

DOCKETED

Docket Number:	09-AFC-06C
Project Title:	Blythe Solar Power Project - Compliance
TN #:	233730
Document Title:	Statement of Staff Approval of Post Certification Change
Description:	Statement of Staff Approval of Post Certification Change Blythe Solar Power Project
Filer:	Susan Fleming
Organization:	California Energy Commission
Submitter Role:	Commission Staff
Submission Date:	7/2/2020 4:01:32 PM
Docketed Date:	7/2/2020

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

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Sacramento, California 95814

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CEC-57 (Revised 1/19)



STATEMENT OF STAFF APPROVAL OF POST CERTIFICATION CHANGE Blythe Solar Power Project (09-AFC-06C)

On May 18, 2020, NextEra Blythe Solar Energy Center, LLC, filed a post certification petition ([TN #233004](#)) with the California Energy Commission (CEC) for the Amended Blythe Solar Power Project (BSPP). The petition requests modifying the site boundary to alter the footprint of the project site. Staff has completed its review of all materials received.

This petition requests a change to the project description only. It does not request changes to project operation or changes to any of the conditions of certification in the Final Commission Decision (Decision).

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

The Amended BSPP, certified by the CEC in January 2014, is a 485-megawatt (MW) solar photovoltaic facility located at 4000 Dracker Drive, in Blythe, Riverside County. The Amended BSPP Units 3 and 4 are currently under construction; Units 1 and 2 were completed and became operational in 2016.

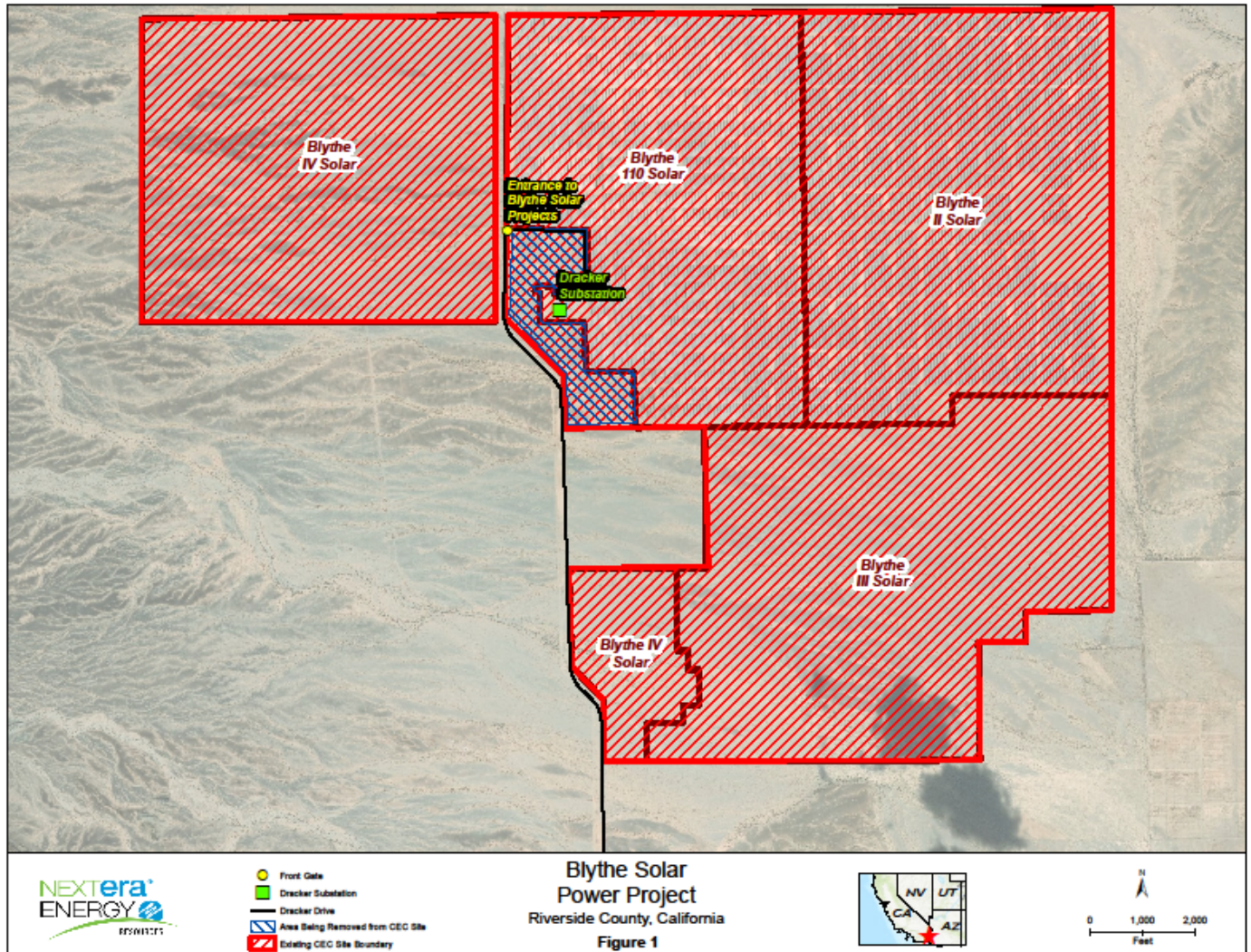
The Amended BSPP is a phased project consisting of four units of photovoltaic solar power generation. The project replaced the originally certified solar thermal project, substantially reducing the footprint of the site (from approximately 7,000 acres to 4,070) and reducing the overall output from 1,000 MW to 485 MW.

