

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION  
 1516 NINTH STREET  
 SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5512  
 www.energy.ca.gov

**DOCKET**  
**02-AFC-02C**

DATE May 13 2009  
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May 13, 2009



**TO: AGENCY DISTRIBUTION LIST (STATE AND FEDERAL)**

**REQUEST FOR AGENCY PARTICIPATION IN THE REVIEW OF THE PETITION FOR A MAJOR AMENDMENT TO THE SALTON SEA UNIT 6 GEOTHERMAL PROJECT (02-AFC-2C)**

On March 12, 2009, CE Obsidian Energy filed a petition with the California Energy Commission requesting to modify the Salton Sea Unit 6 Geothermal Power Plant (SSU6). The Energy Commission certified the project on December 18, 2003, as a 185 MW geothermal plant, and later amended the license in 2005 to allow construction of a single 215 MW geothermal plant. The applicant now desires to develop three separate 53 MW units, totaling 159 MW in generating capacity, rather than the single 215 MW plant.

As part of our review process, the staff of the Energy Commission works closely with local, state and federal agencies to ensure that all laws, ordinances, regulations and standards are addressed in the final decision of the California Energy Commission.

**Project Description**

CE Obsidian's primary objective for the proposed project is to construct, operate and maintain an efficient, economic, reliable, safe and environmentally-sound geothermal generating facility. This facility is intended to help meet the State of California objectives mandated by SB 1078 (California Renewable Portfolio Standard Program); AB 32 (California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006); and other local mandates adopted by the State's municipal electric utilities for the long term wholesale purchase of renewable electric energy for distribution to their customers.

The SSU6 project site is located on a 160-acre parcel in the Imperial Valley, approximately 1,000 feet southeast of the southern reach of the Salton Sea in the North Brawley Geothermal Resources Area, within an unincorporated area of Imperial County, California. The region is characterized by agriculture and geothermal power production. The town of Niland is approximately 7.5 miles to the northeast and the town of Calipatria is approximately 6.1 miles to the southeast of the plant site. The Sonny Bono Salton Sea Wildlife Refuge Headquarters is approximately 4,000 feet from the plant site. The Alamo River and New River are approximately 4.8 miles southwest and 2.7 miles east of the plant site, respectively.

The modification proposed in the petition would involve installation of three separate generating facilities, which would produce a combined 159 MW net of renewable geothermal power. The three units would each utilize a single-flash brine/steam handling system, rather than the multi-flash system planned for the original facility, and the steam production and brine injection wells would be split up and moved close to each generating facility. The project site would be expanded from 80 acres to 160

acres, but the total amount of land disturbed would be approximately identical to the amended 215 MW project.

The project site has been previously disturbed by intensive farming and is in close proximity to transmission infrastructure. CE Obsidian has filed an electrical interconnection request for the project with the Imperial Irrigation District (IID). No changes are proposed to the two interconnecting transmission lines already licensed by the Commission for the project.

The project would use a wet cooling tower for power plant cooling. About 95 percent of the fresh water needed for cooling tower makeup and other uses at the site, such as make-up water to an emissions controls wet scrubber, would be supplied from the condensate produced at the three generating units. The remainder would come from a nearby IID canal. Under expected conditions, water use for the amended project would be 483 acre feet/year (afy), which is somewhat higher than the 290 afy estimated consumption for the original SSU6 project. Under conservative conditions, the three generation facilities in the amended project would use a total of approximately 953 afy, which is slightly less than the original SSU6 project conservative scenario of 987 afy.

If the proposed amendment is approved, CE Obsidian plans to begin project construction soon after receiving the "Notice to Proceed" from the Energy Commission and take approximately 32 months to complete construction of the first of the three units. The other two units would follow sequentially, with the third unit being completed approximately 20 months after the first. Development of the production and injection wells would proceed in parallel with the power generation facilities, over a 24-30 month period.

### **Energy Commission's License Amendment Process**

The Energy Commission is responsible for reviewing and ultimately approving or denying all petitions to amend existing licenses to construct and operate thermal electric power plants, 50 MW and greater, in California. The Energy Commission's facility certification and amendment processes carefully examine 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), but it produces several environmental and decision documents rather than an Environmental Impact Report.

Over the coming months, Energy Commission staff will analyze the potential impacts of the amended project, as compared to its existing license, and proposed changes to the existing conditions of certification as appropriate. Staff will release its analysis for agency and public comment, and then make a recommendation to the Commission to approve or disapprove the amendment petition. Staff may hold one or more public workshops and hearings on the petition to determine whether the amendment petition should be approved and under what set of conditions. The Energy Commission will issue notices for these workshops and hearings at least 10 days prior to the meeting.

