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Docket Number:	97-AFC-01C
Project Title:	High Desert Power Plant
TN #:	212677
Document Title:	Petition to Amend Energy Commission Staff Status Conference Statement
Description:	N/A
Filer:	Cenne Jackson
Organization:	California Energy Commission
Submitter Role:	Commission Staff
Submission Date:	8/8/2016 1:55:15 PM
Docketed Date:	8/8/2016

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

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State Of California

Natural Resources Agency

Memorandum

Date: August 8, 2016
Telephone: (916) 653-4677
File: 97-AFC-01C

To: Commissioner Karen Douglas, Presiding Member
Commissioner Janea Scott, Associate Member
Susan Cochran, Hearing Officer

From: **California Energy Commission -** Joseph Douglas, Compliance Project Manager
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Subject: **HIGH DESERT POWER PROJECT (HDPP 97-AFC-01C) PETITION TO AMEND
ENERGY COMMISSION STAFF STATUS CONFERENCE STATEMENT**

Staff hereby files its Status Conference Statement as ordered in the July 12, 2016 Notice of August 11, 2016 Committee Status Conference and Related Orders.



**BEFORE THE ENERGY RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
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**PETITION TO AMEND THE
HIGH DESERT POWER PLANT**

Docket No. 97-AFC-01C

Staff Status Conference Statement

On July 13, 2016, the Energy Commission Committee (Committee) assigned to conduct proceedings on the Project Owner's (HDPP or Petitioner) Petition for Modification to Drought-Proof the High Desert Power Plant (Petition) issued a Notice of August 11, 2016 Committee Status Conference and Related Orders (Notice). Per the Notice, Staff filed an Issues Report on August 1, 2016, responding to Committee questions concerning recycled water, percolation of State Water Project (SWP) water, groundwater, water quality, and reliability. A Committee Status Conference is scheduled for August 11, 2016, to review and discuss the progress made in the proceeding and to consider any pending motions or petitions. Prior to the Status Conference, the Committee requires that each party file a Status Conference Statement on August 8, 2016, responding to several questions and providing a proposed schedule for the remaining proceedings in the case. Staff provides the following responses to the Committee's questions and scheduling request.

Q1. What categories of questions (other than those outlined in Staff's Issues Report) should be asked?

A1. The Committee identified five categories of questions for Staff's Issues Report: recycled water, percolation of SWP water, groundwater, water quality, and reliability. Based on currently available information, Staff considers these categories to be an exhaustive list of topics of concern in this case. Staff and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), in cooperation with the Mojave Water Agency (MWA) and the

Victor Valley Water Reclamation Authority (VWVRA), continue to refine and reform the scope of a water balance study to determine current inflows and outflows in the Mojave River basin, thereby informing the health of the riparian habitat in the Transition Zone of the Alto sub-basin. This process may spur additional questions or topics appropriately addressed in this proceeding. Additionally, results of such a study may prompt additional questions or redirect the scope for this proceeding.

Q2. What is the definition of the “water balance calculation” that has been discussed? What information will it provide that is in addition to that provided in the Annual Report of the Mojave Basin Area Watermaster? What question about project impacts will it answer and how will it answer those questions?

A2. The phrase “water balance calculation,” as discussed in the proceeding, means net water balance in a defined region or sub-basin after accounting for inflows (e.g., rivers, precipitation, intra-basin flows, or percolation ponds) and outflows (e.g., rivers, pumping, dissipation, or plant uptake) of water in the sub-basin. CDFW provided Staff with a preliminary water balance study that carried flows forward from 2003 to today (CDFW 2016). This water balance study estimated changes in groundwater elevations by determining the net balance (inflows minus outflows) in the Alto sub-basin. The Watermaster’s annual report provides net flows at the scale of the sub-basin; CDFW has expressed an interest in water flows at the Transition Zone scale, which is a much smaller scale than the currently available analysis.

Therefore, discussions between Staff, CDFW, and MWA are necessary for determining how the agencies can produce a study that not only provides updated net flows for the sub-basin as a whole, but also specifically for the Transition Zone. With greater information concerning historical and current inflows and outflows from and to the various water sources in the Transition Zone, Staff may be able to provide an informed analysis of the health of the riparian habitat and determine the minimum flows necessary to preserve the Transition Zone riparian resources. Furthermore, Staff may

be able to recommend permissible use of recycled water by the High Desert Power Project (HDPP) that avoids significant impacts on the riparian habitat.

Q3. Include a proposed schedule for the remaining proceedings in the case.

A3. Staff proposes a public workshop in September to discuss with the parties the scope of the proposed study, the division of labor and resources to complete the study, and setting a timeline for completing study. MWA and VVWRA will be invited to participate in this scoping meeting, as they may be able to provide valuable input concerning the feasibility, costs, and timeline of the study. Another Status Conference may be necessary after this scoping meeting to inform the Committee of the proposed scope and length of the study, as it will affect the timing of future proceedings in this case.

Staff looks forward to meeting with the parties on August 11, 2016 at the Committee Status Conference to discuss progress made toward refining the scope of the study to inform the Committee and the parties on the availability of recycled water for use by HDPP for operations.

References:

CDFW 2016 – State of California Department of Fish and Wildlife Status Conference Statement. Docket TN # 212656, submitted August 5, 2016.