The petition requests the site boundary be modified to eliminate approximately 94 acres of land in the western portion of the site, just east of Dracker Drive, as described in the Decision. The land proposed for removal from the project site currently contains transitory uses, including parking, laydown/staging, and contractor trailers supporting the construction of BSPP. Despite the fact that the land would no longer be included within the boundaries of the licensed BSPP, all conditions of certification in the Decision would remain in full force and effect.

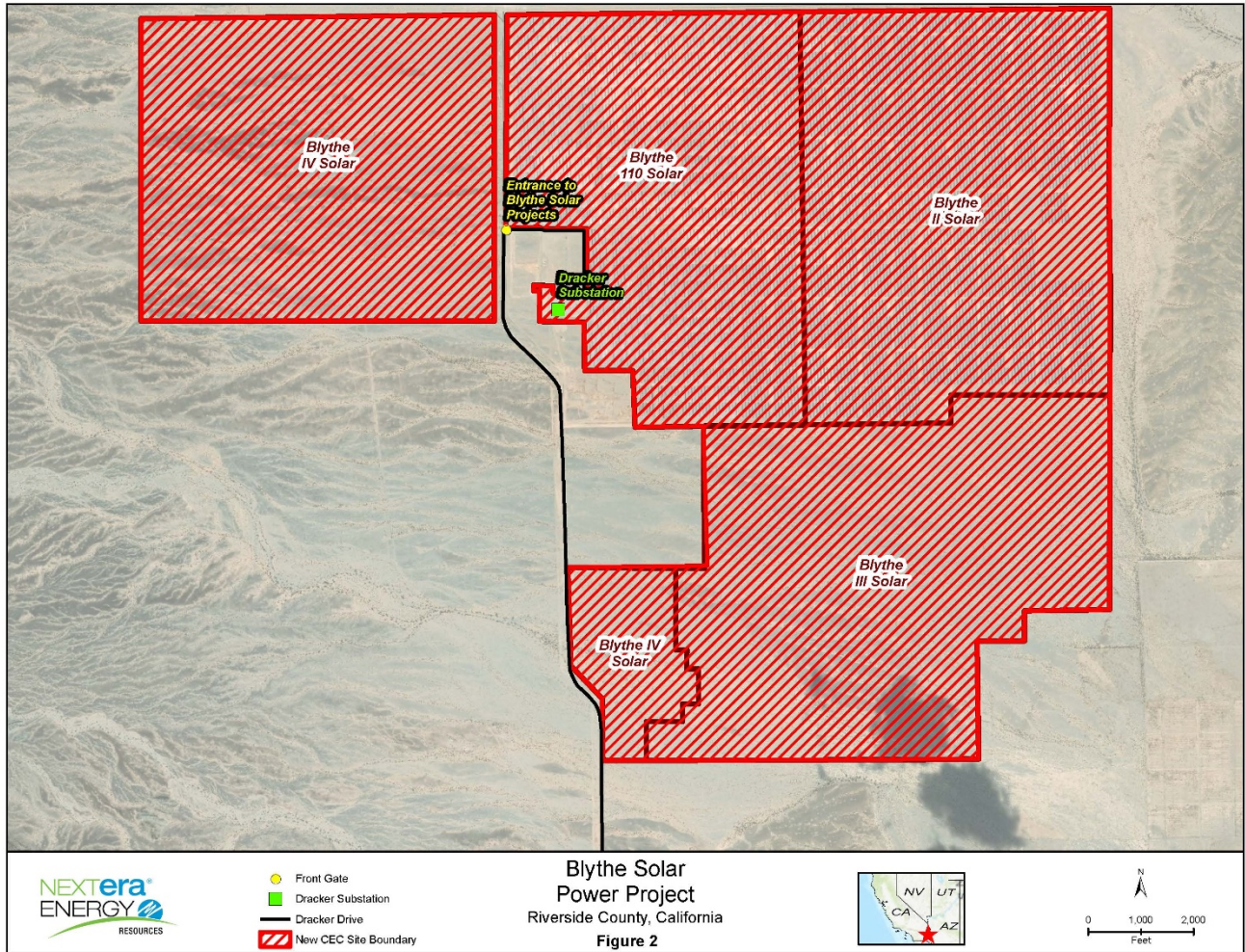
Relocating the westernmost boundary of BSPP would make additional property available for the development of the battery storage facility, facilities not directly connected to the solar fields. The battery storage facilities would not be subject to CEC jurisdiction and would be permitted by BLM through its right-of-way grant administration process. The battery storage facilities were not anticipated when the project was initially licensed. All lands before and after the property boundary adjustment would still be located on public land located entirely within the BLM right-of-way grant No. CACA-048811.

