive Management Techniques for Mitigation Measures

Adaptive management is an iterative process that requires selecting and implementing management actions, monitoring, comparing results with management and project objectives, and using feedback to make future management decisions. The process recognizes the importance of continually improving management techniques through flexibility and adaptation instead of adhering rigidly to a standard set of management actions. Although adaptive management is not a new concept, it may be relatively new in its application to specific projects. The effectiveness of adaptive management monitoring depends on a variety of factors including:

- a) The ability to establish clear monitoring objectives;
- b) Agreement on the impact thresholds being monitored;
- c) The existence of a baseline or the ability to develop a baseline for the resources being monitored.
- d) The ability to see the effects within an appropriate time frame after the action is taken;
- e) The technical capabilities of the procedures and equipment used to identify and measure changes in the affected resources and the ability to analyze the changes;
- f) The resources needed to perform the monitoring and respond to the results.

Recommendation:

EPA recommends that WAPA consider adopting a formal adaptive management plan to evaluate and monitor impacted resources and ensure the successful implementation of

mitigation measures. EPA recommends that WAPA review the specific discussion on Adaptive Management in the NEPA Task Force Report to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) on *Modernizing NEPA*.

Climate Change

Scientific evidence supports the concern that continued increases in greenhouse gas emissions resulting from human activities will contribute to climate change. Global warming is caused by emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases. Global warming can affect weather patterns, sea level, ocean acidification, chemical reaction rates, and precipitation rates, resulting in climate change. Reports also indicate that deserts may store as much carbon as temperate forests.

Recommendations:

The DEIS should consider how climate change could potentially influence the proposed project, specifically within sensitive areas, and assess how the projected impacts could be exacerbated by climate change.

The DEIS should consider the cumulative impacts associated with multiple large-scale solar projects proposed in the desert southwest and clarify how existing and/or proposed resources will be affected by climate change.

The DEIS should quantify and disclose the anticipated climate change *benefits* of solar energy. We suggest quantifying greenhouse gas emissions from different types of generating facilities including solar, geothermal, natural gas, coal-burning, and nuclear and compiling and comparing these values.

The DEIS should discuss whether the trenching, grading, and filling associated with the construction of this project and the installation of the heliostats, will affect the deserts' ability to store carbon, and to what degree this may occur.

Air Quality

The DEIS should provide a detailed discussion of ambient air conditions (baseline or existing conditions), National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), criteria pollutant nonattainment areas, and potential air quality impacts of the proposed project (including cumulative and indirect impacts). Such an evaluation is necessary to assure compliance with State and Federal air quality regulations, and to disclose the potential impacts from temporary or cumulative degradation of air quality.

The DEIS should describe and estimate air emissions from the proposed power plant, including potential construction and maintenance activities, as well as proposed mitigation

measures to minimize those emissions. EPA recommends an evaluation of the following measures to reduce emissions of criteria air pollutants and hazardous air pollutants (air toxics).

Recommendations:

- *Existing Conditions* – The DEIS should provide a detailed discussion of ambient air conditions, NAAQS, and criteria pollutant nonattainment areas in all areas considered for solar development. The DEIS should identify relevant local and state requirements and ensure all sources meet the requirements.
- *Quantify Emissions* – The DEIS should estimate emissions of criteria pollutants from the proposed project and discuss the timeframe for release of these emissions over the lifespan of the project. The DEIS should describe and estimate emissions from potential construction activities, as well as proposed mitigation measures to minimize these emissions.
- *Specify Emission Sources* – The DEIS should specify the emission sources by pollutant from mobile sources, stationary sources, and ground disturbance. This source specific information should be used to identify appropriate mitigation measures and areas in need of the greatest attention.
- *Equipment Emissions Mitigation Plan (EEMP)* – The DEIS should identify the need for an EEMP. An EEMP will identify actions to reduce diesel particulate matter, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, and NOx associated with construction activities. We recommend that the EEMP require that all construction-related engines:
 - are tuned to the engine manufacturer's specification in accordance with an appropriate time frame;
 - do not idle for more than five minutes (unless, in the case of certain drilling engines, it is necessary for the operating scope);
 - include all available mitigation measures to reduce green house gas emissions;
 - are not tampered with in order to increase engine horsepower;
 - include diesel particulate filters, oxidation catalysts and other suitable control devices on all construction equipment used at the project site;
 - use diesel fuel having a sulfur content of 15 parts per million or less, or other alternative diesel fuel, unless such fuel cannot be reasonably procured in the market area; and
 - include control devices to reduce air emissions. The determination of which equipment is suitable for control devices should be made by an independent Licensed Mechanical Engineer. Equipment suitable for control devices may include drilling equipment, generators, compressors, graders, bulldozers, and dump trucks.
- *Fugitive Dust Control Plan* - The DEIS should identify the need for *Fugitive Dust Control Plan*. We recommend that it include these general recommendations:

- Stabilize open storage piles and by covering and/or applying water or chemical/organic dust palliative where appropriate. This applies to both inactive and active sites, during workdays, weekends, holidays, and windy conditions.
- Install wind fencing and phase grading operations where appropriate, and operate water trucks for stabilization of surfaces under windy conditions; and
- When hauling material and operating non-earthmoving equipment, prevent spillage and limit speeds to 15 miles per hour (mph). Limit speed of earth-moving equipment to 10 mph.

