

County of Santa Barbara Planning and Development

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May 5, 2008

RE: Partial Recirculation of Aesthetic/Visual Resources Section
Lompoc Wind Energy Project Draft EIR (SCH# 2006071008)

Dear Reader:

The draft EIR for this project was released in July 2007 and the public comment period closed in September 2007. We received a number of comments on potential visual impacts of the wind turbines, as seen from public viewing areas. Many of your comments expressed concern about visibility of the wind turbines from La Purisima Mission Historic State Park or impacts on views from public areas close to the project site.

Your comments were very helpful to staff in addressing visual impacts and preparing a more complete and adequate EIR. We have reassessed the visual impacts from the Mission. We also analyzed visual impacts from several new locations near the proposed project site. These analyses are incorporated in a revised draft of the Aesthetic/Visual Resources section of the EIR. The major revisions are as follows:

La Purisima Mission

From the Mission grounds, wind turbines would be visible on the hills approximately 7 miles to the south. Visual impacts were classified as Class III (adverse but not significant) in the July 2007 draft EIR. Since that time, the project Applicant has amended the project description to reduce the maximum number of turbines from 80 to 65 and reduce the maximum turbine height from 492 feet to 397 feet, which would reduce their visibility from the Mission. The reanalysis concluded that ten turbines would be visible in distant views from the Mission under some conditions, but impact severity would be low. Therefore, although view quality and viewer sensitivity are rated high, visual impacts do not rise a level of significance and remain classified as Class III.

San Miguelito Road

Four wind turbines would be highly visible along San Miguelito Road adjacent to the Miguelito County Park, and would be seen by park visitors as they approach the park. The visual impacts were determined to be Class I (significant, unavoidable).

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Miguelito County Park

One turbine would be visible from locations within the park, and the rotating blades would attract attention in an otherwise harmonious scene. Due to high view quality, viewer sensitivity, and impact severity, the visual impacts within the park were determined to be Class I.

Immediate Project Vicinity

The view in the immediate project vicinity, near the intersection of San Miguelito Road and Sudden Road, would be dominated by many wind turbines and other project facilities. The existing setting is rural and picturesque. The area is used for recreation and is visited for the ocean view at the southern end of Sudden Road. Visual impacts were determined to be Class I.

Because these new, significant visual impacts have come to light, we are recirculating the relevant portion of the draft EIR for public review and comment, as provided in CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5. The recirculated portion includes the complete, revised text of the Aesthetic/Visual section of the draft EIR including all new or revised figures, but omitting figures that were not revised. The revised text is indicated in strike-out/underline format. The draft EIR (July 17, 2007) and recirculated visual resources section are available from the County and other sources, as detailed in the accompanying Notice of Availability.

Important

We welcome your comments on the revised draft. Please refer to the Notice of Availability for information on comment submittal. Please limit your comments to environmental issues related to the visual resources section of the draft EIR. Comments on other EIR sections will not be considered. Please be aware that our response to comments on the visual resource section, to be included in the final EIR, will address only new comments on the revised draft visual impacts section.

Sincerely,



John Day
Planner