



ALAMEDA COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

March 6, 2013

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Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for Modifications to Existing (Year 2005) Conditional Use Permits – Altamont Winds Inc. (AWI)

Planning Case PLN2011-00102

SUMMARY:

Notice is hereby given by the County of Alameda, Community Development Agency, Planning Department, as the lead agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), that the above-named Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) is available for public review and comment. Comments on the DEIR will be received for a 45-day period, between March 6, 2013 and April 19, 2013, after which a Final EIR will be prepared containing comments and responses to comments, that together with the DEIR form the Final EIR. The Final EIR will be used by the East County Board of Zoning Adjustments in its consideration of approval of the proposed CUP modifications, described below.

PROJECT LOCATION:

Within the approximately 14,436-acre Alameda County portion of the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area (APWRA), in the eastern portion of Alameda County, bisected by Interstate I-580. The subject Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) apply to 828 existing wind turbines and supporting infrastructure owned by Altamont Winds, Inc. (AWI, Applicant), and which have a total footprint of approximately 233 acres distributed across the Alameda County portion of the APWRA. The AWI facilities are intermixed with other wind turbines and facilities not owned by AWI, as well as with ongoing ranching and other land uses.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

AWI has applied to Alameda County to modify its CUPs, specifically related to operational and decommissioning schedules for its 828 existing wind turbines, which have a nameplate generating capacity of 85.8 MW. The AWI application requests elimination of the existing CUP requirements approved in September 2005 that it remove a predetermined percentage of its turbines on a specified, phased schedule, and that it participate in annual wintertime seasonal shutdowns from the 1st of November to February 15th. The first phase of decommissioning took place in 2009, at which time AWI was required to remove 10% of its 920 turbines. The existing CUPs require AWI to permanently remove an additional 25% of the original 920 turbines by September 30, 2013 (for a cumulative total of 35%), an additional 50% of the original turbines by September 30, 2015 (for a cumulative total of 85%), and the remaining 15% of turbines by September 30, 2018.

The proposed Project would provide for continued operation of all 828 existing turbines on the site through December 2015, removal of the winter seasonal shutdown requirement, and subsequent decommissioning of the existing turbines and AWI's share of related APWRA infrastructure. Decommissioning consists of removing turbines and associated facilities, and reclamation of their sites, and would commence in 2016 and be completed by 2017. Otherwise, the proposed Project involves no physical changes to existing turbines or related infrastructure prior to decommissioning activities, but only changes to the months or times of operation and the decommissioning schedule. AWI also requested that the EIR evaluate an alternative to the Project in which all 828 turbines would operate through September of 2018, with decommissioning activities taking place primarily in 2019.

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The existing CUPs also required that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) be prepared to evaluate the environmental impacts of a repowering program (the replacement of older turbines with substantially fewer but larger turbines with the same overall output) and to also evaluate continued operation of existing turbine facilities and their progressive removal or phased decommissioning; the subject Draft EIR is intended to comply with the latter requirement, but does not address repowering of the AWI turbines, because AWI does not currently have a repowering proposal. At the time that AWI proposes repowering, a separate project EIR will be required. A separate, combined program-project EIR is being prepared on behalf of a consortium of wind farm operators, including AWI, to address overall repowering of the Alameda County portion of the APWRA on a program level, and some specific repowering projects that have been proposed.

The Project objective is additional operation of the AWI turbines for greater efficiency (year-round vs. partial-year operation), increased renewable energy output to help meet the state's goals for renewable energy (33% from renewable energy sources by 2020), reduced emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that result from conventional energy production, and sustainable company revenue.

ANTICIPATED SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:

The DEIR's analysis of Project impacts identifies the following significant impacts on noise and biological resources that would be less than significant after mitigation is implemented:

- Impact BIO-1: Potential to cause a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on non-avian special-status species.
- Impact BIO-2: Potential substantial adverse effects on riparian habitat and other sensitive natural communities.
- Impact BIO-3: Potential substantial adverse effects on state or federally protected wetlands through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.
- Impact NOISE-1: Exposure of residences to increased wind turbine noise.
- Impact NOISE-2: Exposure of residences to noise during decommissioning activities.