Coordination with Tribal Governments

Executive Order 13175, *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments* (November 6, 2000), was issued in order to establish regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials in the development of federal policies that have tribal implications, and to strengthen the United States government-to-government relationships with Indian tribes.

Recommendation:

The DEIS should describe the process and outcome of government-to-government consultation between WAPA and each of the tribal governments within the project area, issues that were raised (if any), and how those issues were addressed in the selection of the proposed alternative.

National Historic Preservation Act and Executive Order 13007

Consultation for tribal cultural resources is required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Historic properties under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) are properties that are included in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or that meet the criteria for the National Register. Section 106 of the NHPA requires a federal agency, upon determining that activities under its control could affect historic properties, consult with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO/THPO). Under NEPA, any impacts to tribal, cultural, or other treaty resources must be discussed and mitigated. Section 106 of the NHPA requires that Federal agencies consider the effects of their actions on cultural resources, following regulation in 36 CFR 800.

Executive Order 13007, *Indian Sacred Sites* (May 24, 1996), requires federal land managing agencies to accommodate access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites by Indian Religious practitioners, and to avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity, accessibility, or use of such sacred sites. It is important to note that a sacred site may not meet the National Register criteria for a historic property and that, conversely, a historic property may not meet the criteria for a sacred site.

Recommendation:

The DEIS should address the existence of Indian sacred sites in the project area. It should address Executive Order 13007, distinguish it from Section 106 of the NHPA, and discuss how WAPA will avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity, accessibility, or use of sacred sites, if they exist. The DEIS should provide a summary of all coordination with Tribes and with the SHPO/THPO, including identification of NRHP eligible sites, and development of a Cultural Resource Management Plan.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* (February 11, 1994), directs federal agencies to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations, allowing those populations a meaningful opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Guidance⁸ by CEQ clarifies the terms low-income and minority population (which includes American Indians) and describes the factors to consider when evaluating disproportionately high and adverse human health effects.

Recommendation:

The DEIS should include an evaluation of environmental justice populations within the geographic scope of the project. If such populations exist, the DEIS should address the potential for disproportionate adverse impacts to minority and low-income populations, and the approaches used to foster public participation by these populations. Assessment of the project's impact on minority and low-income populations should reflect coordination with those affected populations.

Hazardous Materials/Hazardous Waste/Solid Waste

The DEIS should address potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of hazardous waste from construction and operation of the proposed project. The document should identify projected hazardous waste types and volumes, and expected storage, disposal, and management plans. It should address the applicability of state and federal hazardous waste requirements. Appropriate mitigation should be evaluated, including measures to minimize the generation of hazardous waste (i.e., hazardous waste minimization). Alternate industrial processes using less toxic materials should be evaluated as mitigation. This potentially reduces the volume or toxicity of hazardous materials requiring management and disposal as hazardous waste.

⁸Environmental Justice Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act, Appendix A (Guidance for Federal Agencies on Key Terms in Executive Order 12898), CEQ, December 10, 1997.

Should the proposed project utilize evaporation ponds, the DEIS should describe the concentrated, dewatered solid waste associated with the evaporation pond(s) and describe whether this waste product will be transported off site for disposal.

Power Tower/Heliostat Production/Recycling

Heliostats are primarily composed of steel and glass, both of which are readily recyclable, and of comparatively long service life. Production can and should address the full product life cycle, from raw material sourcing through end of life collection and reuse or recycling. Companies can minimize their environmental impacts during raw material extraction, and facilitate future material recovery for reuse or recycling. Solar companies can facilitate collection and recycling through buy-back programs or collection and recycling guarantees.

Recommendation:

EPA recommends that the proponent strive to address the full product life cycle by sourcing power tower components from a company that: 1) minimizes environmental impacts during raw material extraction; 2) manufactures heliostats in a zero waste facility; and 3) provides future heliostat disassembly for material recovery for reuse and recycling.

Coordination with Land Use Planning Activities

The DEIS should discuss how the proposed action would support or conflict with the objectives of federal, state, tribal or local land use plans, policies and controls in the project area. The term "land use plans" includes all types of formally adopted documents for land use planning, conservation, zoning and related regulatory requirements. Proposed plans not yet developed should also be addressed if they have been formally proposed by the appropriate government body in a written form (CEQ's Forty Questions, #23b).



BEFORE THE ENERGY RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
1516 NINTH STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
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**APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION
FOR THE *RICE SOLAR ENERGY POWER
PLANT PROJECT***

Docket No. 09-AFC-10

***PROOF OF SERVICE*
(revised 3/4/2010)**

APPLICANT

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DECLARATION OF SERVICE

I, Teraja` Golston , declare that on, April 28, 2010, I served and filed copies of the attached, Rice Solar Energy (09-AFC-10) - US EPA's Scoping Comments. 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/ricesolar>].

The documents have 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:

- X sent electronically to all email addresses on the Proof of Service list;
- X by personal delivery;
- X 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."

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Attn: Docket No. 09-AFC-10
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.

Original Signature in Dockets
Teraja` Golston