

DOCKETED

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CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

1516 NINTH STREET, MS-2000
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5512
www.energy.ca.gov



October 1, 2013

**REQUEST FOR COMMENTS
ON THE FINAL STAFF ASSESSMENT
FOR THE PROPOSED PALEN SOLAR ELECTRIC GENERATING
SYSTEM (09-AFC-7C)**

To: AGENCY DISTRIBUTION LIST

This notice is to inform you that the California Energy Commission (Energy Commission) staff has prepared a Final Staff Assessment-Part B (FSA). The FSA-Part B contains staff's independent, objective evaluation of PSH's Petition to Amend (09-AFC-7C) for Cultural Resources.

The FSA-Part A was published on September 10, 2013 and contains the Project Description; Biological Resources; Hazardous Materials Management; Land Use; Noise and Vibration; Public Health; Socioeconomics; Soil and Water Resources; Traffic and Transportation; Transmission Line Safety and Nuisance; Visual Resources; Waste Management; Worker Safety and Fire Protection; Facility Design; Geology and Paleontology; Power Plant Efficiency; Power Plant Reliability; and Transmission System Engineering.

Part C (Air Quality) of the FSA will be published 30 days after staff receives the Preliminary Determination of Compliance (PDOC) from the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). Currently, staff has not received this document.

The FSA-Part B, which was published on September 23, 2013, contains Energy Commission staff's independent, objective, final cultural resources evaluation of the proposed PSEGS, based on the information provided by the applicant, government agencies, tribes, interested parties and other sources available at the time the FSA was prepared.

With respect to the Energy Commission's CEQA review, the public, tribes and agencies may continue to comment on the FSA or any aspect of the proposed PSEGS project, even though there is not a formal comment period for the FSA. The Energy Commission will accept and consider comments until the close of evidentiary hearings that will be noticed and held by the Energy Commission. Comments received on the FSA will be addressed by the Energy Commission's Committee in the Presiding Member's Proposed Decision (PMPD). The PMPD will be published after conclusion of the Energy Commission's evidentiary hearings.

If you wish to provide comments on the project, please submit comments to the Energy Commission using the Energy Commission's e-commenting feature by going to the Energy Commission's Palen Solar Power Project webpage, <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/palen/>, and click on the "Submit e-Comment" link. A full name, e-mail address, comment title, and either a comment or an attached

document (.doc, .docx, or .pdf format) is mandatory. After entering CAPTCHA (a challenge-response test used by the system to ensure that responses are generated by a human user and not a computer), click on the "Agree & Submit Your Comment" button to submit the comment to the Energy Commission Dockets Unit. If you are preparing non-electronic written comments, please mail or hand deliver them to:

California Energy Commission
Dockets Unit, MS-14
Docket No. 09-AFC-7C
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

All comments and materials filed with the Dockets Unit will become a part of the public record of the proceeding. Additionally, your comments will be posted on the Energy Commission's PSEGS webpage.

You can also subscribe to receive e-mail notification of all notices and announcements at: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/listservers>. By being on this email list, you will receive all project related notices and documents pertaining to the project's evaluation and review.

For additional information contact Christine Stora, Energy Commission Compliance Project Manager, at (916) 654-4745 or email at christine.stora@energy.ca.gov.

The FSA will serve as staff's formal testimony in evidentiary hearings to be held by the Energy Commission's Committee assigned to hear this case. The Committee will hold evidentiary hearings to consider the recommendations presented by staff, applicant, intervenors, government agencies, tribes and the public prior to proposing its decision. In the last step, the full Energy Commission will issue the final decision.

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED PALEN SOLAR ELECTRIC GENERATING SYSTEM

On December 17, 2012, Palen Solar Holdings, LLC (PSH) filed a petition with the Energy Commission requesting to modify the Palen Solar Power Project (PSPP). (see <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/palen/compliance/>). The project, as licensed on December 15, 2010, by the Energy Commission, is a 500-megawatt (MW) solar thermal power generating facility utilizing parabolic trough technology. The project site is approximately 3,794 acres and is located approximately 0.25 mile north of Interstate 10, approximately 10 miles east of Desert Center and approximately halfway between the cities of Indio and Blythe, in Riverside County, California.

In the 2012 petition, PSH proposes changes to the approved site layout and technology associated with the approved project. The modified project would use solar tower technology. Heliostats—elevated mirrors mounted on a pylon guided by a tracking system—would be used to focus the sun's rays on a solar receiver steam generator (SRSG) located atop a 750-foot tall solar tower near the center of each solar field.

The modified project would be comprised of two adjacent solar fields and associated facilities with a total combined nominal output of approximately 500 MW. PSH proposes to develop PSEGS in two operational phases: each phase would consist of one solar field and power block with approximately 250 MW of generation capacity. Each solar field would have an array of approximately 85,000 heliostats for a total of 170,000 heliostats for the project. Each phase would also share common facilities, including an administration building, warehouse, evaporation ponds, maintenance complex and a meter/valve station for incoming natural gas service to the site, an on-site switchyard, and a single-circuit, 230-kV generation tie-line to deliver power to the electricity grid. Other on-site facilities would include access and maintenance roads (either dirt, gravel, or paved), perimeter fencing, tortoise fencing, and other ancillary security facilities.

The PSEGS amendment does not propose to change the generating capacity of the Energy Commission-approved project, the site access, or the interconnection point at Red Bluff Substation, although there would be a slight re-routing of the generation tie-line near the western end of the route and around the newly constructed Red Bluff Substation.

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, as a certified regulatory agency pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.5, produces several environmental and decision documents rather than an Environmental Impact Report.

SUMMARY OF CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION STAFF'S FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the information provided, discovery achieved and analyses completed to date, Summary Table-1 on the following page illustrates the Energy Commission staff's final assessment of the Petition to Amend and compares it to the originally approved Palen Solar Power Project (PSPP) as previously licensed by the Commission. Staff's review of the Petition to Amend (Palen 2012A) and multiple visits to the facility site and vicinity lead staff to conclude that the geographic scope of the original analysis for the project is insufficient to analyze the amended project's substantially greater visual intrusion in the Chuckwalla Valley. Staff believes that the proposed change to the project's technology, from a solar trough to a very bright, 750 foot-tall solar power tower facility, would significantly increase the distance from which the project would have the potential to compromise key elements of the integrity of historical resources that rely, in part, on relatively pristine natural landscapes to convey their association with important prehistoric and historic themes. Please review the FSA for a detailed discussion of the significance of staff's conclusions.

**Executive Summary - Table 1
Environmental and Engineering Assessment**

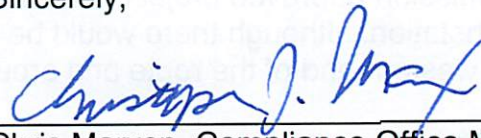
Technical Area	PSPP Decision Complies with LORS	PSPP Decision Impacts Mitigated	PSEGS Amendment Complies with LORS	PSEGS Amendment Impacts Mitigated
Cultural Resources	Yes	No	Yes	No

AVAILABILITY OF THE FINAL STAFF ASSESSMENT

The status of the project, an electronic copy of the FSA, copies of notices, and other relevant documents are available on the Energy Commission's webpage for this amendment: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/palen/compliance/>.

Sincerely,

Date: 1 October 2013



Chris Marxen, Compliance Office Manager
Siting, Transmission and Environmental
Protection Division

cc: Agency List No.7373 (Notice and CD)