

**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

Western Area Power Administration

Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Sutter Power Plant and Transmission Line Project, California

**AGENCY:** Western Area Power Administration, DOE.

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with Section 102(2) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4332, Western Area Power Administration (Western) intends to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) regarding the proposal by the Calpine Corporation (Calpine) to construct an electric generating facility and associated 230-kilovolt (kV) transmission line, approximately 3.5 miles in length, known as the Sutter Power Plant (SPP). Calpine has approached Western concerning an interconnection with Western's Keswick-Elverta and Olinda-Elverta Double-Circuit 230-kV Transmission Line. Because of the potential for incorporating new generation into Western's system, along with potential changes in the existing system, Western has determined to prepare an EIS, in accordance with U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) NEPA Implementing Procedures, 10 CFR 1021, Appendices D5 and 6 to Subpart D. The California Energy Commission (CEC) is responsible for permitting the proposed SPP. The CEC responsibilities are similar to those of a lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In the spirit of the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) implementing NEPA [40 CFR 1501.5(b)], Western and CEC will act as "joint lead agencies" for purposes of satisfying the requirements of NEPA and CEQA, respectively. In this notice, Western and CEC announce intentions to prepare an EIS and hold a public scoping meeting for the proposed project. Western's scoping will include notification of the public and Federal, State, local, and tribal agencies of the proposed action, and identification by the public and agencies of issues and reasonable alternatives to be considered in the EIS.

**DATES:** The scoping meeting will be Tuesday, March 3, 1998, beginning at 10 a.m.

The meeting will be held at the Veterans Memorial Community Building, 1425 Circle Drive, Yuba City, California, 95993. Written comments on the scope of the EIS for the proposed SPP should be received no later than May 5, 1998. Comments on the project will be accepted throughout the NEPA process.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** If you are interested in receiving future information or wish to submit written comments, please call or write Loreen McMahon, Project Manager, Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Customer Service Region, 114 Parkshore Drive, Folsom, California, 95630-4710, (916) 353-4460, FAX: (916) 985-1930, E-mail: [mcmahon@wapa.gov](mailto:mcmahon@wapa.gov). Comments may also be sent to Paul Richins, Project Manager, Energy Facilities Siting and Environmental Protection Division, California Energy Commission, 1516 Ninth Street, MS-15, Sacramento, California, 95814, (916) 654-4074, E-mail: [prichins@energy.state.ca.us](mailto:prichins@energy.state.ca.us). For general information on DOE's NEPA review procedures or status of a NEPA review, contact Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Assistance, EH-42, U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC, 20585, (202) 586-4600 or (800) 472-2756.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Calpine proposes to construct the SPP on lands it owns north of Sacramento, California. The SPP will be a "merchant plant." SPP will not be owned by a utility nor by a utility affiliate selling power to its utility, nor is it supported by a long-term power purchase agreement with a utility. The SPP will instead sell power on a short and mid-term basis to customers and the on-the-spot market. Power purchases by customers will be voluntary, and all economic costs will be borne by Calpine.

The SPP project consists of a nominal 500 megawatt (MW) net electrical output natural gas-fired, combined cycle generating facility, a 230-kV switching station, and 3.5 miles of new 230-kV transmission line to connect with Western's Keswick-Elverta and Olinda-Elverta Double-Circuit 230-kV Transmission Line at some point south and west of the plant. A new 12-mile natural gas pipeline will be constructed to provide fuel for

the project. The 16-inch gas pipeline will connect to an existing Pacific Gas and Electric natural gas supply line located to the west of the facility site. Potable water and cooling water will be provided by an on-site well system that will be developed as part of the project. It is expected that three wells will be developed to provide about 3,000 gallons per minute of water that will be needed during peak operating conditions. Sanitary waste will be treated on-site. The treated and other waste water generated in the operation of the plant will be discharged to an existing surface drainage system, requiring a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit.

The SPP will be located in Sutter County, California, on a portion of Calpine owned 77-acre parcel of land that contains a 49.5 MW cogeneration plant. Yuba City, California, is about 7 miles to the northeast; Oswald, California, is about 3.5 miles to the east; and Sacramento, California, is about 36 miles to the southeast of the proposed project site. The land surrounding the project area is farmland used to grow rice, walnuts, almonds, and other orchard crops.

Western was approached by Calpine to consider providing an outlet for the power produced by the SPP. Since this would require Western to make facility additions to its existing system to incorporate additional power from new generation, Western is required by the DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures to prepare an EIS on the potential environmental impacts of this proposal. Western, therefore, agreed to be the lead Federal Agency, as defined at 40 CFR 1501.5. However, because the CEC has licensing responsibilities, Western has agreed to be a joint lead with the CEC and to utilize their expertise in siting issues.

The purpose of the CEC's Energy Facilities Siting and Environmental Protection Division (Division) is to ensure that needed energy facilities are authorized according to this process in an expeditious, safe, and environmentally acceptable manner. In addition, the Division prepares all environmental documentation for the CEC as required by CEQA. To attain its objectives, the Division maintains a staff of experts in more than 20 environmental and engineering disciplines. The Division's range of technical

expertise allows it to perform balanced, totally independent evaluations of complex and controversial projects.

Western and the CEC will carefully examine public health and safety, environmental impacts, and engineering aspects of the proposed power project, including all related facilities, such as electric transmission and natural gas lines. The permitting process is open to the public and includes input from the public and all interested parties as well as consultations with other Federal, State, local, and tribal agencies. The review process was initiated when Calpine filed an Application for Certification (AFC) with the CEC on December 15, 1997. On January 21, 1998, the CEC accepted the AFC as complete which begins a 1-year review process. General information on the CEC facility siting process and the SPP can be found on the CEC's Internet web site (<http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/sutterpower>). Since the project site is currently zoned for agricultural uses, Calpine will request Sutter County to permit a rezone of the 77-acre parcel to a planned development site, thus allowing industrial use. Western, CEC, and Sutter County reviews will occur concurrently.

The EIS will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of CEQ's NEPA implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) and DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures (10 CFR 1021). Full public participation and disclosure are planned for the entire EIS process. It is anticipated that the EIS process will take 12 months and will include public information/scoping meetings; coordination and involvement with appropriate Federal, State, local, and tribal government agencies; public review and hearings on the published draft EIS; a published final EIS; a review period; and

publication of a record of decision (ROD). Public information and scoping meetings will begin March 3, 1998. Publication of the ROD is anticipated in the fall of 1998.

Dated:

Michael S. HacsKaylo  
Acting Administrator