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### **Agency Participation**

During the entire amendment process staff welcomes comments and participation by all federal, state, regional and local agencies and non-governmental organizations. You will be given an opportunity to comment on staff's analysis of the petition, and your agency may also present its comments and recommendations in person at any schedule hearing or workshop, or at the Energy Commission Business Meeting where the petition is ruled upon. Your participation in the proceeding will be valuable and is encouraged and will allow you to identify and try to resolve issues of concern to your agency. Staff may also have specific requests for agency consultation, review or comment during the amendment process

Enclosed is a copy (CD) of the amendment petition in electronic format. If you would like to have a hard copy of the amendment petition sent to you, if you have questions, or if you would like additional information on how to participate in the Energy Commission's review of the proposed project, please contact Matt Trask, Amendment Project Manager, at (916) 651-2935, or by email at [mtrask@energy.state.ca.us](mailto:mtrask@energy.state.ca.us). The status of the proposed project, copies of notices, electronic version of the amendment petition, and other relevant documents are also available on the Energy Commission's Internet web site at [http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/saltosea\\_amendment/index.html](http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/saltosea_amendment/index.html). By being on the project mailing list, you will receive notices of all project related activities and documents related to the proposed amendment's evaluation and review. You can also subscribe to receive e-mail notification of all notices at <http://www.energy.ca.gov/listservers>.

Sincerely,



Eileen Allen, Manager  
Energy Facilities Siting and Compliance Office

Enclosure

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RIGHT OF WAY PROPERTY TRUSTEE  
 EARTHRISE NUTRITIONALS  
 FARM OWNERS  
 IMPERIAL COUNTY PLANNING DEPT ✓

LATHAM & WATKINS  
 \* IMPERIAL CO AIR POLUTION CONTROL DIST ✓  
 QUECHAN TRIBAL MEMBER ✓

IMPERIAL COUNTY PLANNING DEPT ✓  
 PERALTA FARMING CO INC ✓  
 ADAMS BROADWELL JOSEPH & CARDOZO ✓  
 \* CA REG WATER QUALITY CONTROL ✓  
 C/O BOB G TRIMM, CPA ✓  
 \* IMPERIAL CO AIR POLUTION CONTROL ✓  
 BORDER POWER PLANT WORKING GROUP ✓

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER \* DEPARTMENT OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL ✓  
 \* U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE - DIV CHIEF ✓  
 ACCU CHEM CONVERSION - PRESIDENT ✓  
 V I WALKER TRUST ✓

REG PROF ELEC ENG - E7152 CALIF ✓  
 EL CENTRO PUBLIC LIBRARY ✓  
 IMPERIAL IRRIGATION DISTRICT ✓  
 IMPERIAL MAGMA ✓  
 \* US FISH & WILDLIFE - PROJECT LEADER ✓

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 PO BOX 505  
 PO BOX 270  
 PO BOX 232  
 939 W MAIN ST STE B-1  
 1996 W BANNISTER RD  
 650 TOWN CENTER DR STE 2000  
 150 S 9TH ST  
 655 IRONWOOD DR  
 PO BOX 119  
 939 W MAIN ST STE B-1  
 PO BOX 771  
 601 GATEWAY BLVD STE 1000  
 73720 FRED WARING DR STE 100  
 PO BOX 1407  
 150 S 9TH ST  
 4452 PARK BLVD STE 209  
 PO BOX 1407  
 PO BOX 806  
 6010 HIDDEN VALLEY RD  
 13226 NELSON AVE  
 PO BOX 39  
 PO BOX 1110  
 714 SANDALWOOD DR  
 539 STATE ST  
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 PO BOX 657  
 906 W SINCLAIR RD

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 WESTMORLAND CA 92281-0428  
 FILLMORE UT 84631-0505  
 CALIPATRIA CA 92233-0270  
 WESTMORLAND CA 92281-0232  
 EL CENTRO CA 92243-2887  
 BRAWLEY CA 92227-9635  
 COSTA MESA CA 92626-7135  
 EL CENTRO CA 92243-2801  
 WINTERHAVEN CA 92283-9627  
 BRAWLEY CA 92227-0119  
 EL CENTRO CA 92243-2887  
 MERCED CA 95341-0771  
 SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO CA 94080-7059  
 PALM DESERT CA 92260-9363  
 BRAWLEY CA 92227-1320  
 EL CENTRO CA 92243-2801  
 SAN DIEGO CA 92116-4050  
 BRAWLEY CA 92227-1320  
 SACRAMENTO CA 95812-0806  
 CARLSBAD CA 92009-4219  
 CITY OF INDUSTRY CA 91746-1514  
 WESTMORLAND CA 92281-0039  
 BRAWLEY CA 92227-1110  
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