

DOCKETED

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Petition to Extend the Deadline for Commencement of Construction for the Palen Solar Power Project

I would like to have my comments added to the Docket No. 09-AFC-7C, Petition to Extend the Deadline for Commencement of Construction for the Palen Solar Power Project, as follows:

This project falls well below what environmentalists would call Green Power, for these reasons stated so eloquently the last time this project was being considered, as this from The Center for Biological Diversity:

“Clearly we had concerns about the project as it was proposed and we’re pleased they withdrew their application,” said Leene Anderson, a biologist in Los Angeles with the Center for Biological Diversity.

“We think that technology is inappropriate for that site because of avian migration that goes through the Chuckwalla Valley, from the Salton Sea to the Colorado River, and north-south on the Pacific Flyway,”

At BrightSource’s other tower-power solar project in Ivanpah, near Primm, Nev., there have been incidents of birds flying into the heat zones around the towers and dying from burns.

David Lamfrom, California Desert Program associate director for the National Parks Conservation Association, also lauded the withdrawal of the tower power plan.

“Americans love our national parks and our wildlife, and today’s smart decision is an indication that solar developers can as well,” he said in a statement. “We hope that today’s action will embolden the Interior Department to follow suit as it proceeds with the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and decisions related to in-progress renewable energy proposals that impact our national parks.”

In December, the same Energy Commission committee recommended denying the Palen project because of concerns about burned birds, Native American resources and energy storage.

The panel, however, reconsidered after developers said they could address those concerns by using mists, noisemakers and other measures to keep the birds away.

Palen Solar Holdings also planned to pay the Colorado River Indian Tribes \$2.5 million to make up for anticipated disruption of ancestral and archeological sites considered sacred by the tribes.

The Palen site is already permitted for another type of technology using parabolic troughs, which use sunlight to heat mirrors on the ground. A fluid-filled tube in the center of the trough drives an engine that generates electricity. That permit was granted in 2010, before Palen Solar Holdings bought it from a bankrupt developer.

Palen Solar Holdings amended its application because the company doesn’t use the solar trough technology. It was unclear what will happen with that permit, but Desmond, of BrightSource, said the company is talking about making use of it.

“The possibility is left open to be able to come back in the future with a configuration involving power technology and thermal storage,” he said.”

And now, here we are again with the same negative environmental impacts on the plate once more.

Please do not allow this disaster to go forward! Surely we can extract sun energy with solar panels that are safe!

Thanks so much,
Marian Fricano,
San Jose, CA