

DOCKETED

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CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

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SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5512
www.energy.ca.gov



October 1, 2013

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF THE
FINAL STAFF ASSESSMENT–PART B
FOR THE PROPOSED PALEN SOLAR ELECTRIC GENERATING SYSTEM
AMENDMENT (09-AFC-7C)**

TO: MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

This notice is to inform you that the California Energy Commission (Energy Commission) staff has prepared a Final Staff Assessment (FSA)-Part B for cultural resources for the December 12, 2012 Petition to Amend to modify the Palen Solar Power Project (PSPP).

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 is now available for public review and comment at <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/palen/>.

Under its certified regulatory program, Energy Commission staff has completed an independent assessment of the PSEGS Petition to Amend (09-AFC-7C). The Energy Commission staff's final conclusions are summarized in this notice. The Energy Commission encourages public participation in the review of the PSEGS Amendment.

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.

Energy Commission Licensing Authority

The Energy Commission is responsible for reviewing and ultimately approving or denying all applications for construction, operation and modification of thermal electric power plants, 50 megawatts (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 through its certified regulatory program produces Preliminary and Final Staff Assessments rather than Draft and Final Environmental Impact Reports.

Summary of the Amended Palen Electric Generating System

On December 17, 2012, the project owner filed a Petition to Amend with the Energy Commission requesting to modify the Palen Solar Power Project (PSPP) now called PSEGS. The PSPP, as licensed by the Energy Commission on December 15, 2010, is a 500-megawatt (MW) solar thermal power-generating facility utilizing parabolic trough technology. The project site is approximately 3,794 acres in size 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.

The modifications proposed in the 2012 Petition to Amend include replacing the parabolic trough solar collection system and associated heat transfer fluid with BrightSource’s solar tower technology. Heliostats—elevated mirrors guided by a tracking system mounted on a pylon—focus the sun’s rays on a solar receiver steam generator (SRSG) located atop a 750-foot tower near the center of each solar field to create steam to drive a turbine that generates electricity. The project would use air-cooled condensers for power plant cooling.

The modified project, the PSEGS, would be comprised of two adjacent solar fields and associated facilities with a total combined nominal output of approximately 500 MW. The project owner 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 with 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 PSPP, or the site access, or the interconnection point at the 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. A new natural gas pipeline is also proposed.

Summary of the California Energy Commission Staff’s Final Conclusions

Based upon the information provided, discovery achieved and analyses completed to date, Summary Table-1 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**

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

Public Resources, Contact Information and Additional Sources for Information

If you desire information on how to participate in the Energy Commission's review of the proposed project, please contact Alana Mathews, the Energy Commission's Public Adviser, at (916) 654-4489 or toll free in California at (800) 822-6228, or by email at: publicadviser@energy.ca.gov.

The status of the project, copies of notices and other relevant documents are also available on the Energy Commission's web site: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/palen/> . News media inquiries should be directed to Sandy Louey, at (916) 654-4989, or by email at: mediaoffice@energy.ca.gov.

Paper copies of the FSA will be available for review at the following local libraries:

Palo Verde Valley Dist. Library
125 W. Chanslor Way
Blythe, CA 92225

Riverside Library – Main Branch
3581 Mission Inn Avenue
Riverside, CA 92501

Cathedral City Branch Library
33520 Date Palm Drive
Cathedral City, CA 92234

Coachella Branch Library
1538 Seventh Street
Coachella, CA 92236


Lake Tamarisk Library
43880 Lake Tamarisk Drive
Desert Center, CA 92239

The FSA is also available at the Energy Commission and California State Libraries in Sacramento, and at public libraries in Eureka, Fresno, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. In addition, electronic copies (CDs) will be distributed to those public agencies that would normally have jurisdiction except for the Energy Commission's exclusive authority to certify sites and related facilities.

If you would like a paper copy or CD of the FSA, please fill out the enclosed form and return it to the California Energy Commission, attention: Alicia Campos, Project Assistant, or by e-mail at alicia.campos@energy.ca.gov.

Date: 10600BR2013

Sincerely,



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

cc: Mail List No. 7373,
Proof of Service list, and
Docket Unit

Please send me a paper copy / CD (**please circle one**) of the California Energy Commission's Final Staff Assessment (FSA) – Part B for the proposed Palen Solar Electric Generating System project (PSEGS), Amendment (09-AFC-7C).

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

FOLD HERE

California Energy Commission
Attention: Alicia Campos
1516 Ninth Street, MS-15
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

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