



ALAMEDA COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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March 7, 2013

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FROM: Sandra Rivera
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SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report for a
Repowering Conditional Use Permit – Sand Hill Wind Project

SUMMARY:

The County of Alameda (County) is issuing this NOP to inform agencies and interested parties that the County will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for proposed repowering activities in the Alameda County portion of the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area (APWRA). Repowering refers to the removal of older existing wind turbines and replacement with new, more efficient wind turbines. FloDesign Wind Turbine Corp. (FloDesign; the Applicant) has applied for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the removal of 70–80 existing wind turbines equivalent to 4 megawatts (MW) and the installation of 40 new generation turbines with a combined generating capacity of 4 MWs to assess the functionality of the new turbine design and the extent to which it could reduce impacts on birds and bats compared to the existing turbines.

FloDesign intends to use results from an associated avian study and turbine performance data generated by the initial 4 MW repowering effort to inform its approach to repowering the remainder of the approximately 400 existing turbines in future phases. Subsequent repowering phases (which are not the subject of the current CUP application but will be programmatically assessed by this CEQA review) would include the subsequent repower of up to 32 MW of capacity. The combined repowering activities could therefore generate up to 36 MW of combined generation capacity if additional CUPs are approved subsequent to the initial 4 MW repowering CUP currently under consideration.

The County will serve as the Lead Agency for the EIR, which will address both the project-specific effects of the 4 MW initial repowering action and the program-level consideration of subsequent repowering actions. The EIR will be prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and in accordance with relevant federal, state, and local regulations. An Initial Study has been prepared to identify on a preliminary basis the likely significant impacts of the project, and is available upon request and on the County's website: <http://www.acgov.org/cda/planning/landuseprojects/currentprojects.htm>

The County is soliciting the views of agencies, organizations, Native American tribes, and interested parties as to the scope and content of the environmental resources and topics to be studied in the EIR and to advise the public that outreach activities conducted by the County and their representatives will be considered in the preparation of the EIR. In accordance with CEQA, agencies are requested to review the project description provided in this NOP and provide comments on environmental issues related to their statutory responsibilities. The EIR

will be used by the East County Board of Zoning Adjustments in its consideration of approval of the proposed CUP

CEQA sets the review and comment period for an NOP to end 30 days after receipt of the notice. The County therefore requests comments on this NOP be received no later than the close of business on Friday, April 6, 2013. Written comments on the Sand Hill Wind Project EIR scope, including the alternatives to be considered, the impacts to be evaluated, and the methodologies to be used in the evaluations, should be sent to:

Sandra Rivera, Assistant Planning Director
ATTN: Sand Hill Wind Project EIR
Alameda County Community Development Agency
224 W. Winton Avenue, Suite 110
Hayward, CA 94544

Comments can also be sent by email with subject line "Sand Hill Wind Project EIR" to: sandra.rivera@acgov.org. Please include a return address and contact name with your written comments.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

A public scoping meeting will be held at the time and location shown below, in order to inform interested parties about the proposed scope of the analysis in the EIR and to solicit comments on the proposed scope of the EIR. Comments may be provided orally or in writing at the scoping meeting.

Wednesday, March 13, 2013
4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Alameda County Public Works Agency
Operations Building
4825 Gleason Drive
Dublin, CA 94568

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 scoping meeting. Scoping materials will also be made available through the County's Internet site: <http://www.acgov.org/cda/planning/landuseprojects/currentprojects.htm>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Sandra Rivera, Assistant Planning Director, ATTN: Sand Hill Wind Project EIR, Alameda County Community Development Agency, 224 W. Winton Avenue, Suite 110, Hayward, CA, 94544, or at 510-670-5400.

Project Location

The 1,058.2-acre project area is currently in use as an existing wind farm operation and as cattle grazing land in a rural area of unincorporated eastern Alameda County, near the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley. The project sites (Figure 1) are located within the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area (APWRA) on Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APN) 099B-7750-006-00, 099B-6325-001-03, 099B-7375-001-07, 099B-7875-001-02, 099B-7875-001-03, 099B-7500-003-01, and 099B-7600-001-01.

