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

**DOCKET**
**11-AFC-4**
DATE FEB 22 2012
RECD. MAR 06 2012

February 22, 2012

Morongo Band of Mission Indians
Michael Contreras, Cultural Heritage Program
12700 Pumarra Road
Banning, CA 92220

RE: PROPOSED NEW POWER PLANT IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY
RIO MESA SOLAR ELECTRIC GENERATING FACILITY

Dear Mr. Contreras,

Your name was provided to the California Energy Commission (Energy Commission) by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), per the NAHC issued letter dated January 25, 2012, as a representative of a Native American community who might be interested in the proposed construction and operation of a power plant in Riverside County near the city of Blythe (see attached vicinity and composite maps).

The Energy Commission has jurisdiction over the proposed project and has received an application for a permit to build and operate the power plant. The Rio Mesa Solar Electric Generating Facility (SEGF) is being proposed for development by Rio Mesa Solar I, LLC, Rio Mesa Solar II, LLC, and Rio Mesa III, LLC, all subsidiaries of BrightSource Energy, Inc., a Delaware corporation. The Energy Commission will be analyzing this project jointly with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which also has permitting authority over the proposed project.

The proposed Rio Mesa SEGF (Project) would include three solar fields and a common area with shared facilities encompassing a total of approximately 5,750 acres and would be situated on the Palo Verde Mesa in Riverside County, 13 miles southwest of Blythe. The southern solar field (Rio Mesa I) would be located on approximately 1,800 acres of privately owned land and the middle solar field (Rio Mesa II) would be located on approximately 1,940 acres of mostly privately owned land, with a small portion located on Federal land administered by the BLM. The third solar field (Rio Mesa III), approximately 1,800 acres in size and located in the northern portion of the project site, is mostly on BLM land, with a small portion on private lands. Additional project area would be required for the 220 kilovolt generator transmission tie line that would link the project facilities to the newly permitted Southern California Edison (SCE) Colorado River Substation, located approximately five miles northwest of the project. A separate Right of Way grant must be approved by BLM for those portions of the project located on BLM land. Each solar plant would generate approximately 250 megawatts (MW), for a total net output of 750 MW and would use heliostats – elevated mirrors guided by a tracking system mounted on a pylon – to focus the sun's rays on a steam generator receiver located atop a 750-foot tall solar power tower near the center of each solar field. Each solar plant would utilize approximately 85,000 heliostats.

The shared facilities, located in the common area east of the plant sites, would include administration, control, maintenance, and warehouse buildings; a heliostat assembly building, evaporation ponds, groundwater wells, water treatment plant, construction laydown and parking areas, mobile equipment maintenance facilities, and a natural gas tap and meter station.

On February 1, 2012, the Energy Commission held an Informational Hearing in Blythe, California and conducted a site visit of the proposed project site. Over the coming months, the Energy Commission will be holding a number of public workshops and hearings on the proposal to determine whether the proposed project should be approved for construction and operation and under what set of conditions. These workshops and hearings will provide the public, and tribes, local, state and federal agencies the opportunity to ask questions about, and provide input on, the proposed project. The Energy Commission will issue notices for these workshops and hearings at least 10 days prior to the meeting.

To view a copy of the Application for Certification and find more information about the project and proceedings, please visit the project website: http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/riomesa/index.html. If you want to be notified by e-mail whenever a public meeting is scheduled or a document is posted to the project website, you can sign up for the project list server on the main web page. Should the tribe request, Energy Commission staff will arrange for a separate meeting to discuss issues that the tribe may wish to hold in confidence from the general public.

The Energy Commission staff welcomes your comments or questions. If you have concerns regarding cultural resources that could be affected by the proposed project, please contact Thomas Gates at (916) 654-5008; Fax: (916) 651-8868; or by e-mail: tgates@energy.ca.gov.