The petition requesting the project change has been docketed and is available on the CEC's website at: <https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=09-AFC-06C>

Area Proposed to be Removed from Amended Blythe Solar Power Project Site



Proposed New Configuration of Amended Blythe Solar Power Project Site



ENERGY COMMISSION STAFF REVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

CEC staff reviewed the petition for potential environmental effects and consistency with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards (LORS). Staff has concluded that the technical areas of Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Efficiency, Facility Design, Geological and Paleontological Resources, Hazardous Materials Management, Land Use, Noise, Public Health, Reliability, Socioeconomics, Soil and Water Resources, Traffic and Transportation, Transmission Line Safety and Nuisance, Transmission System Engineering, Visual Resources, Waste Management, and Worker Safety and Fire Protection are not affected by the proposed changes. Modifying the site boundary would not result in any significant impact on the environment, cause the project to not comply with applicable LORS, or require a change to or deletion of any condition of certification in the Decision.

In addition, the project change would not affect any population including the environmental justice population as shown in **Environmental Justice Table 1, Figure 1, and Figure 2**

Staff's conclusions for each technical or environmental area are summarized in the table below.

Summary of Staff Conclusions

TECHNICAL/ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS REVIEWED	CEQA/LORS CONCLUSIONS			Revised Conditions of Certification Recommended
	Technical Area Not Affected	No Significant Environmental Impact or LORS Inconsistency	Potential for Significant Environmental Impact or LORS Inconsistency	
Air Quality	X			
Biological Resources	X			
Cultural Resources	X			
Efficiency	X			
Facility Design	X			
Geological and Paleontological Resources	X			
Hazardous Materials Management	X			
Land Use	X			
Noise	X			
Public Health	X			
Reliability	X			
Socioeconomics	X			
Soil and Water Resources	X			
Traffic and Transportation	X			
Transmission Line Safety and Nuisance	X			
Transmission System Engineering	X			
Visual Resources	X			
Waste Management	X			
Worker Safety and Fire Protection	X			

