



**AGENDA REQUEST FORM**  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF INYO

For Clerk's Use Only:  
AGENDA NUMBER

- Consent     Departmental     Correspondence Action     Public Hearing  
 Scheduled Time for     Closed Session     Informational

**FROM:** County Administrator/Planning Department/County Counsel

**FOR THE BOARD MEETING OF:** October 1, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Preliminary Assessment of Draft Environmental Impact Report for the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's Proposed Southern Owens Valley Solar Ranch Project

**DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:** Receive a presentation regarding staff's preliminary assessment of the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the proposed Southern Owens Valley Solar Ranch project and provide direction.

**SUMMARY DISCUSSION:** Approximately three years ago, in October 2010, the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a proposed "Southern Owens Valley Solar Ranch" in the vicinity of Lone Pine. Two potential locations for the project were identified: (1) one south of Lone Pine adjacent to the north shore of Owens Lake and (2) the other east of Lone Pine on the east bank of the Owens River north of the Narrow Gage Road. The County provided input in response to the NOP on November 12, 2010<sup>1</sup>.

After the County provided its input, County and DWP staff worked to address areas of concern, but progress on the EIR slowed. DWP subsequently informed County staff that an alternate site was being considered further north towards Independence, north of Manzanar-Reward Road and east of the Owens River. Earlier this year, the County and DWP staff reengaged to develop a Term Sheet for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to address relevant issues, which was approved by the Board on August 8, 2013. The Term Sheet is not an MOU and by approval of the Term Sheet, the Board did not commit the County to enter into an MOU. In developing the Term Sheet, staff estimated direct County costs due to the project at approximately \$6.3 million. County staff is working with DWP to develop the MOU based on the Term Sheet. Once completed, the MOU will be submitted to the Board for consideration.

***Summary Project Description***

DWP released a Draft EIR earlier in September to evaluate the project. The proposal involves development of a 200 megawatt (MW) solar energy facility using photovoltaic (PV) panel modules on approximately 1,200 acres of City of Los Angeles land in the southern Owens Valley, approximately six miles southeast of Independence, ten miles north of Lone Pine, and 1.5 miles east of the Owens River. Primary elements include the solar panel arrays, supporting electrical equipment, on-site electrical collection cabling, an on-site electrical substation, improvement of a portion of Manzanar Reward Road, on-site roadways, and a maintenance building. The substation would connect with DWP's adjacent Inyo-Rinaldi 230 kilovolt alternating current transmission line.

<sup>1</sup> Refer to <http://inyoplanning.org/projects.htm> for information regarding the project, including the County's previous correspondence and the Term Sheet, and a link to the Draft EIR.

### ***Draft EIR***

The Draft EIR indicates that the overall purpose of the project is to provide 200 MW of electrical power generated through a solar PV installation to help meet broader goals related to increasing the use of sustainable renewable energy resources and decreasing greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions. The following issue areas are evaluated: Aesthetics/Visual Resources; Hydrology and Water Quality; Agricultural and Forestry Resources; Land Use; Air Quality; Noise; Biological Resources; Population and Housing; Cultural and Paleontological Resources; Public Services; Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources; Recreation; Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Traffic and Transportation; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; and, Utilities and Service Systems. According to the Draft EIR, best management practices and/or mitigation measures are identified to preclude potentially significant impacts. No unavoidable significant project-specific or cumulative or growth-inducing impacts are identified.

The Draft EIR evaluates the following alternatives:

- Alternative 1: Energy Conservation
- Alternative 2: Additional Local Distributed Solar Generation
- Alternative 3: Alternative Location Outside the Owens Valley
- Alternative 4: Alternative Area of the Owens Valley
- Alternative 5: Alternative Location East of the Lower Owens River
- Alternative 6: Reconfiguration of the Proposed Project Facilities
- Alternative 7: Concentrating Solar Technology
- Alternative 8: No Project

Of these, Alternative Nos. 1 and 2 are considered infeasible, and Alternative Nos. 3 may not be achievable due to limited property availability elsewhere. The proposed project is identified as the environmentally superior alternative.

### ***Preliminary Staff Analysis***

Staff is evaluating the Draft EIR and working to refine its earlier costs estimates, and will provide a preliminary analysis under separate cover. Staff plans to incorporate feedback from the Board into comments on the Draft EIR and submit the draft comments to the Board for consideration at a later date. According to the Notice of Availability, the review period for the Draft EIR is scheduled to close on October 18, 2013. DWP staff has indicated that the review period will be extended to November 2, 2013.

**ALTERNATIVES:** The Board may consider directing staff to not proceed with preparing draft comments regarding the Draft EIR and/or ceasing work on the MOU. These alternatives are not recommended as the project has the potential to impact the County, and the MOU provides an opportunity to address financial impacts to the County.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:** The County Administrator and Planning Director, in coordination with County Counsel, are overseeing the overall County response to the project and coordinating with DWP. All County departments are participating in the identification and documentation of potential impacts to the County. Other agencies, organizations, and persons will also be participating in the environmental review process, such as Caltrans, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, local tribes, other local agencies, etc.

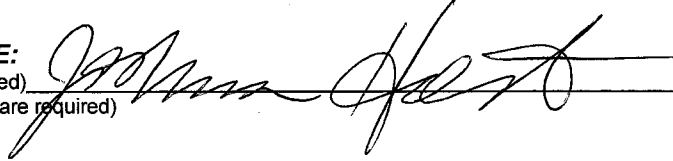
**FINANCING:** General funds are utilized to support staff's efforts in monitoring DWP's activities. Funding for portions of the socioeconomic work has been from the Natural Resource Development budget (010204).

County costs anticipated due to construction and operation of the project are expected to be addressed in the MOU as outlined in the Term Sheet.

<b>APPROVALS</b>	
COUNTY COUNSEL:	AGREEMENTS, CONTRACTS AND ORDINANCES AND CLOSED SESSION AND RELATED ITEMS <i>(Must be reviewed and approved by county counsel prior to submission to the board clerk.)</i>  Approved: _____ Date _____
AUDITOR/CONTROLLER:	ACCOUNTING/FINANCE AND RELATED ITEMS <i>(Must be reviewed and approved by the auditor-controller prior to submission to the board clerk.)</i>  Approved: _____ Date _____
PERSONNEL DIRECTOR:	PERSONNEL AND RELATED ITEMS <i>(Must be reviewed and approved by the director of personnel services prior to submission to the board clerk.)</i>  Approved: _____ Date _____

**DEPARTMENT HEAD SIGNATURE:**

(Not to be signed until all approvals are received)  
(The Original plus 20 copies of this document are required)



Date: 9/25/13