Response to Comment Letter O8

Newberry Springs Community Alliance
Ted Simpfel
March 3, 2014

O8-1 This comment is introductory in nature and does not raise an environmental issue for which a response is required.
The County of San Diego (County) concurs with this comment and addresses the specific comments on the Proposed Project below.

The comment concerns the commenter’s observations related to the Newberry Solar 1 solar farm, located in Newberry Springs, California, and does not raise an environmental issue for which a response is required.

The commenter is referred to the response to comment O8-3.

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Recent media coverage reports Soitec’s Mike Armstrong identified their Newberry Springs project as a “test site”. It was never promoted nor identified as such that we are aware of.

Misrepresentations in Soitec’s CEQA Addendum to a Mitigated Negative Declaration for an existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP) (Solutions for Utilities, Inc.) to replace regular PV (6-7 feet high) with Soitec/Concentrix CPV trackers (27.5 feet high): (http://sbcounty.gov/Uploads/LAS/Desert/mitigatedNegativeDeclaration.pdf)

CUP statements of “minimal grading”, “no glare”, and “minimal visual impacts” have proven untrue.

Soitec’s on-site well had insufficient capacity for the amount of water required for dust control during construction and off-site water had to be trucked in.

Soitec announced the site was complete in July 2013; however, visible ongoing problems with a number of trackers continue to this date.
6. The Newberry Springs CUP at page 2 states that the site will be unmanned and that maintenance and repair crews will be dispatched as needed; which is now happening almost daily, including holidays, demonstrating that the equipment appears flawed.

7. Employees have stated that they were having problems with dust infiltration into the inverters and gears and recently built metal shelters around the inverter stations.

8. Blinding glare from the trackers have been reported from Interstate-40 and distracting glare from other locations.

9. Soltec failed to provide contact information for emergency first responders and for public complaints, such as for glare, at its Newberry Springs facility.

10. Ongoing complaints from adjacent neighbors of increased blowing sand onto their properties, and Mountain View Road.

11. Increased sand sweeping by County road crews since the site was clear graded for Soltec’s project.

12. Apparent non-compliance with CUP:
   - The CUP stated 3 different size CPV units would be used ranging from 6-22 kW and 21-27.5 feet tall, with shorter units to be installed closest to Mountain View Road neighbors (CUP page 3 Table 1).
   - According to Soltec’s own July 2013 press release, the Newberry Springs trackers are their newest fifth generation 26xW CX-5530 systems, manufactured in their San Diego facility:
   - Failure to control blown sand.
   - Road improvements, including widening pavement to 26 feet, do not seem to have been completed.
   - Torobe fencing has not been maintained, with evident gaps under the chain line.

These reports from KABC News and the Newberry Springs Community Alliance reflect the community’s feeling of being duped by Soltec:

We strongly recommend a site visit to Newberry Springs, without advance notice to Soltec, so you can see what we see every day—an obviously visually intrusive, high-maintenance project, with questionable reliability, that is definitely not ready for utility scale development. Please contact us with any questions at (760) 475-6340 or newberrysprings@hotmail.com.

Cordially,
/Ted Stimpfel/
Ted Stimpfel, government liaison
Newberry Springs Community Alliance

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O8-8 The commenter is referred to the response to comment O8-3.

O8-9 The commenter is referred to the response to comment O8-3.

O8-10 The commenter is referred to the response to comment O8-3.

O8-11 The commenter is referred to the response to comment O8-3.

O8-12 The commenter is referred to the response to comment O8-3.

O8-13 The commenter is referred to the response to comment O8-3.

O8-14 The commenter is referred to the response to comment O8-3.

O8-15 The commenter is referred to the response to comment O8-3. The County further notes that County staff visited the Newberry Springs 1 solar farm on March 14, 2014, as requested by the commenter.