

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION
1516 NINTH STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5512

DOCKET**07-AFC-5**

DATE 11/04/09

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November 4, 2009

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
FINAL STAFF ASSESSMENT and DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FOR THE PROPOSED IVANPAH SOLAR ELECTRIC GENERATING SYSTEM
PROJECT (07-AFC-5)**

TO: MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

This notice is to inform you of the availability of the Final Staff Assessment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (FSA/DEIS) for the Ivanpah Solar Electric Generating System (ISEGS) project (07-AFC-5). The FSA/DEIS contains the California Energy Commission staff's and U.S. Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) environmental, public health and engineering evaluation of the proposed ISEGS project. The FSA/DEIS also contains a proposed BLM land use plan amendment to the California Desert Conservation Area Plan. The FSA/DEIS was published by the Energy Commission on November 4, 2009.

The FSA/DEIS will serve as the Energy Commission staff's testimony during the Commission's evidentiary hearings. The Energy Commission Committee assigned to the ISEGS proceedings will consider and weigh the testimony or comments or recommendations of all interested parties, including Energy Commission staff, the applicant, intervenors, public, and other local, state, and federal agencies, before issuing the Presiding Member's Proposed Decision (PMPD) for consideration by the full Energy Commission. The public, intervenors, local, state and federal agencies are encouraged to participate in these hearings. BLM will participate with the Energy Commission's ISEGS Committee and staff in the hearings. The Energy Commission will issue notices at least ten days prior to any scheduled hearings.

The California Energy Commission encourages public participation in the review of the ISEGS Application for Certification and the FSA/DEIS. Written comments on the FSA/DEIS which a member of the public or interested party would like to have entered into the record before the Energy Commission's Evidentiary Hearing, should be provided to John Kessler, Energy Commission Project Manager, no later than 5:00 p.m., December 7, 2009 at the address on this letterhead or by email to jkessler@energy.state.ca.us.

BLM will also be conducting a 90-day comment period in association with BLM's EIS process, which will be noticed separately. Following completion of BLM's comment period scheduled to end February 11, 2010, Energy Commission staff and BLM will prepare a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The FEIS will respond to public comments and will incorporate any changes deemed necessary to update the analysis of project impacts.

Summary of the Proposed Ivanpah Solar Electric Generating System (ISEGS) Project

On August 31, 2007, the applicant filed an Application for Certification (AFC) with the California Energy Commission seeking permission to develop the proposed 400 megawatt (MW) Ivanpah Solar Electric Generating System (ISEGS) project. The applicant also filed Right-of-Way applications with the BLM for the use of public lands.

PROOF OF SERVICE (REVISED 7/20/09) FILED WITH
ORIGINAL MAILED FROM SACRAMENTO ON 11/4/09

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The applicant proposes to locate the ISEGS project on 4,073 acres within the Mojave Desert on land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), in San Bernardino County, California. This proposed site is located east of the Clark Mountains and west of the Ivanpah Dry Lake. More specifically, the proposed project site is located 4.5 miles southwest of Primm, Nevada and 0.5 mile west of the Primm Valley Golf Club. Access to site would be from the Yates Well Road Interchange on I-15 and Colosseum Road which passes through the proposed project site.

The applicant proposes to develop the ISEGS project as three power plants in three separate phases, anticipating that it would start with Ivanpah 1 and the Construction Logistics Area, and end with Ivanpah 3. At full build out, the project would have an electrical generation capacity of 400 megawatts. All three of the proposed solar electric plants (Ivanpah 1, 2 and 3) would be developed on contiguous BLM property, share an administration building, an operation and maintenance building, and a substation. The proposed project would also require on-site and off-site infrastructure improvements such as a natural gas pipeline and metering stations, two new ground water wells, telecommunications lines and road improvements, among others.

The ISEGS project would be interconnected to the Southern California Edison (SCE) transmission grid by three new 115 kilovolt transmission generation tie lines and a new Ivanpah substation. It is anticipated that SCE will upgrade its transmission lines to 220 kV from the proposed new Ivanpah substation, easterly, to the existing Eldorado substation in Nevada.

Energy Commission Licensing Authority

The Energy Commission is responsible for reviewing and ultimately approving or denying all applications for construction and operation of thermal electric power plants, 50 MW and greater, proposed for construction in California. The Energy Commission's facility certification process carefully examines 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), and produces several environmental and decision documents rather than an Environmental Impact Report.