Environmental Justice – Figure 1 shows 2010 census blocks in the six-mile radius of the Amended Blythe Solar Power Project with a minority population greater than or equal to 50 percent. The population in these census blocks represents an environmental justice (EJ) population based on race and ethnicity as defined in the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s *Guidance on Considering Environmental Justice During the Development of Regulatory Actions*. Staff conservatively obtains demographic data within a six-mile radius around a project site based on the parameters for dispersion modeling used in staff’s air quality analysis. Air quality impacts are generally the type of project impacts

that extend the furthest from a project site. Beyond a six-mile radius, air emissions have either settled out of the air column or mixed with surrounding air to the extent the potential impacts are less than significant. The area of potential impacts would not extend this far from the project site for most other technical areas included in staff’s EJ analysis.

Based on California Department of Education data in the **Environmental Justice – Table 1**, staff concluded that the percentage of those living in the Palo Verde Unified School District (in a six-mile radius of the project site) and enrolled in the free or reduced price meal program is larger than those in the reference geography, and thus are considered an EJ population based on low income as defined in *Guidance on Considering Environmental Justice During the Development of Regulatory Actions*. **Environmental Justice – Figure 2** shows where the boundaries of the school district are in relation to the six-mile radius around the Blythe Solar Power Project site.

The following technical areas (if affected by the project change) consider impacts to EJ populations: Air Quality, Cultural Resources (indigenous people), Hazardous Materials Management, Land Use, Noise, Public Health, Socioeconomics, Soil and Water Resources, Traffic and Transportation, Transmission Line Safety and Nuisance, Visual Resources, Waste Management, and Worker Safety and Fire Protection.

