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Date: 10/28/2010 12:49 PM
Subject: Rice Solar Energy Project - Status of Communication Path Investigations

John,
Western Area Power Administration has recently completed the Interconnection Facilities Study for the Rice Solar Energy Project, Large Generator Interconnection. The Study will be made final in the next few weeks after consideration of the proponent's comments; however, given the timing of the CEC's proceedings, the proponent believes the Study contains important new information on the status of the telecommunication work that should be shared with the Commission this week.

Two telecommunications paths are required between the interconnecting switching station (ICS) and Western's Phoenix Operations Center. Existing Western communication sites are available near the ICS that can transmit information to the Phoenix Operations Center, so two connections are required between the ICS and these existing sites. Technologies for the "primary" and "redundant" paths were evaluated for the Study using a number of criteria; a more thorough discussion of these may be found in the Study. For reasons primarily related to data transmission quality and reliability, the primary path is the most important of the two. The Study recommended using either microwave or fiber optic technology for the primary path. Western has a long track record with both; however, use of fiber optic technology requires installation of Optical Ground Wire (OPGW) on Western's transmission line for up to 64 miles. Technology options for the redundant path were less restrictive. The new generation of digital power line carrier was found to be suitable for the redundant path. Power line carrier technology requires only the addition of equipment at both ends of the transmission line.

Significant work refining the microwave option (for the primary path) has continued since the Study was completed on October 12. We can now say with some certainty that it is highly unlikely Western will need to utilize OPGW as the primary communication path to the ICS, or to install OPGW on the existing Parker-Blythe 161-kV transmission line. Since no direct line-of-sight microwave paths exist between the ICS and any of Western's existing communication sites, we have performed extensive investigations identifying over-lapping line-of-sight "view sheds" from the ICS with those from Headgate Rock Substation, Black Point and Metal Mountain, to identify possible locations for a microwave reflector/repeater site to provide a suitable microwave path. An exact reflector/repeater site for the primary path has not been chosen yet, but we believe there are enough potential sites available to virtually assure at least one will be viable. What remains is a thorough evaluation of the potential sites for access, ease-of construction and purchase availability.

Disclaimer: It is not the intent of this summary to neglect or detract from any content included in the Study. Decisions should not be drawn solely from this summary without reading the parent document.

Western hopes the information provided will be useful to the Commission and to the Project. You may contact me with any questions regarding any of the above.

Best Regards,

Matt Mueller
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