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STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Energy Resources
Conservation and Development Commission

In the matter of:

Amendment for the **PALEN SOLAR
ELECTRIC GENERATING SYSTEM**

DOCKET NO. 09-ACF-7C

COLORADO RIVER INDIAN TRIBES
Exhibit 8035: Testimony of David Harper
Regarding Significance of Birds In Mohave Culture

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Testimony of David Harper
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QUALIFICATIONS

David Harper is the traditional spokesman for the Mohave Elders Committee. He has held this position for the past twenty-five (25) years. He has been mentored by several Elders who have passed from both the Colorado River Indian Tribes and Ft Mojave Indian Tribe on Mohave culture for many years.

STATEMENT

I, David Harper, am the spokesperson on behalf of the Colorado River Indian Tribes (“CRIT”) Mohave Elders’ Committee, and offer this statement to document the importance of birds for the Mohave people and the impact that the proposed amendment to the Palen Project will have on traditional Mohave beliefs. The CRIT Mohave Elders’ Committee has been developed to consider and protect the Mohave people’s interests and culture.

The proposed amendment to the Palen Solar Electric Generating System is one of the most recent solar energy developments that will impact the traditional lands of the Mohave people. The project, which is located west of the town of Blythe, California, has been brought to the attention of the CRIT Mohave Elders’ Committee. The Mohave people, or ‘Aha Macav, have lived in the subject area since time immemorial, with the inhabited region of the Mohave people stretching just below San Francisco to the Gulf of Mexico.

The Mohave people have a well-documented history of occupation of the subject land and practice their religious beliefs even today. The Mohave people have a traditional and spiritual tie to the land that is reflected in their adamant refusal to allow the land to be desecrated. Traditional landscapes, trails, and landmarks are reflected in the Mohave songs, stories, and beliefs, which are directly tied to the origins of the Mohave people.

Birds play a key role in the existence of the Mohave people in their creation story. The Mohave creation story tells the importance of the bird population and impact of their existence on the daily life of the Mohave people. Ironically, the phrase “cradle to death” is a statement that is well within the Mohave people’s tradition and culture. Within the Mohave creation story, it is the Creator’s son, Mastamho, who changes from a spiritual being to a sea eagle after creating the plants, animals, and all beings.

The Mohave clans have been identified in the earth, desert, mountains, plants, and animals, and have long impacted the Mohave people. The following Mohave clans play an important role in the Mohave traditions and culture and have been given specific duties within the Tribe’s traditions:

- (1) Quail, or in the Mohave language, Masipa
- (2) Night Bird, or in the Mohave language, Mothetha
- (3) Small Flying Bird, or in the Mohave language, Maha

- (4) The most significant and important bird is the Red Tail Hawk, or in the Mohave language, Suukwiily. This bird has great and significant value to the Mohave people. 'Avi Suukwiily is the spiritual and sacred landmark to the clan representing the Warrior Clan of the Mohave people. The Warrior Clan was first to step into battle and sacrifice their life for the people. When in battle, or in day to day life, members of the Warrior Clan wore the red tail hawk feathers to identify their membership in the group. Warriors were taught at a young age to fight out of existence, not anger, and to understand that they have committed their life to ensure the Tribe's survival and sustainability. The Mohave warrior staff was taken into battle and currently, is still used to honor the Warrior Clan descendants at funerals. The staff is adorned with red tail hawk feathers which represents the clan, with the colors of red, black, and white. It is believed that red signifies life, black represents death, and white represents the integrity of the person for who the staff has been made.
- (5) The road runner, or in the Mohave language, Talypo, is a clan which has been long respected for communication amongst the Tribes, clans, and enemies. The road runner signifies the runners of the Mohave people. It is well documented that runners could run up to 100 miles per day and would easily run in a day to the Quechan people, well over 100 miles away. The runners would be the messengers of death, ceremonies, or celebrations for the Mohave people. Most often, the runner would return home the next day at the same rate of speed and distance. Without the runners, many of the Mohave villages and people would not be warned of attacks from other people and enemies who would put them in harm's way. Once returning from battle, the runners would run back and forth at a high rate of speed for many hours to remove any bad spirits which may have accompanied them for their journey.
- (6) The eagle, or in the Mohave language, 'Aspa, is such an important bird that I am not able to write or document activities associated with the eagle because of this bird's sensitivity and importance to the Mohave people, unless the Elders approve of releasing this information.
- (7) The owl, or in the Mohave language, Kuupiit, is another bird which I am unable to discuss unless approved by the Elders. This bird has a direct link to today's world and the spirit world by those who practice the traditional ways.

Mohave Bird Songs:

The Mohave Bird Songs are a part of Mohave Culture and play a significant role in the migration of the Mohave people. The songs reflect the areas which the Mohave people have been to, almost like a map retracting the Mohave people's land experiences. It is believed that the Mohave people use these songs to understand the significant spiritual landmarks which have existed since time immemorial. The Elders of the Mohave people say:

If you go to the sacred mountain, you will dream the songs. It will come to you like a river flowing, it is there that you will receive your gift of being a Mohave Bird Singer.

In conclusion, bird deaths resulting from the Palen project are detrimental to our culture because these animals are crucial to the practice and existence of our Mohave culture and belief.

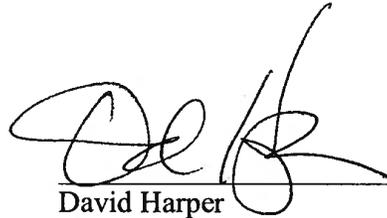
Testimony of David Harper

I, David Harper, declare as follows:

- 1) I am currently the spokesperson for the Mohave Elders Committee.
- 2) My relevant professional qualifications and experience are set forth in the attached testimony.
- 3) I prepared the attached testimony relating to the proposed Amendment to the Palen Solar Electric Generating System.
- 4) I submit this testimony in support of CRIT's opposition to the proposed Amendment to the Palen Solar Electric Generating System.
- 5) It is my professional opinion that the attached testimony is true and accurate with respect to the issues that are addressed.
- 6) I am personally familiar with the facts and conclusions described within the attached testimony and if called as a witness, I could testify competently thereto.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

DATED: June 23 2014
AT: Parker, AZ



David Harper

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