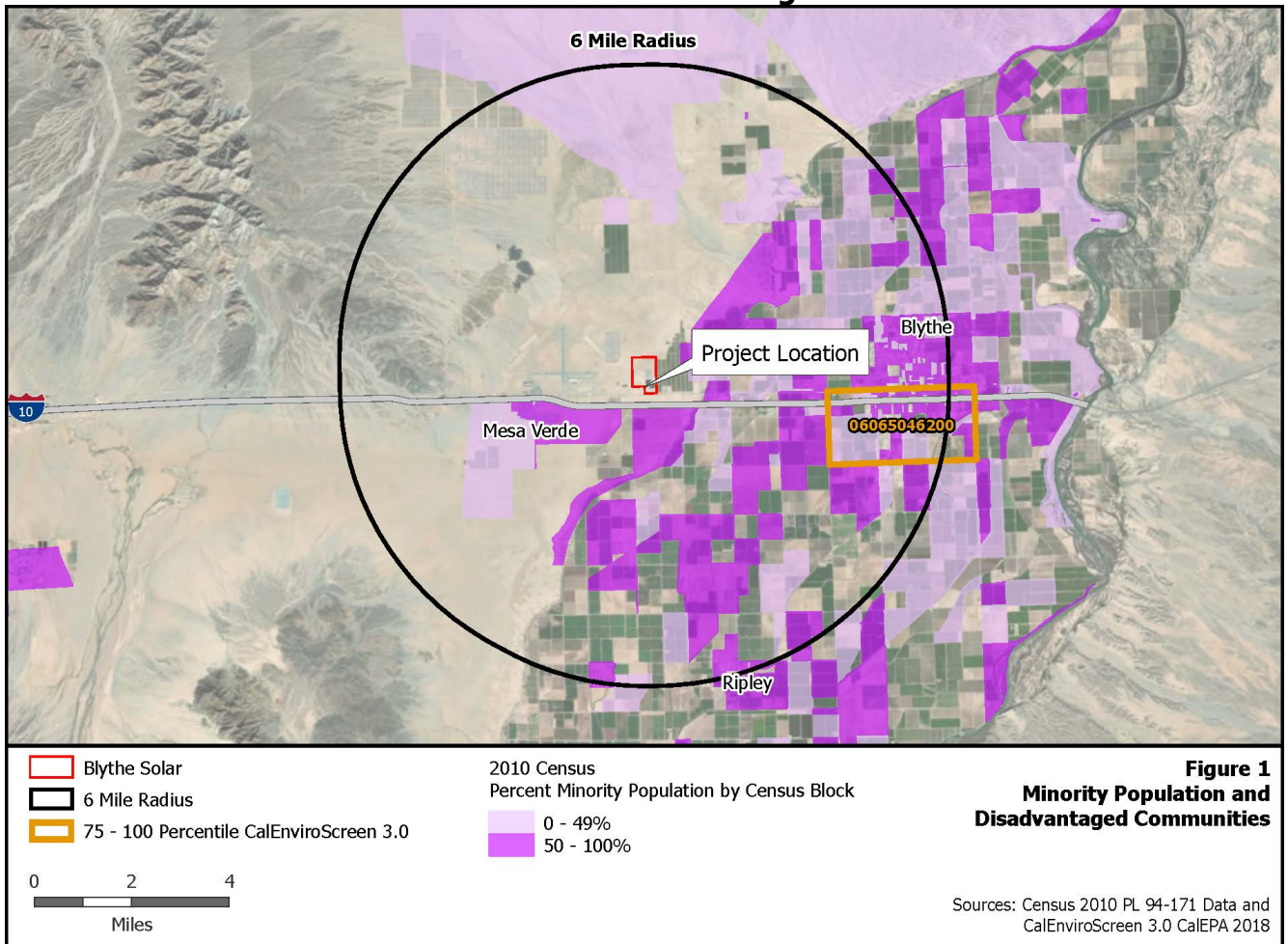
Environmental Justice Conclusions

None of the technical areas that consider impacts to EJ populations are affected by the proposed project change. Thus, there would be no impacts on any population in the project’s six-mile radius, including the EJ population represented in **Environmental Justice – Figure 1, Figure 2, and Table 1**.

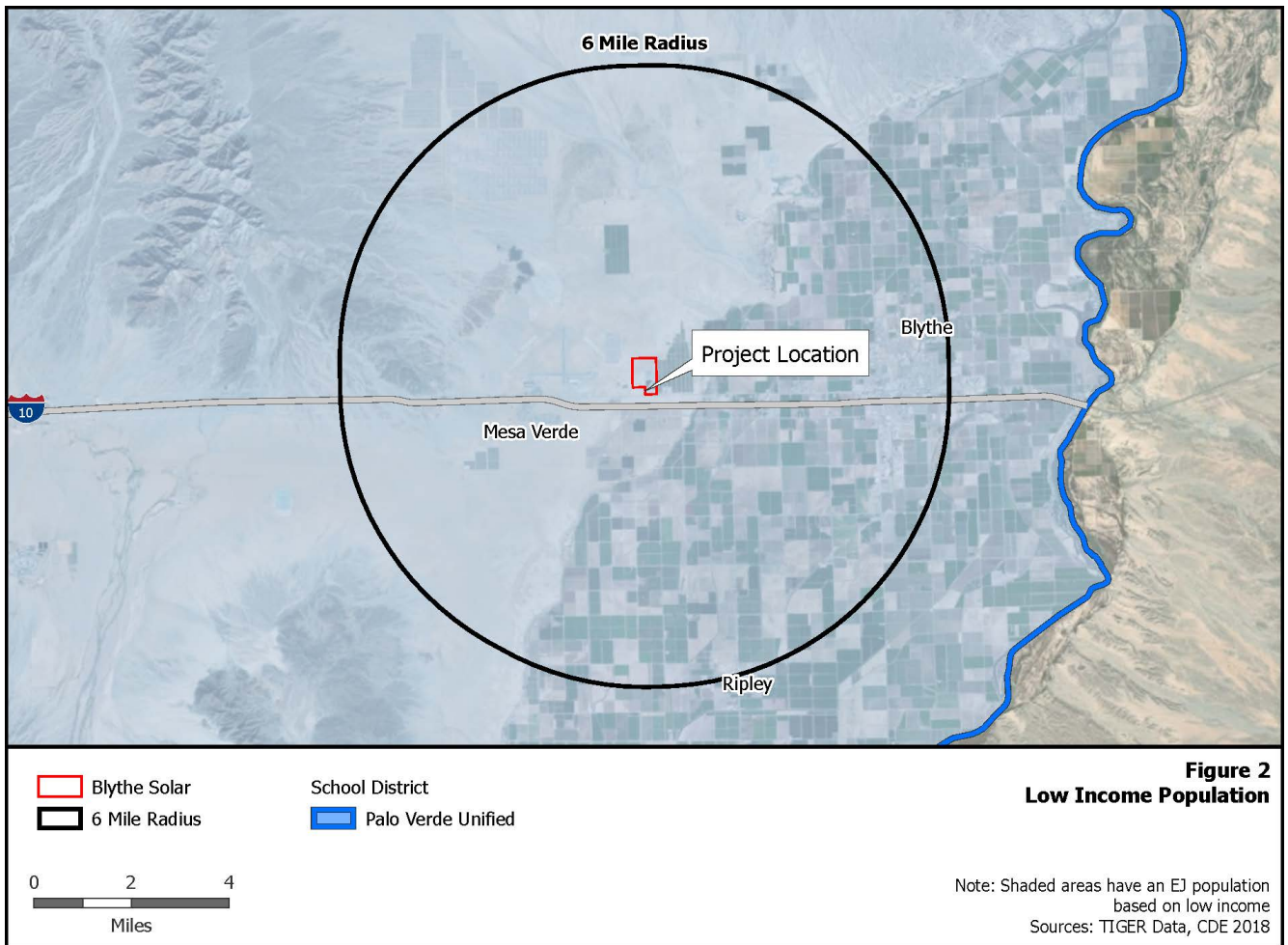
**Environmental Justice – Table 1
 Low Income Data within the Project Area**