Summary of the Energy Commission Staff's Conclusions and BLM's Analysis

The ISEGS facility would help meet California's goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and producing 33 percent of its electricity from renewable resources by 2020. The project would achieve maximum water conservation, using an air-cooled condenser that reduces water use to less than a tenth of the water that would be consumed with an evaporative cooling system as is associated with some other power plants. In addition, project air emissions would be minimal as associated primarily with the auxiliary boilers that would augment solar energy and result in less than 5% of the total power production. The auxiliary boilers would be used in the early morning and late afternoon when the sun's position on the horizon would be less favorable for producing solar electric energy.

While acknowledging the benefit of developing renewable energy to curb climate change and achieve state/federal goals, the FSA/DEIS states that the proposed project would result in significant and unavoidable environmental effects. The project would

have direct impacts on biological and visual resources, and cumulative impacts on biological resources, land use, traffic and transportation and visual resources; however, mitigation measures have been identified to avoid or lessen project impacts to the extent possible.

The project proposed by BrightSource Energy, at a site situated in the Ivanpah Valley in proximity to Interstate 15 and various types of commercial development, would develop approximately 4,073 acres of occupied desert tortoise habitat. A minimum of 25 desert tortoises, a state and federal-listed endangered species, would need to be relocated. Loss of habitat would be compensated by acquiring, improving conditions for, and preserving other existing habitat to increase the carrying capacity for desert tortoise to offset the loss. The project site also supports a diverse flora including numerous special-status plant species. While recommended mitigation measures would help avoid and minimize impacts to special-status plants, not all effects would be fully mitigated.

Impacts of the ISEGS project combined with the potential impacts of reasonably foreseeable projects in the Ivanpah Valley and southern California Mojave desert would result in significant and unavoidable cumulative impacts related to land used currently for multiple purposes such as recreation, wildlife habitat, livestock grazing, and open space. The project also would not conform to some of the applicable goals and policies of the San Bernardino General Plan Conservation and Open Space Elements of their General Plan calling for preservation of scenic vistas and for maintaining and enhancing the visual character of scenic routes along Interstate 15.

The proposed project would result in a substantial impact that could not be mitigated as it would be altering existing scenic resource values as seen from several vantage points in the Ivanpah Valley and Clark Mountains, and from a cumulative perspective within the southern California Mojave Desert. Vehicle trips by construction and operations personnel would also exacerbate traffic congestion on Interstate 15 on Friday afternoons and evenings; the direct impacts would be reduced by various measures such as ride sharing.

Mitigation measures have been proposed to address the potential glare from the project's heliostats to be used to reflect the sun's energy using mirrors tracking the sun, and the solar power tower receiver to collect the solar energy at the top portion of each 459-foot tower.

Public Resources, Contact Information and Additional Sources for Information

Technical or project schedule questions should be directed to John Kessler, Energy Commission Project Manager, at (916) 654-4679 or jkessler@energy.state.ca.us. Also, for those persons with limited English knowledge, please request interpreter services by contacting John Kessler.

If you desire information on how to participate in the Energy Commission's review of the proposed project, please contact the Energy Commission's Public Adviser, at (916) 654-4489 or toll free in California at (800) 822-6228, or publicadviser@energy.state.ca.us.

If you need reasonable accommodation in terms of assistance, please contact Lourdes Quiroz of the Administrative Services Division at (916) 654-5146 or lquiroz@energy.state.ca.us.

November 4, 2009

Page 4

The status of the project, an electronic copy of the Application for Certification, the FSA/DEIS, copies of notices, and other relevant documents are also available on the Energy Commission's web site at

<http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/ivanpah/index.html>.

News media inquiries for the Energy Commission should be directed to Susanne Garfield, Assistant Director, at (916) 654-4989 or mediaoffice@energy.state.ca.us.

The FSA/DEIS will be available for review at the following local libraries:

San Bernardino County Library District

Library Administration

104 W. 4th Street

San Bernardino, CA 92415

Barstow Branch Library

304 E. Buena Vista Street

Barstow, CA 92311

Copies will also be available at the Energy Commission's Library in Sacramento, the California State Library in Sacramento, and at California public libraries in Eureka, Fresno, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Copies will also be available at two of BLM's offices including the public room at the BLM California State Office in Sacramento and the BLM Needles Field Office in Needles, CA. In addition, copies will be distributed to those public agencies that would normally have jurisdiction except for the Energy Commission's exclusive authority to certify sites and related facilities.

If you would like a paper copy or CD of the FSA/DEIS, please fill out the enclosed form and return it to California Energy Commission, Attention: Maria Santourdjian, Siting Project Assistant, at (916) 651-9410, or by e-mail at msergoyan@energy.state.ca.us.

Sincerely,

Date: _____

EILEEN ALLEN, Office Manager
Siting, Transmission and Environmental
Protection Division

Enclosure

Mailed to list:
7255 - General
7256 - Property Owners