

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

1516 NINTH STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5112**DOCKET****09-AFC-10**DATE 11/04/10RECD. 11/04/10

November 4, 2010

TO: AGENCY DISTRIBUTION LIST

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF THE STAFF ASSESSMENT / DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE RICE SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT, APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION (09-AFC-10)

The California Energy Commission staff (staff), the Department of Energy (DOE), which includes the Western Area Power Administration (Western) and the Loan Guarantee Program (LGP), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have prepared a Staff Assessment/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SA/DEIS), which is a joint environmental analysis document for the proposed Rice Solar Energy Project (RSEP) in Riverside County, California. This notice serves as a reminder to the Notice of Availability posted on the Energy Commission's website on October 12, 2010 that the Energy Commission's 30-day comment period began October 12, 2010 and will conclude November 11, 2010. Western has noticed a 90-day comment period separately as associated with its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, and Western will subsequently prepare a Final EIS. Western, on behalf of DOE, and the Energy Commission are joint lead agencies for purposes of satisfying the requirements of NEPA and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), with the BLM acting as a cooperating agency. The Draft SA/DEIS is available on the internet at: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/ricesolar/index.html>.

The SA/DEIS contains the staff's, Western's and BLM's engineering, public health, and environmental evaluation of the proposed RSEP. The SA/DEIS served as staff's testimony during the evidentiary hearings conducted by the Energy Commission on October 29, 2010.

Western issued its Notice of Availability in the Federal Register on October 27, 2010 which initiated the federal 90-day public comment period on the SA/DEIS under NEPA.

The Energy Commission Committee assigned to the RSEP proceedings will consider and weigh the testimony, comments, and 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). After a 30-day comment period, the revised PMPD will be issued for consideration by the full Energy Commission. The public, intervenors, local, state and federal agencies were encouraged to participate in these hearings. The Energy Commission issues notices at least ten days prior to any scheduled hearings.

The California Energy Commission encourages agency participation in the review of staff's SA/DEIS. Written comments on the SA/DEIS should be provided to John Kessler, Project Manager, no later than 5:00 p.m., November 11, 2010 at the address on this letterhead (please add "Mail Stop 15") or by email to jkessler@energy.state.ca.us.

PROOF OF SERVICE (REVISED 8/5/10) FILED WITH
ORIGINAL MAILED FROM SACRAMENTO ON 11/4/10

MS

Technical or project schedule questions should also be directed to John Kessler at (916) 654-4679 or by email.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed RSEP project is a solar electric generating facility to be located on approximately 1,410 acres in eastern Riverside County, California, immediately south of State Route (SR) 62, about 1 mile east of the junction with Blythe-Midland Road. RSEP would be a 150-megawatt (MW) concentrating solar thermal power project with a central receiver tower, sun-tracking heliostat field and an integral thermal storage system using molten salt as the heat transfer and storage medium. When electricity is to be produced, the heated salt would be routed to a steam generation system, which supplies steam for use in a high-efficiency reheat steam turbine-generator. With thermal storage, RSEP would produce power according to periods of peak demands including hours when there is no collection of energy from the sun.

ENERGY COMMISSION'S, WESTERN'S, AND BLM'S JOINT ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The Energy Commission, Western and BLM have prepared a joint environmental analysis of the proposed project to avoid duplication of staff efforts, to share staff expertise and information, to promote intergovernmental coordination at the state and federal levels, and to facilitate public review. When considering a thermal-electric energy project of 50 megawatts or greater for licensing, the Energy Commission is the lead state agency for evaluating environmental impacts of a proposed licensing action under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The SA, the result of the Energy Commission staff's environmental evaluation process, is functionally equivalent to the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report.

Western, on behalf of the Department of Energy (DOE), is the lead federal agency evaluating environmental impacts of the proposed project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regarding the electrical interconnection to Western's transmission system. The proposed project's generation tie line is located partially on public lands managed by the BLM and would require a right-of-way grant and land use plan amendment to allow project use of those lands. For this reason, BLM is a cooperating agency in evaluating environmental impacts of the proposed project under NEPA, pursuant to an Memorandum of Understanding between Western and BLM, and an MOU between DOE's Loan Guarantee Program (LGP) and BLM. The DEIS is the BLM's environmental evaluation of the potential impacts that could result from the authorization of the requested right-of-way and similarly serves as Western's environmental evaluation of the potential impacts that could result from the proposed electrical transmission interconnection. The LGP is participating with Western in the preparation of this SA/DEIS as the project proponent has applied to this program.

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AGENCY PARTICIPATION

Please direct your technical or project schedule questions to John Kessler, Project Manager, at (916) 654-4679, or by e-mail at jkessler@energy.state.ca.us.

The status of the proposed project, copies of notices, an electronic version of the SA/DEIS, Application for Certification, and other relevant documents are available at the web site: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/ricesolar/index.html>. You can also subscribe to receive e-mail notification of all notices and announcements at: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/listservers>. By being on this email list, you will receive all project-related notices and documents pertaining to the project's evaluation and review. If you have any questions related to the automatic email notification list, please contact Maria Santourdjian, Project Assistant, at (916) 651-9410, or by email at: msergoya@energy.state.ca.us

Sincerely,

Roger Johnson, Office Manager
Energy Facilities Siting Office

Enclosure: CD containing the **Staff Assessment/Draft Environmental Impact Statement** for the Rice Solar Energy Project (09-AFC-10)



BEFORE THE ENERGY RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
1516 NINTH STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
1-800-822-6228 – WWW.ENERGY.CA.GOV

**APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION
FOR THE *RICE SOLAR ENERGY POWER
PLANT PROJECT***

Docket No. 09-AFC-10

PROOF OF SERVICE
(Revised 8/5/2010)

APPLICANT

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DECLARATION OF SERVICE

I, Maria Santourdjian, declare that on November 4, 2010, I served and filed copies of the attached Agency Letter for the SA/DEIS dated November 4, 2010. The original document, filed with the Docket Unit, is accompanied by a copy of the most recent Proof of Service list, located on the web page for this project at: [\[http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/ricesolar\]](http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/ricesolar).

The documents have been sent to both the other parties in this proceeding (as shown on the Proof of Service list) and to the Commission's Docket Unit, in the following manner:

(Check all that Apply)

FOR SERVICE TO ALL OTHER PARTIES:

- sent electronically to all email addresses on the Proof of Service list;
- by personal delivery;
- by delivering on this date, for mailing with the United States Postal Service with first-class postage thereon fully prepaid, to the name and address of the person served, for mailing that same day in the ordinary course of business; that the envelope was sealed and placed for collection and mailing on that date to those addresses NOT marked "email preferred."

AND

FOR FILING WITH THE ENERGY COMMISSION:

- one electronic copy, mailed and emailed respectively, to the address below (***preferred method***);

OR

- depositing in the mail an original and 12 paper copies, as follows:

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

Attn: Docket No. 09-AFC-10
1516 Ninth Street, MS-4
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512
docket@energy.state.ca.us

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct, that I am employed in the county where this mailing occurred, and that I am over the age of 18 years and not a party to the proceeding.

Originally Signed by
Maria Santourdjian