SCHOOL DISTRICT IN SIX-MILE RADIUS	Enrollment Used for Meals	Free or Reduced Price Meals	
Palo Verde Unified	3,006	2,236	74.4%
REFERENCE GEOGRAPHY			
Riverside County	428,995	280,021	65.3%
Source: CDE 2018. California Department of Education, DataQuest, Free or Reduced Price Meals, District level data for the year 2017-2018, < http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ >.			

Environmental Justice-Figure 1



Environmental Justice-Figure 2



ENERGY COMMISSION STAFF DETERMINATION

Section 1769(a)(3)(A), Title 20, California Code of Regulations states, "(s)taff shall approve the change where staff determines:

- (i) that there is no possibility that the change may have a significant effect on the environment, or the change is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act;
- (ii) that the change would not cause the project to fail to comply with any applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, or standards; and
- (iii) that the change will not require a change to, or deletion of, a condition of certification adopted by the commission in the final decision or subsequent amendments."

CEC staff has determined the proposed change to the project meets the criteria for approval at the staff level.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Any person may file an objection to staff's determination within 14 days of the date of this statement on the grounds that the project change does not meet the criteria set forth in section 1769(a)(3)(A). As specified in 1769(a)(3)(C), any such objection must make a showing supported by facts that the change does not meet the criteria. Absent any such objection, this petition will be approved 14 days after this statement is filed in the docket.

This statement is being provided to interested parties and property owners adjacent to the facility site, is being mailed to the BSPP mail list, and sent electronically to the BSPP listserv. Any person may comment on the petition. To use the CEC's electronic commenting feature, go to the CEC's webpage for this facility, cited above, click on the "[Submit e-Comment](#)" link, and follow the instructions in the on-line form. Be sure to include the facility name in your comments.

Written comments may also be mailed to:

California Energy Commission
Docket Unit, MS-4
Docket No. 09-AFC-06C
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

All comments and materials filed with and accepted by the Docket Unit will be added to the facility Docket Log and be publicly accessible on the CEC's webpage for the facility.

If you have questions about this notice, please contact Eric Veerkamp, Project Manager, at (916) 661-8458 or via email at: Eric.Veerkamp@energy.ca.gov.

For information on participating in the CEC's review of the BSPP petition to modify the site boundary, please contact the CEC's Public Advisor at (916) 654-4489, or at (800) 822-6228 (toll-free in California). The Public Advisor's Office can also be contacted via email at publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov.

News media inquiries should be directed to the CEC's Media Office at (916) 654-4989, or by email at mediaoffice@energy.ca.gov.

Mail List No. 7368
Blythe Solar Power Project listserv