The following environmental impacts on biological resources were determined to be significant and unavoidable.

- Impact BIO-1: Potential to cause a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on special-status avian species.

PUBLIC REVIEW:

One of the purpose of CEQA itself is in large part to inform the public of the likely environmental consequences of public and private projects such as the proposed modifications to the CUPs. The purpose of this Notice, consistent with Sections 15086 and 15087 of the CEQA Guidelines, is to consult with and request comments on the DEIR from responsible agencies, organizations, Native American tribes, and interested parties as to its environmental analyses.

The DEIR is available for review during normal business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), Monday through Friday, at the Alameda County Community Development Agency, Planning Department, at 224 West Winton Avenue, Room 111, Hayward, California, 94544. It is also available Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Planning Department offices at the Martinelli Center, 3585 Greenville Road, Livermore, CA 94550, or by appointment (phone 925.960.9486), and at the Livermore Public Library, Civic Center Branch, 1188 South Livermore Ave, Livermore, CA 94550-9315, 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday to Thursday; 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Friday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday and 10:00 a.m. to

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5:00 p.m., Sunday. The DEIR may also be viewed or downloaded at the Alameda County website: (<http://www.acgov.org/cda/planning/landuseprojects/awipermit.htm>, or select Pending Land Use Projects – Current Development Projects – Wind Turbine Projects at <http://www.acgov.org/cda/planning>. Comments on the DEIR may be submitted to:

Sandra Rivera, Assistant Planning Director
ATTN: AWI Permit Modification EIR
Alameda County Community Development Agency
224 W. Winton Avenue, Suite 110
Hayward, CA 94544

Please include a return address and contact name with your written comments. Comments can also be sent via email with subject line “AWI Permit Modification EIR” to: sandra.rivera@acgov.org.

Although CEQA does not require formal hearings at any stage of the environmental review process (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15202[a]), it does encourage “wide public involvement, formal and informal...in order to receive and evaluate public reactions to environmental issues” (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15201) and requires the lead agency to provide the public with the opportunity to provide comments. The County, as lead agency, circulated an NOP of a DEIR (SCH # 2012062060) for the proposed project on May 31, 2012. The NOP was distributed for a 30-day comment period that was extended to July 2, 2012. In addition, the County held a public scoping meeting on June 21, 2012, to solicit input on the scope and focus of the EIR. Comments received on the NOP and during the public scoping meeting were considered in the preparation of the EIR. Appendix A of the DEIR contains the NOP, written comments received on the NOP, and a transcript of the public scoping meeting.

The DEIR incorporates public and agency responses to the NOP. Like the NOP, the DEIR is being circulated for review and comment by appropriate agencies, as well as organizations and individuals who have requested notification. In accordance with Section 15205(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, the County has scheduled a 45-day public review period for the DEIR, ending on April 19, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. Within that 45-day period, the County will hold one public hearing to request comments on the DEIR, at the following time and place:

Thursday, March 28, 2013, 1:30 p.m.
Meeting of the East County Board of Zoning Adjustments
City of Pleasanton Council Chambers,
200 Old Bernal Avenue, Pleasanton

The meeting facilities will be accessible to persons with disabilities. If special translation or signing services or other special accommodations are needed, please contact Maria Palmeri at 510-670-5400 or maria.palmeri@acgov.org at least 48 hours before the meeting.

Following the close of the public review period for the DEIR, the County will prepare a Final EIR, incorporating all comments received during the public comment period, for consideration by the East County Board of Zoning Adjustments (EBZA) tentatively scheduled for Thursday, June 27, 2013. As required by CEQA (Section 21092.5), the Final EIR, including written responses to the comments submitted by public agencies, will be available at least 10 days prior to certification.