The area's topography is generally characterized by grass-covered, rounded hills and smooth contours, with occasional steep slopes and ridges. Like the project area, much of the region currently serves as

cattle grazing land, and existing wind turbines and associated facilities are highly visible both within and from viewpoints surrounding the project areas. Scattered rural residences and businesses dot the surrounding landscape.

Proposed Project

FloDesign intends to implement a repowering program that will entail the removal of all existing turbines on multiple parcels in the APWRA. FloDesign would replace the older turbines with a new technology turbine known as a mixer-ejector wind turbine (MEWT). FloDesign seeks to accomplish the repowering in two or more phases through 2016.

The first phase of the program would involve the removal of 70–80 existing turbines and installation of 40 MEWTs of equal total capacity to assess the functionality of the new MEWT design and determine the extent to which it reduces impacts on birds and bats compared to the existing turbines. The assessment would consist of an avian validation study funded by a Public Interest Energy Research (PIER) Grant from the California Energy Commission and currently underway.

FloDesign intends to use the avian study results and turbine performance data generated by the initial, 4 MW repowering effort to inform its approach to repowering the remainder of the existing wind installations for a potential combined total generating capacity of up to 36 MW.

The 40 MEWTs installed during the initial repowering phase would be installed throughout the existing facilities; the remainder of the existing turbines would be left in place for at least 1 year as controls for the avian study that would be conducted to test the MEWTs' efficacy in reducing avian and bat mortality rates.

Because of the proposed project's co-location with and replacement of existing turbines, no new access roads, substation facilities, interconnection lines, or operations and maintenance facilities would be necessary. However, some access roads may require widening. New pads would be constructed for the MEWTs, as well as new connections to the existing power collection system and temporary lay-down areas.

Each MEWT would be a maximum of 190 feet tall, with a maximum hub height of 120 feet. The shrouded turbine would have a maximum diameter of 70 feet. Each tower's foundation would require an excavation approximately 56 feet in diameter to a depth of 8 feet. The permanent disturbance area of each turbine would be approximately 64 feet in diameter (approximately 3,215 square feet).

To reduce disturbance at each turbine location, common assembly pads would be constructed. Depending on the number of turbines in close proximity, up to eight MEWTs may be constructed from each pad, for a total of up to five pads required. The pads would be level areas of approximately 200 feet in diameter with gravel cover to support the construction equipment and to reduce dust. The pads would be temporary and would be removed and restored on completion of construction. Each pad would therefore disturb approximately 0.72 acre, for a total disturbance area of 3.6 acres.

In addition to the pad area for each turbine, the initial repower phase would require four temporary laydown areas of 5 acres each to store turbine components, construction equipment, job trailers, and construction materials. These areas would be restored to pre-project (i.e., prior to repowering) conditions on completion of the construction.

In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines, the County is requiring an EIR to evaluate the environmental effects of the proposed initial repowering phase and subsequent repowering phases, and to propose mitigation measures to reduce any significant effects identified, before considering FloDesign's CUP application for the initial repowering phase.

Probable Environmental Effects

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15161, the Sand Hill Wind EIR will examine the environmental impacts of the requested CUP, which would involve the removal of existing wind generation facilities and their replacement with fewer turbines of a new design. The EIR will focus primarily on the physical changes in the environment that would likely result from the proposed repowering project, including direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts.

The EIR will discuss the potential for impacts on all resources required to be considered under CEQA. As discussed in greater detail in the attached Initial Study, certain resource areas would not be affected by the proposed project; consequently, those resource areas have been dismissed from further discussion in the EIR. On the basis of the project description and the County's understanding of the environmental issues associated with the project, the attached Initial Study identifies the following topics expected to be analyzed in greatest detail in the Draft EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forest Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

As indicated above, An Initial Study has been prepared to identify on a preliminary basis the likely significant impacts of the project, and is available upon request and on the County's website:

<http://www.acgov.org/cda/planning/landuseprojects/currentprojects.htm>