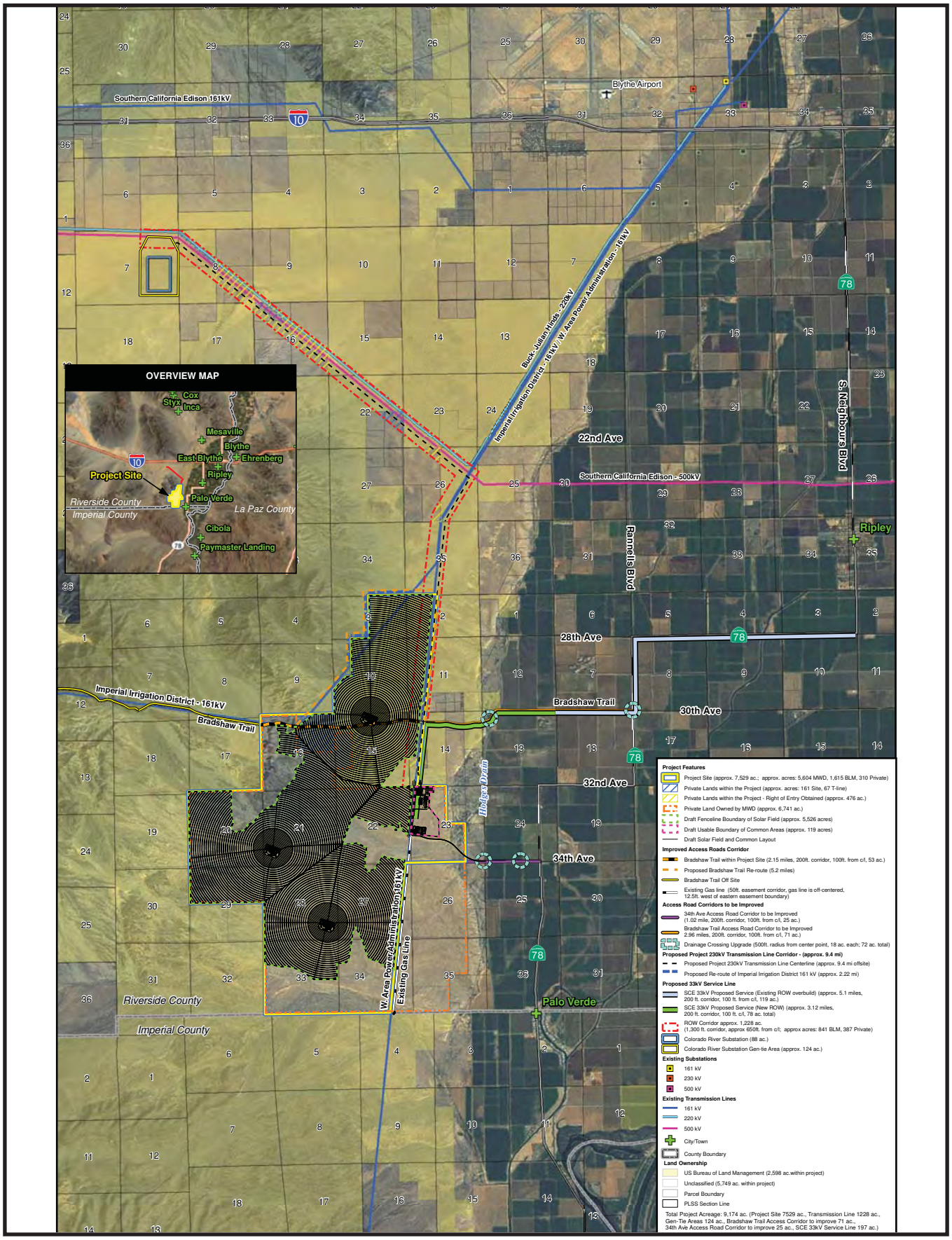
Sincerely,

Originally Signed by
Eric Knight, Manager
Environmental Protection Office

Enclosures: Project Vicinity Map
Project Composite Map

cc: Energy Commission Dockets
Thomas Gates, Cultural Resources
Pierre Martinez, Project Manager

Rio Mesa Solar Electric Generating Facility - Composite Map

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SOURCE: AFC, Executive Summary, Fig 1.2-1, URS

Rio Mesa Solar Electric Generating Facility - Regional and Vicinity Map

**CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION - SITING, TRANSMISSION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DIVISION**

SOURCE: AFC, Executive Summary, Fig 1.1-1, URS