

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

45 FREMONT, SUITE 2000
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219
VOICE AND TDD (415) 904-5200
FAX (415) 904-5400

**W-10.a**

Energy and Ocean Resources Unit
Staff: JJJ, SMH—SF
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STATUS REPORT ON SONGS MITIGATION PROGRAM

Following is a brief status report for the mitigation projects required in Southern California Edison Company's (SCE) coastal development permit for the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) Units 2 and 3 (permit no. 6-81-330, formerly 183-73). The conditions originally were adopted by the Commission in 1991 to mitigate the adverse impacts of the power plant on the marine environment. In 1993, the Commission added a requirement for the permittee to partially fund construction of an experimental fish hatchery. The Commission has since approved amendments to the conditions in April 1997 and October 1998.

WETLAND RESTORATION MITIGATION**The Project**

Condition A of the permit requires the permittee to create or substantially restore a minimum of 150 acres of wetlands to mitigate for impacts to fishes caused by the operation of SONGS. In April 1997, the Commission reaffirmed its 1992 approval of the permittee's choice of the San Dieguito River Valley as the site for the wetland restoration project.

Progress Report

The wetland restoration mitigation project is undergoing a planning and environmental review process which incorporates the mitigation project into the overall San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park project, and which also includes additional wetland restoration required under the permittee's settlement agreement with the Earth Island Institute.

The CEQA/NEPA documentation is currently being prepared by the lead agencies, the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park Joint Powers Authority (JPA) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. An administrative draft EIR/S was circulated in June to the involved local, state and federal agencies. Review of the administrative draft found errors in the habitat maps and acreages. Correcting these errors involves detailed calculations to determine at what elevations specific coastal wetland habitat

types would occur and additional biological analyses. Thus, the release of the public draft EIR/EIS is now scheduled for August 27, 1999. The extra time is being taken now to ensure that an adequate and accurate evaluation of potential impacts is provided. All parties are working cooperatively to produce and review the information in a timely manner.

Following the release of the draft EIR/S there will be a 45-day comment period, ending October 12, 1999. A public meeting will be held on September 16, 1999, from 7 to 9 PM at the Solana Beach City Hall in the Council Chambers, located at 635 South Highway 101, Solana Beach, California.

Under this schedule the final EIR/S may be completed by the end of November. Following the 30-day review required under NEPA, the final EIR/S could be certified by the end of December 1999.

Once the draft EIR/S is released, the staff will work with SCE to determine the schedule for SCE's submittal of the final restoration plan and coastal development permit application.

KELP REEF MITIGATION

The Project

Condition C of the permit requires construction of an artificial reef that will consist of an experimental reef and a larger mitigation reef. The experimental reef must be a minimum of 16.8 acres and the mitigation reef must be of sufficient size to sustain 150 acres of medium to high density kelp bed community. The purpose of the experimental reef is to determine what combination of substrate type and substrate coverage will best achieve the performance standards specified in the permit. The design of the mitigation reef will be contingent on the results of the experimental reef.

In April 1997, the Commission added the requirement for a payment of \$3.6 million to the State's Ocean Resource Enhancement and Hatchery Program (OREHP) to fund a mariculture/marine fish hatchery to provide compensation for resources not replaced by the artificial mitigation reef. SCE has fully satisfied this requirement.

Progress Report

The State Lands Commission, lead agency for CEQA, released the final PEIR on May 24, 1999. The PEIR concludes that for the experimental reef phase the environmentally preferred project would be the proposed project because it involves less construction and less impacts initially than the other alternatives (other than the No Project alternative). The State Lands Commission certified the final PEIR and issued the offshore lease for the experimental reef on June 14, 1999.

The Commission approved the coastal development permit for the experimental reef (E-97-10) on July 15, 1999. SCE is working with State Lands Commission staff to meet

the provisions of the lease agreement regarding air quality impacts. All operations will be out of Los Angeles, and it appears that no permit will be needed from the South Coast Air Pollution Control District.

In response to special conditions in the coastal development permit, SCE is creating a GIS anchoring plan that will overlay existing sonar data. The plan will include visual inspection of the anchor locations by divers as well. SCE also is working with fishermen's associations to receive input on the required Notice to Mariners and on the order of construction that will have the least impact on fisheries. For construction monitoring, SCE will have divers in the field as the modules are constructed.

For the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit, SCE has provided its response to comments. The environmental assessment is being prepared and the permit should be issued shortly so SCE can begin construction in August.

The staff produced a proposed monitoring plan for the experimental reef which was reviewed by SCE, resource agencies and other technical specialists and also was included in the draft PEIR for general public review. The Commission approved the proposed monitoring plan for the experimental reef on July 15, 1999. The staff is ordering needed equipment to be ready to set up the permanent sampling stations on the experimental modules as they are constructed.

FISH BEHAVIORAL MITIGATION

The Project

Condition B requires the permittee to install and maintain behavioral barrier devices at SONGS to reduce fish impingement losses.

Progress Report

Following the permittee's experiments on light and sound devices, the permittee considered fish guidance lights to be more effective in preventing fish from being trapped and killed. In October 1998, the Executive Director approved the permittee's installation plan for the lights and the lights were installed in December 1998.

Monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of the fish guidance lights began in March 1999 and is continuing.